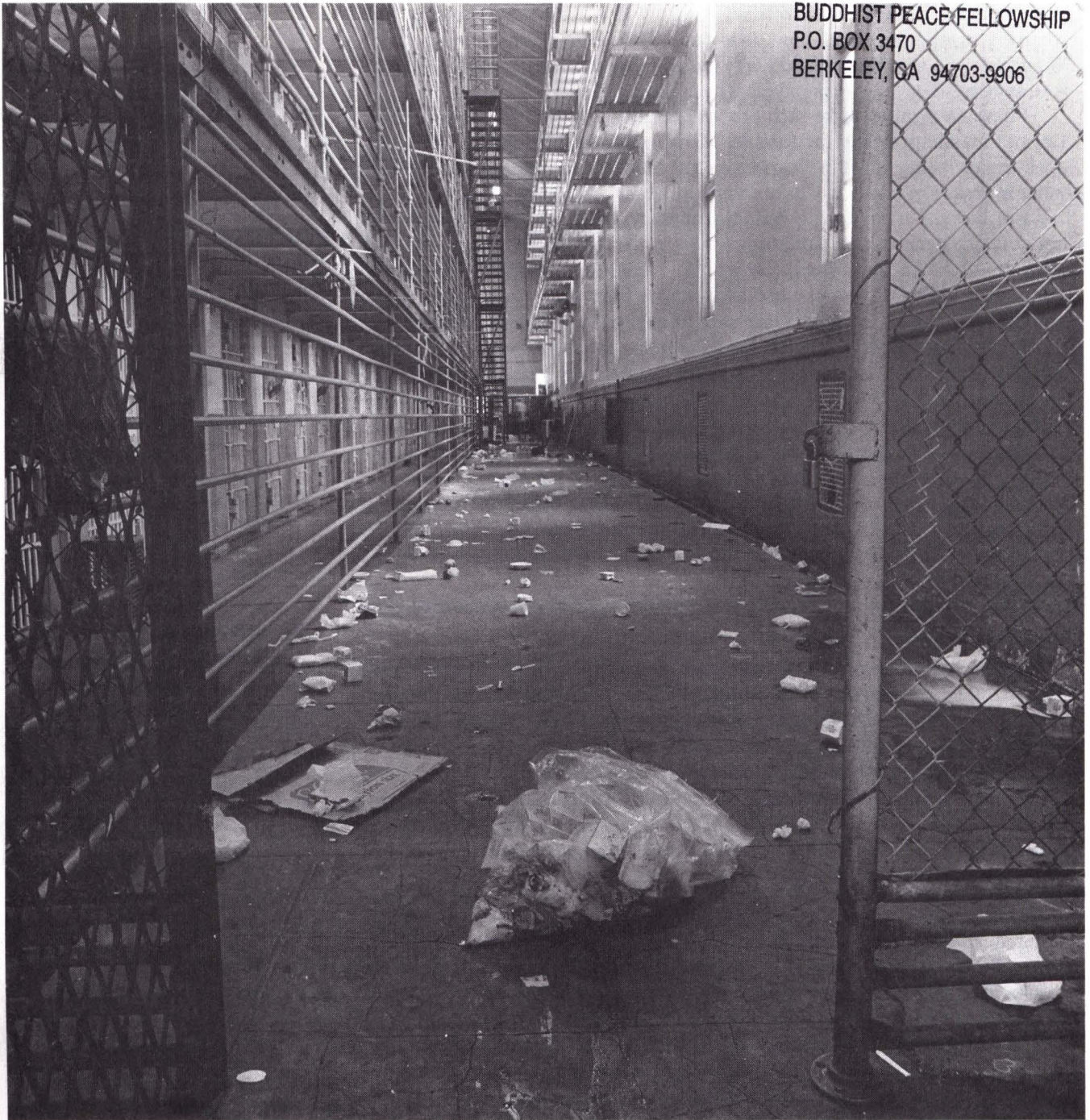




# TURNING WHEEL

*Journal of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship*

Winter 1992 \$3.00



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

Cell Block, San Quentin State Penitentiary

*Meditating Behind Bars —*

## BUDDHIST PRISONERS TELL THEIR STORIES

❖ *Robert Thurman on Buddha's Mother* ❖



## FROM THE EDITOR

Time. It's what we've got. It's what we don't have enough of. Sometimes it hangs heavy on our hands and we want it to hurry by. We experience good times and bad times. 1991, for example, was a rough year. Let's hope 1992 goes better. And prisoners "do time," looking forward to their release. But what if you were on death row, as is one of our contributors to this issue? Would you still wish time would hurry by? It's your life. Aren't we all on death row, anyway? How can we say a year is bad, a day is bad?

I have no right to make such pronouncements, because I'm comfortable. I'm not standing in line for food in Moscow. I'm not in prison. My loved ones are not being killed in Yugoslavia. My children are not poisoned by bad water in Iraq. I'm not sick. I'm not in physical pain. Not now. Not yet.

I'm lucky, but my luck is tenuous, illusory, based on the idea that I'm not connected to all that suffering. I live on this planet, too. People I love are getting cancer. Too many, too young. I think it's environmental pollution. And we have this time, these days, maybe these years, to be alive, to do something about it. To try and take care of each other a little bit better.

So what am I doing? In a few days I'm going to be a monk in the mountains for three months. I will be uncomfortable, and perhaps worse than uncomfortable. There will be moments, sitting in the cold zendo in the early morning dark with my knees hurting, when I will wish my own precious time to hurry by. I'm supposed to be an "engaged" Buddhist, but I'm completely disengaging from the world for this time. It's a luxury. I guess the world can get along without me for a little while. I know *Turning Wheel* can, because in my absence, Denise Caignon, who has helped edit the last two issues, will be the skillful guest editor of the Spring issue. And I'll be back. I'll let you know what it's like. ♦ — Susan Moon

### Please help prison practice.

Readers are encouraged to buy gift subscriptions to *Turning Wheel* for prisoners. In the past we have given complimentary subscriptions to all prisoners who ask for it. We expect and hope that with this special issue on prison practice, many more prisoners will ask for *Turning Wheel*, and we will need your support to meet their requests. In this way, those of us lucky enough to be able to practice when and where we want to can share our fortune with our imprisoned sangha members. \$25 buys a gift BPF membership for one prisoner for one year. Please make checks to BPF and earmark "prisoner subscription fund."

### Next issue: Community

The **spring issue** of *Turning Wheel* will focus on community in its infinitely varied incarnations: urban and rural communities and neighborhoods, Buddhist (and secular) "intentional" communities, monastic centers, groups of people who come together to work on specific issues. Of particular interest are communities organized around spiritually-based activism.

What does community mean to you? If you live and/or work in a community, how's it going? What are the joys and pitfalls? If you long for community, what is your dream? What role does spiritual practice play in your community life? Send articles, poems, artwork, letters by **March 1, 1992** to: *Turning Wheel*, P.O. Box 4650, Berkeley, CA 94704.

**Summer issue** will be on the Quincentennial, colonialism, and indigenous people's rights. Deadline: May 18. **Fall issue** will be on Gay Buddhism. Deadline: August 17.

**Correction:** The short piece "Geese" in the last issue was not *written* by Jeff Scannell, it was *contributed* by him.



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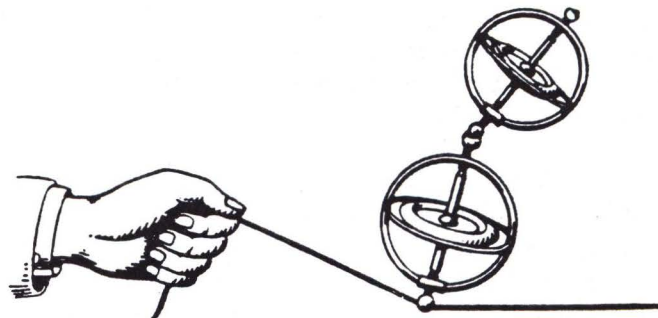
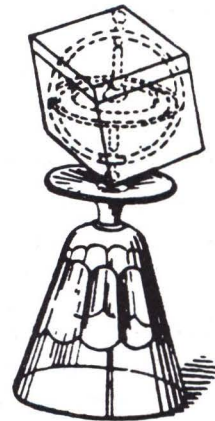
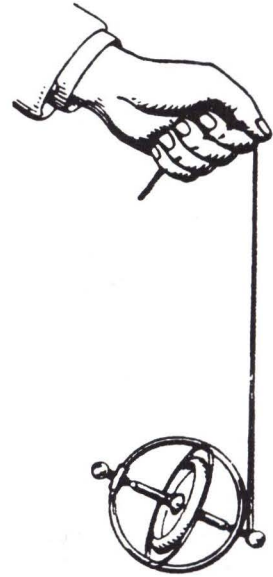
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## Buddhist Peace Fellowship's Meditation in Action Institute

July 5 - 11, 1992

*Holy Redeemer Center, Oakland, California*

Keeping in mind the painful legacy of the Columbus Quincentennial, worldwide democratic upheavals, our upcoming national election, and Buddhist principles of interdependence, our focus this summer is the "Practice of Democracy," with an emphasis on training, direct experience, and continuing work. Invited teachers include Joanna Macy and Pracha Hutanuwat, with more to be announced soon.

*Please write us for further details:  
BPF, P.O. Box 4650, Berkeley, CA 94704*

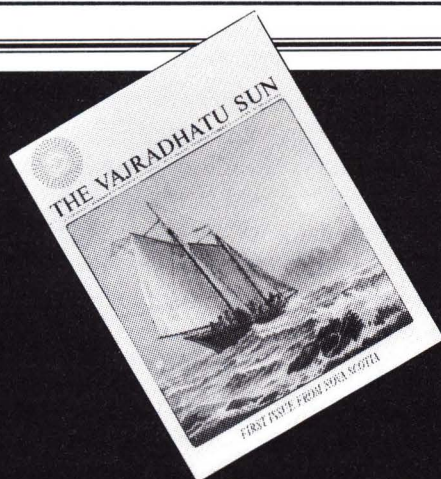
## LETTERS

Dear Editor:

The Kalachakra Initiation and Ceremony for World Peace, led by His Holiness the Dalai Lama in New York City (Oct. 21-25) has just concluded. During the four-day teachings which preceded it, he emphasized the importance of caution and common sense in the choosing of a guru or teacher, and of questioning him or her along the way in study and practice. "Be cautious from the beginning," he said, "so that you protect yourself." If your guru says or does something that contradicts your deepest sense of the Buddha way, then it is your responsibility to oppose that — out of consideration and *compassion* for the person. So that wrongdoing does not continue, to the harm of the perpetrator and his/her students.

"It is very important to ensure that a guru's instructions are in accord with the general structure of the Buddhist path. Rely more on the Path than the guru; it can be substantiated by the Vinaya." Unquote. The concept of "crazy wisdom" recently popularized in various circles pales in the simple clear light of such advice: tell the truth, do not harm others, keep the precepts. Not much flashy glamour there, just quiet grace.

—Diana N. Rowan, Cambridge, MA



## THE VAJRADHATU SUN

Social issues, the arts, poetry, politics,  
and of course, the Buddhist and  
Shambhala teachings. Sample copy \$4,

1345 Spruce St., Boulder, CO 80302.

Dear Editor:

Thank you for focusing on sexual misconduct. Please do not stop just yet. One would think that with so much publicity, with so many sordid stories being reported, most of the offending so-called teachers would have been rooted out by now. Not so. There is more work to do and we need publications with a conscience like yours to keep printing what's going on.

Many of us in our sangha have been trying for years with very little success to deal with our lama's (Lama Tsenjur) sexual misconduct. Too many have quit the sangha in disgust, frustrated by all the obstacles, the deceit, the women's pain.

For sixteen years our lama has been sexually harassing women, including getting one pregnant and telling her to leave town, having a long affair with a nun, forcing a woman president of the society out of office when she tried to do something about the problem, and all the while wearing what appear to be monk's robes. Of course anything that has gone on this long is a very complicated affair and it would probably take a book to tell the whole sordid story, and it's not over yet because he is still the lama.

A report has been filed with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police regarding the lama's sexual harassment of a woman and child. Written affidavits by many women



who have been sexually offended by this man are on file, and the constitution of the society giving him veto power over the board is being reviewed. He is presently in India waiting for everything to calm down as it always has in the past. It will not calm down this time.

Of course he has his defenders. Because it was always handled discreetly, many students never heard about the problem and want to give him another chance. They have much invested in keeping the status quo, almost their whole belief system. The great high lamas of the lineage have also defended him and protected him in public. When the Karmapa was told about the problem many years ago, he made him a *rinpoche*, presumably to shut people up. Later Kalu Rinpoche told students to let it drop or leave the sangha, while privately chastising the offending lama. Many other high lamas have publicly defended him. Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche, who is now in charge, has asked Tsenjur Rinpoche to retire. A step in the right direction, but only a very small step.

Lama Tsenjur's sexual misconduct is not an isolated incident in this lineage. A major house cleaning remains to be done.

Please keep up the good work, for you are an inspiration for so many of us.

—Matthew T. Coleman, Ganges, British Columbia

## READINGS

### *International Burma Campaign Formed*

In an unprecedented gathering, leading human rights, environmental, spiritual, legal, activist and expatriate Burmese organizations concerned about Burma met in Washington, D.C. in November 1991.

Participants at the conference, determined to make a difference in the future of Burma, agreed to form the International Burma Campaign (IBC), which will have offices in Washington, D.C. in early 1992. The IBC will encourage, coordinate, and/or facilitate activities fostering nonviolent social change in Burma.

The BPF was among the more than 40 organizations and 100 individuals worldwide represented at the conference. Speakers came from as far away as the Burma border, Australia and Europe. Old "Burma hands" mixed with newer activists; Burman and ethnic minority Burmese networked and compared strategies with Western peace activists and NGO (non-governmental organizations) delegates.

Conference organizers Paula Green (Karuna Center) and Rand Engel (Wisdom Publications) saw the need for an international Burma coalition, so that large, multi-organization, international campaigns could be successfully mounted. Although the conference was planned long before Aung San Suu Kyi was awarded

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the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize, the Nobel announcement certainly affirmed the need for coordinated action for democracy and reconciliation in Burma.

Among the activities that IBC might coordinate are educational and public relations campaigns, economic sanctions or boycotts, rapid-response emergency networks, human rights campaigns, and legislative and U.N. liaison work. IBC will publish a directory of participating organizations, including pro-democracy groups along the Burma border and in Bangkok who were unable to attend but who support the establishment of an international cooperative network working to relieve suffering and bring peace to Burma.

For information about the IBC until its offices are established, please contact the BPF National Office.

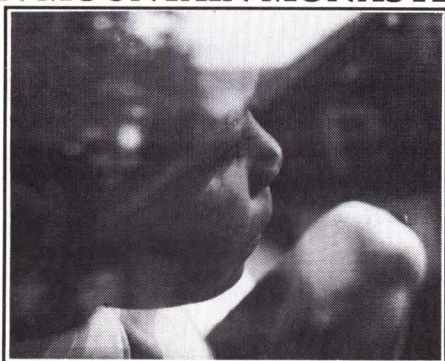
—Paula Green

### *Help Build a Hospital in Chittagong, Bangladesh*

BPF has received an appeal from the Bangladesh Buddhist Missionary Society in Chittagong for help with their construction of a 45-bed missionary hospital there. This organization has carried on many activities since it was founded in 1977; at the moment, they run an orphanage, a technical school, a monks' training center, a publishing house, and public education and community development projects. The Society has received



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awards from government and public service organizations for its work with the many very poor people of the region, most of whom are Buddhists. The need for a hospital with modern medical facilities is sorely felt, but the cost of the project is far beyond the means of the Buddhist Missionary Society.

Please help. Write to Jivanananda Bhikkhu, Secretary-General, Bangladesh Buddhist Missionary Society, GPO Box No. 1168, Chittagong Post Code No. 4000, Bangladesh.

***Mass Grave Discovered in Mongolian Republic***

[reprinted from the *Vajradhatu Sun*, Dec. 1991]

The discovery of a mass grave containing the bodies of some three thousand Buddhist monks has revealed the full horrors of Stalin's suppression of Vajrayana Buddhism in Mongolia.

The monks were each executed with a single bullet to the back of the head and buried in their robes in a two-acre mass grave near the town of Moron, in north-western Mongolia. Mongolian President Punsalmaagiyn Ochirbat said a monument would be erected to honor the massacred monks.

The discovery has sparked a series of revelations about the destruction of Buddhism in Mongolia in the 1930s and 1940s. An eighty-three-year-old man interviewed by the BBC said he led the squad which executed seventeen thousand monks on Stalin's orders. Some seven hundred monasteries were destroyed.

A seventy-eight-year-old monk interviewed by the Reuters News Service remembered the horrors of life in the 1930s.

"In the year of the Yellow Tiger (1938), troops came one night from the Ministry of the Interior," he recalled.

"They came with some high-ranking monks who had turned informer. The informers identified the important monks and then the troops took them outside and shot them in front of the rest of us. We were then ordered to smash our monastery. They killed my three brothers before my eyes because they refused to cooperate."

One Mongolian historian estimated the total number of executions during the 1930s and 1940s as 100,000, including a staggering 40% of the adult male population. Mongolia's total population at that time was about 600,000.

***Boycott of Toys Made in China***

Tibetan support groups, Chinese dissident organizations and the AFL-CIO have joined to ask that businesses and consumers boycott toys manufactured in the P.R.C. to protest the Beijing regime's persecution and genocide in Tibet, the continuing imprisonment of Chinese and Tibetans for expressing democratic aspirations, and forced labor and child labor practices. For more information, call Lisa Keary of the U.S. Tibet Committee at 212/213-5011.



# MILK AND WATER

by Patrick McMahon

The occupational hazard of the Bodhisattva is ego erosion. As practice breaks the heart the world pours in. In the setting of a Buddhist sangha this fluidity is valued and carefully cultivated. Individuals become as intermixed as milk and water. In the society at large, though, boundaries are jealously guarded. Schools, hospitals, welfare programs, and prisons institutionalize distance — teacher from student, health professional from patient, social worker from client, prison guard from inmate.

It's a workaday dilemma, then, for helping professionals practicing the Buddha Way of compassion. On one hand, whomever we work with — client, student, child — is not separate. We drink them in, every curve of the smooth cheek, every line of the worried face, every halting or manic word. On the other, in settings structured around alienation, we often feel stymied in communicating experiences of interconnection.

Fortunately we're in the process of developing communities in which such experiences can be shared and confirmed. Sara Hummel, a participant in the Educator's Sangha, is an acupressurist serving autistic children in a school with a strict behavior modification program. She recently told us "Michael's" story.

*The first time I did body work on him I was amazed to watch the tension gradually lessen in his face. He had off-*

*and-on eye contact with me. It was a very soft eye exchange. We sort of smiled together inside and again I felt a deep connection. He yawned and stretched and smiled. I felt privileged to witness this very dear child letting go and just being.*

*Two months later: About ten minutes into the massage he called out "Mama, Mama." He has little oral language and rarely initiates speech on his own. I experienced a connection with him that touched my inner being as he kept calling out, "Mama."*

Such moments nourish the Bodhisattva in us. As one teacher with 30 children, an overheated curriculum, and multifarious demands on me, from the principal to the school district to the State legislature, I live for the shared smile, the soft eye contact, the jaunty, "Give me five!" The other day one of my neediest boys tugged at my elbow, in the middle of one of those chaotic end-of-the-day moments when it seems my attention is needed everywhere at once. I looked down with annoyance, as he fanned out a hand of baseball cards.

"Take one, Mr. McMahon. Any one." Looking into his eyes I suddenly saw through to the boy I had been at 10, starving for contact. I chose a card. His face broke into the widest grin I'd seen all day. "Keep it, it's yours!" he said, and slipped back into the classroom sea, one more little fish. ♦

*The Education column in Turning Wheel has spawned an independent journal, The Teaching Circle. To receive the winter issue, send \$3 to Educator's Sangha, 2311 C Woolsey St., Berkeley, CA 94705. Make checks payable to Educator's Sangha.*

## SAKYAMUNI BUDDHA: A STORY



"Buddha's Death", 1991, Ceramic, 55x44x1½"

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*Dr. Ronald Nakasone, author of "Ethics of Enlightenment", Dharma Cloud Publishing, Fremont, CA, called this panel series, "Dynamic yet sensitively rendered." The artwork is for sale as well as for exhibit. For further inquiries, contact the artist, Lorraine Capparell, at (415) 493-2869.*



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*Born in New York in 1936, Pema became a Buddhist nun in 1973, and was ordained at that time by His Holiness, Karmapa. She is a student of Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche. Presently she is the director of Gampo Abbey, a monastery for western monks and nuns in Nova Scotia. Ani Pema is a member of the advisory board of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship.*

For more information, or to register for the events, please contact:



Los Angeles Dharmadhatu (213) 653-9342  
8218 W. Third St. Los Angeles, CA 90048

**WOMEN'S WORLD CONGRESS  
FOR  
A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT**

**by Stephanie Kaza**

On June 1-12, 1992, over 10,000 people will gather in Brazil for an unprecedented Earth Summit, a worldwide conference on the environment. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) is perhaps the most important conference since the 1972 Stockholm conference for naming environmental issues and setting priorities for the future. Preparatory committees, citizens' action groups, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been working hard for two years preparing reports, proposing treaties, and developing an Earth Charter of environmental ethics for the entire planet.

Paralleling the Earth Summit will be the Global Forum, a major gathering of hundreds of NGOs concerned with the environment and development. Activist, religious, scientific, and cultural groups are all scrambling to prepare a grassroots agenda that will be broader in scope and perhaps far more illuminating than the posturing of government officials. This is especially true for the United States, where the Bush administration report has been prepared by the Environmental Protection Agency and focuses on U.S. achievements rather than shortcomings or overconsumption. The Citizens' Action Network of non-profits has undertaken the massive job of coordinating NGO input from the United States at the Global Forum.

In November 1991, I attended a preparatory conference in Miami dedicated to influencing the agendas of both the UNCED Earth Summit and the NGO Global Forum. The Women's World Congress for a Healthy Planet was organized by the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) under the strategic leadership of Bella Abzug. Over a million dollars was raised to bring 1500 women together from 84 different countries: an outstanding set of witnesses for the three plenary tribunal sessions.

The planning group deliberately chose to counterbalance the input from white western women with the experience, insights, and perspectives of women of color, women of southern nations, and indigenous women. They sought out women organizers, economists, judges, farmers, senators, and scientists to work together in creating a women's action agenda for Brazil in 1992.

The sea of faces in the audience was a deeply moving sight: all women, and all concerned about the fate of the planet and their own regions, families, and children. In one session we heard from Wangari Maathai, founder of the Green Belt Movement in Kenya; Magda Renner,



activist working on behalf of environmental refugees in Brazil, especially children; Peggy Antrobus of the West Indies insisting that power is the primary issue and feminist environmental movements are revolutions; and Rosalie Bertell, Canadian cancer researcher who described how the militaristic foundations of Bush's New World Order undermine the health of both the environment and human social systems.

In between plenaries, we participated in workshop sessions to address the action agenda drafted by the planning committee. I was struck by the urgency of Vandana Shiva's (India) concern about the colonizing of women's bodies through new techniques in biotechnology, and by Marilyn Waring's (New Zealand) strong recommendations for environmental accounting. I learned, to my grave distress, that the military impact on the environment was not included on the UNCED agenda; it had been proposed by a number of countries but vetoed by the United States. Women from Norway and Sweden were very articulate and committed on this topic, along with American representatives of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. I spoke up on behalf of nonviolence and honoring spiritual intention in resisting the militarization of the world. The final agenda contains strong statements linking war with environmental and cultural destruction.

The Women's Congress was a remarkable example of solidarity across geographical and political boundaries. We came together as students, professionals, mothers, and activists to speak the truth from our experience on behalf of the planet. The power of so much truth-telling will surely influence the conversation in Brazil in June 1992. To begin the lobbying process, the agenda was presented to Maurice Strong, Executive Secretary for the conference, and Gro Bruntland, Prime Minister of Norway. Each participant left with the strength of her sisters' concerns behind her and a commitment to press her government for environmental sanity and sustainable actions. It was a powerful start to what may be the most organized and radical presence at the Earth Summit. ♦

For copies of the full, revised *Women's Action Agenda*, contact *Women's Environment and Development Organization*, 845 Third Avenue, 15th floor, NY, NY 10022. Phone: (212) 759-7982, fax (212) 759-8647.

### *The Moving Moment*

*The present moment carries me  
As it walks through the landscape  
Of time.*

— Joe Maizlish

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# BUDDHA'S MOTHER SAVING TIBET

by Robert Thurman

*Following is an excerpt from a talk given by Robert Thurman at Green Gulch Farm Zen Center on April 14, 1991.*

I'd like to start by reading from the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, or *Flower Ornament Sutra*. Queen Maya, mother of the Buddha, speaks:

I became the mother of the enlightening being Siddhartha, by the great inconceivable miracle of the birth of an enlightening being. At that time I was in the house of king Shuddhodana, and when the time of the enlightening being's descent from the heaven of contentment had arrived, from every pore the enlightening being emanated as many rays of light as atoms in untold buddha-lands, arrayed with the qualities of the birth of all enlightening beings . . . Rays of light illumined the whole world, then descended on my body and entered into every pore of my body, beginning with my head. As soon as those light rays, with various names, had entered my body, I saw all the enlightening beings . . . as they sat on the Buddha's lion throne at the site of enlightenment, surrounded by congregations of enlightening beings, honored by the leaders of the world, turning the wheel of the teaching. . . . When those rays of light of the enlightening being entered my body, my body outreached all worlds, and my belly became as vast as space, and yet did not go beyond the human physical size. The supernal manifestations of the enlightening beings' abode in the womb everywhere in the ten directions all appeared in my body. [*Entry Into the Realm of Reality*, translated by Thomas Cleary, Shambhala Publications.]

Apparently, to be the Buddha's mother, to carry the Buddha in your womb, is quite an exercise. While he's in your womb, 42 trillion different deities come to receive dharma teachings every day. There's this multimedia show going on inside your stomach wall, and Buddha's sitting there in a little pagoda, talking about the dharma instead of being an embryo. You don't want to breathe too heavily, or burp, or gurgle, because you could disturb the dharma teachings for trillions of subliminal beings. *The Flower Ornament Sutra* is an extended evocation of Maya, the mother of the Buddha. It's a fantastic vision of the power of the feminine, where all negativity is harnessed and enfolded within pure love, and formed into beauty, and formed into planets wherein beings can come to their own perfection. This is what it means to give birth to Buddhas at all times.

I wanted to start in honor of the Buddha's mother, whose miraculous power is still with us, because otherwise, in our imagination of Buddhist history, we think

that Siddhartha Shakyamuni lived 2,500 years ago and now we have descended into a dark age. We also think that the guys have been doing it all — all the big monks and patriarchs, all the male chauvinist macho enlightened beings — and we think that the girls have just been making sushi.

Well, this is completely wrong. In the first place, the Buddha is not gone at all. In fact, the death of the Buddha is merely the dissolving of the illusion of the body, and the Buddha is returning to where he always has been, which is in and around us, suffused in every atom of all of our being. Every one of us, like Maya Devi, has billions of planets in our body, in every cell and atom, and those planets are not just planets where a bunch of morons are fighting nuclear wars, they are planets where Buddhas and bodhisattvas are attaining enlightenment, are giving their lives and benefiting other beings in an inconceivable web of benevolence and beauty.

So we have to start with this miracle level when we talk about Tibet, because Tibet is the place on this planet where the collision of delusions is most manifest. And we are totally connected to it right here and now. Every time you turn on the tap and worry about the water shortage, you are connecting with Tibet. The destruction of the environment of Tibet creates a chimney effect, and it

makes the air currents neurotic: they go too far south in the Pacific and too far north on the North American continent, and that's part of what is depriving you of your water.

So Tibet is totally connected to us, and we have to start affirming the miraculous truth that love *is* in fact powerful. And evil is stupid and wimpy, screwing things up, but really not the main thing that is going on. We have to start from that, because otherwise when we really look at the horror, we become too depressed. We have to be able to find Queen Maya's belly, in order to confront nonviolently the forces of hate and delusion. The force of love is *more powerful*. Even if they kill us, it's more powerful. Even if we die, if we die loving, the love is more powerful than the physical death.

Only when a whole mass of people understand this will we win the battle. It's the only way we can win it. More people have to be willing to die *not* to hurt others than those who are willing to die to hurt others, before the hurting of others will stop.

Do you know the story of the seamless monument? A great Ch'an master in China goes to visit the Emperor, who is his disciple, and the Emperor says, "Oh master, I

*To be the Buddha's mother is quite an exercise. While he's in your womb, 42 trillion different deities come to receive dharma teachings every day.*



like you. After you die, what can I do for you?"

The master says, "Build me a seamless monument."

The Emperor thinks about architectural plans, and he notices all the joints in joinery, all the boundaries, all the seams, and he says, "Excuse me, Your Holiness, could you please tell me what such a monument would look like?"

His Holiness remains silent for quite a while. Then he says, "Do you see it? Do you understand?"

The Emperor says, "No I don't — I have no idea."

The master says, "I have a disciple who will tell you fifteen years from now what it's like." And then the master went off and he died.

The poor Emperor had to wait. He sent for the disciple, and after about fifteen years the disciple showed up.

The Emperor says, "Can you describe for me the seamless monument?"

And the disciple says, "The seamless monument? Sure, I've had that description ready for years!" And then he says this verse which many people meditate on as a koan — it's in the *Blue Cliff Record* (Thomas Cleary's translation):

*"South of Hsiang, north of T'an,  
In between there's gold sufficient to a nation.  
Beneath the shadowless tree the community ferryboat —  
Within the crystal palace there's no one who knows."*

Now I'll give my commentary. (I guess you're not supposed to comment on koans, but never mind. I'm just a woolly Tibetan, I don't know these finer points.) "South of Hsiang, north of T'an" — this is like saying "south of San, north of Francisco," i.e. everywhere. "In between, there's gold sufficient to a nation." Now, what do you think a seamless monument is? How do you make a monument to enlightenment if you're a ruler? It's nice to make a monument: like giving the Nobel Peace Prize to

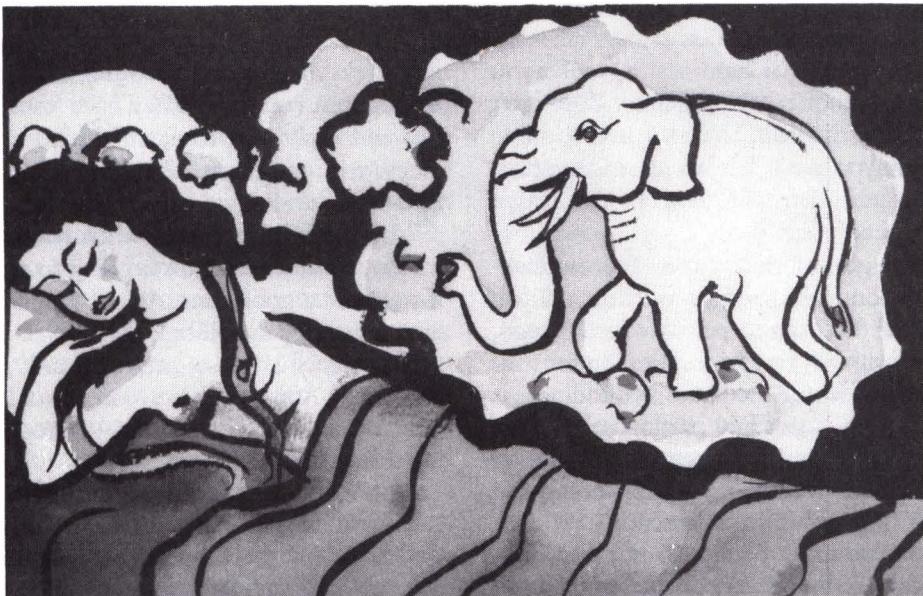
somebody. You're commemorating their greatness, right? But suddenly you are doing something else when you do that. When you give one person the Nobel Peace Prize you are pointing out that hundreds of millions don't have the Nobel Peace Prize. When you create a monument, you are pointing out that billions of people are not memorialized in that monument. Lincoln got a monument, but Andrew Jackson didn't make it. So a monument creates a distinction between the holy and the unholy. A seamless monument would have to mean somehow that what's being memorialized and the memorializer are nondual. Death and life cannot be different, enlightenment and non-enlightenment cannot be different, Buddhism cannot be different from society.

We think that if we all were just enlightened all the time, there would be no economy and we would all starve. We think that only a certain segment can pursue enlightenment and the rest have to work to produce the food, although no matter how much food you eat, you can't live forever. Finally you die anyway.

But the master in the story says no, in between San and Francisco, there is gold sufficient to a nation. He says, "Don't tell me, Mr. President, that you can't afford to support the whole nation's seamless life as a monument to enlightenment! Everything is gold, everything is abundance!"

For example, take Tibet. "We couldn't give up Tibet," says China; "we couldn't afford it. Tibet is so valuable. That's why we invaded and annexed it. It's one million square miles."

And the United States says, "Oh, we can't afford to censure China. We can't afford to stop them from torturing people; it's their internal affair. Besides, think of how much Coca-Cola they're going to drink in the next century!"



Lorraine Capparell, "Elephant Dreams"



We all do this, we all say this “can’t afford” to ourselves. The Tibetan teacher Tara Tulku asks everyone to do an exercise of counting up the minutes of your life. Count them up — How many of them were spent trying to achieve the purpose of your life, the fruition that will go on beyond the death that you know is waiting for you? Let’s see: I sleep for eight hours, I spend so many hours eating, I spend so many hours making the money to eat, building my house, buying my clothes, keeping up my car and so on. And how much do I spend developing my generosity and wisdom, which is my body of enlightenment, my future house and my future mind? How many minutes of the day do I spend on that? It’s a shocking exercise to think about how extremely little time is spent investing in something greater than what we are wrongly misidentifying as ourselves, this personality that is running around busily looking for a cemetery plot. Anyway, all the money we make will be spent by idiots when we’re dead.

“Beneath the shadowless tree, the community ferryboat.” What is the shadowless tree? The tree that casts no shadow. The tree of enlightenment is nondual. There is no light and shadow. And what *is* the tree of enlightenment? Is it some tree in India in ancient times? No. It is your nervous system. It is an enlightened nervous system that knows it’s not separated from the world around it. It is the Buddha’s mother’s nervous system. In this koan, the Zen master says that beneath the shadowless tree of an enlightened Emperor is a community ferryboat. When the Emperor is enlightened, society will be a community ferryboat. And what *is* a community ferryboat? It takes everybody across the ocean of samsara.

How do you get across? You can’t just get on and have someone else take you across. Buddha cannot take you across. His Holiness the Dalai Lama cannot take you across. Queen Maya cannot take you across. Why can’t she? Because you’re already there. She can’t take you into her own womb when you *are* in her womb. All you have to do is realize you are in her. And how do you realize that? You have to educate yourself.

Meditating will not get you there either. You can meditate all you want without dislodging your delusion, if you don’t educate yourself. You can sit perfectly for 20 years, and your meditation will only build a fortification for your delusion. So Buddhism is not meditation. Buddhism is not a theory. Buddhism is not any particular rules, or actions or morality. Buddhism is a process of education of the mind and heart through learning, understanding and meditation, and through loving, virtuous action.

None of us is paid to make peace. It’s not our livelihood. Maybe a couple of foundation people, one or two fortunate ones, but mostly not. But the *war* armies, *they* have pay! They have hundreds of billions of dollars of

budget. They have a giant Pentagon. And it was the same in Buddha’s time.

So the Buddha thinks, How do I deal with this? The first thing I’ll do is cut all the soldiers’ salaries. I’ll make them monks and nuns — no need for pay. I’m going to cut down on the clothing budget. How? We’ll take some old rags from the corpses in the cemeteries and sew them into monks’ and nuns’ robes. They can live at the foot of a tree. They can live in old barns. That’ll be cheaper. They can beg for a free lunch! In America, too, we could have a free lunch, but they put the surplus food in warehouses to rot, because they are trapped within their Protestant mentality of no free lunch. They underestimate the generosity of their God. God is omnipotent! How can He mind a free lunch?

So the peace-soldiers, the monks and nuns, are going to go out and they’re going to live for enlightenment. They’ll die to the world, shave their hair — no lice, no bugs, no hairdo problems.

That’s the Buddha’s peace army, the monastic army of peace.

Imagine when Shakyamuni’s army arrives here, which will have to happen soon — within a century for sure —

*Imagine when Shakyamuni’s  
army arrives here, what a zendo  
we can have in the Pentagon!  
And you are that peace army.*

what a zendo we can have in the Pentagon! We’ll teach people tantric visualization with all those great video displays. It’ll be awesome. We can take over the building. It will be just right for us. The Five Mothers Mandala, the Pañcharaksha mandala,

has five sides: it’s a pentagon.

And you people are the peace army. This Buddhist peace movement has originated from people who have learned something, who have sat, who have meditated, who have re-educated themselves. Protestant culture has mixed up the purpose of human life. It is freedom, not just production. Enlightenment, not subservience. Fun, not work. *Fun* — they have *fun* in Tibet! They have fun in Buddhist countries. They have festivals where they go out and shake giant lingams in Japan, and get drunk. They’re not uptight. Because you don’t have to be uptight, intrinsically.

You have to be uptight when you live in a militarized society, because some jerk is going to come and arrest you if you have a good time. As His Holiness says, when you have a military establishment, the first person to lose his human rights is the soldier. You can’t disobey, or they’ll shoot you. And when you’ve lost your human rights, you want to take everybody else’s away, too. It’s been happening throughout history.

But now you are the soldiers, and you’re ready. There is a Buddhist peace movement. If they try another war, we’ll all be out there in the streets. You’ll all be out there. Thich Nhat Hanh will be out there, interbeing with that nuke. He’ll interbe that railroad train. We’ll all interbe each other at the big be-in. But is it going to be enough?



Can we liberate Tibet in that way?

The Buddhist movement needs Tibet, actually. Interbeing needs Tibet. Everyone needs Tibet to fully appreciate what they themselves are. Buddhism in India was a great force. It demilitarized India and de-macho-male-chauvinized it. By the time India was invaded by the Muslims it had become a topless civilization. You know, if women didn't feel like wearing shirts because it was hot, they didn't wear them, and nobody molested them. God was Mrs. God, and she was usually topless. Sexuality was allowable. They played fantastic ragas, and they did fantastic drumming. They ate two thousand seven hundred and forty-two varieties of mangos. And they wrote exquisite poetry. It was a paradise, it was the Garden of Eden.

Since then, the Dharma Sangha in Buddhist countries has never controlled the military authority, and social activism has always been countercultural, balanced against a political authority that had responsibility without enlightenment. Particularly in Japan. No one from the East Asian Buddhist traditions has had the experience of having to be responsible for an entire society. There's even a theory that you're not *supposed* to take responsibility. You're supposed to sit and meditate and drop out from the world. And just sort of avoid it. The Buddhist Peace Fellowship has come up against this. They've had a hard time persuading some meditators that they have a responsibility to be concerned about the injustices in society.

But such dualism has nothing to do with the Buddha's and Mrs. Buddha's view of the world. In that view of the world, enlightenment should be compassion. Compassion is nothing but universal responsibility. There should be no military. There should be no violence; humans don't need it. It's contrary to our programming. But in the United States you're educated to believe that militarism is inevitable on account of the fact that you're a nasty person with nasty, aggressive instincts, and you're surrounded by nasty enemies who have nasty, aggressive instincts. The military establishment pays pseudo-biologists at M.I.T. to pump out theories about the genetic nastiness of human beings.

Because of its location, Tibet is unique in the Buddhist world. When the great masters of India saw the Muslim cavalry coming, they said, "Hey, let's sneak up in the hills here." It was the closest place. And they just sneaked right up through the passes into Tibet, and they kept their institutions — all of them, they took the whole thing with them. The Tibetan warlords who lived there were very fierce. Tough as hell. But the Buddhists said, "O.K., we're just going to meditate over here in one little corner," and in about four centuries, that little corner was the whole of Tibet. And the emperors were meditat-

ing, and everyone was reeducated, and the Tibetans became tame and peaceful. Their enemies were so far away, they were able to do that. And finally, the monasteries took over the country. Not like the Protestants. The Protestant ethic destroyed monasticism and created the industrial revolution. But in Tibet, it was the opposite: monasticism made an industrial revolution itself.

Do you know what a monastic industrial revolution would be like? Imagine industrializing Marin County into Zen centers. The industrial product becomes an enlightened person. The whole county government and the taxes are there to support everybody becoming selflessly enlightened. If you want to go on retreat, you just go the Board of Retreats in the county seat, and say, "I'm going to be on retreat. I want a free lunch, every day. Delivered steaming hot." The industry is enlightenment. The product is free people who care about each other. I'm headed for the cemetery, so in the meantime I don't want to get off my pillow. I want to attain enlightenment. I really should be using all my time for this, because if I die without being

free of greed, hate and delusion, they will drag me into the Bardo, into hellish places, with bad plumbing, no climate control. So I want to attain the ability to be free of that situation. A little temporary climate control becomes a very low priority.

And that's what happened in Tibet. Tibet became like

that. Tibet has developed a different sense of responsibility. The Dalai Lama is the head of *state*. We think that's weird. We expect an enlightened, holy person to be *powerless*; we almost suspect that if they're not powerless, there's something wrong with them. But the enlightened person has to take responsibility, take power, in fact. And Tibet is the only place on this planet where political power and enlightenment became the same thing. The Tibetans even tamed the Mongolians, and the Mongolians were ferocious. They controlled the largest piece of land that anybody has ever controlled, and without any modern technology. Just horses and arrows. And yet they became over several centuries what the Buddhists call "tamed." And don't think tame is bad. "Tame" means loving, selfless, kind, not jealous, not greedy. A tame society is a society that will not blow up the world.

But in the last three centuries we have participated in the destruction of Tibet. China hasn't been doing it alone. We destroyed them by exporting our confused idea of reality, which is that reality is something external. We think we are not real. We threw out the idea of the soul. I'm nothing, and therefore I can do anything I want, because I'm not really here. My brain, my flesh are just external things. And the planet is external.

Before we infected China with our confusion, they

*Buddhism de-macho-male-chauvinized India. If women didn't feel like wearing shirts because it was hot, they didn't, and nobody molested them. God was Mrs. God, and she was usually topless.*



never even tried to conquer Tibet. They used to send huge funds to Tibet. All the Chinese emperors would ask the Lamas to pray for them. But we confused them. If Deng Xiaoping were smart, he would say, with the whole world, "Liberate the Tibetans! Train up to ten million Dalai Lamas, send 500 to Iowa, Kansas, Moscow, Paris, Tokyo, Washington D.C., and teach those people to pray and be tamed before they drop neutron bombs on us." The world should be praying to Tibet to come over here and get us to cool out.

It is time we took action before another holocaust happens. Tibet is the last bastion of Buddha's army of peace. If Tibet's ecology, if Tibet's society, if Tibet's Dharma is crushed and destroyed finally by the external-reality-modernizing-militarizing army, the planet is lost. The experiment has failed. Queen Maya's belly was unrecognized by us. We eject ourselves from it.

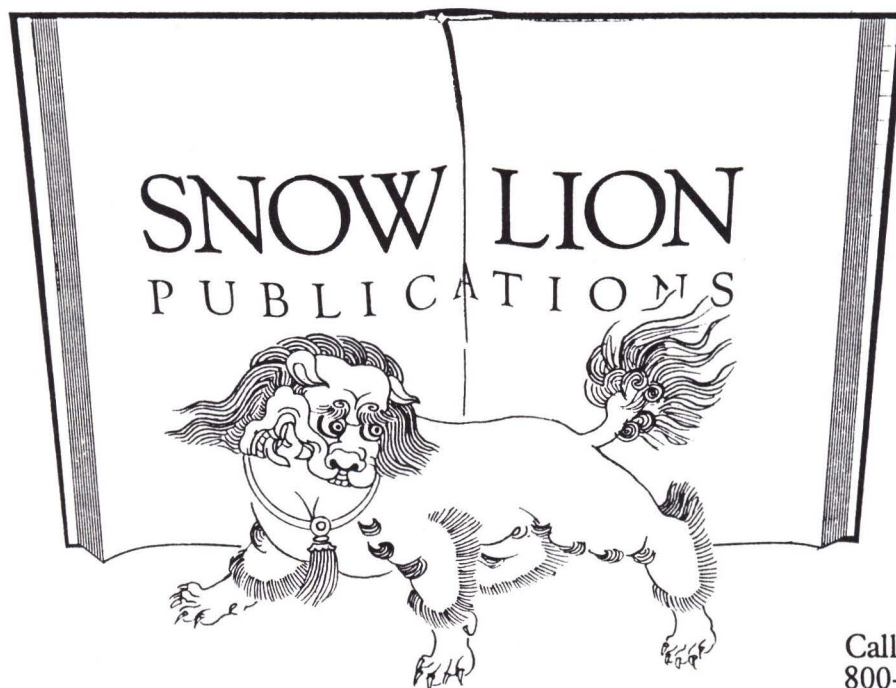
We will not let the destruction of this people stand. We will take responsibility to see that it does not stand. We will force our governments and the United Nations to protest. And we will have hope, in spite of the fact that we've been taught that the good will not prevail. When we sit on our pillow, we will not just sit there blindly, we will sit there until we realize that *goodness will prevail*.

So please help us save Tibet. His Holiness has spoken about monks in Tibet being tortured and executed. He doesn't like to bring it up. He is committed to being

aware of suffering of all beings everywhere. So he doesn't usually open up about one poor Tibetan who is being dragged to execution. But this is what is going on. When you're sitting on your pillow, you think you have a little pain in the thigh, a little needle-like pain. You don't know that that little needle-like pain is someone being tortured to death; a fellow believer in enlightenment and love is being tortured to death by people whom our government is supporting. His Holiness feels we're ready to think about universal responsibility. Every day we say, "Beings are numberless; I vow to save them." Now we can make that vow genuine.

Tibet is an alternative direction for the entire planet, a peace direction that the planet could have gone in four hundred years ago. Tibet is a manifestation of the fact that we can have paradise, we can have Shambhala, we can have Eden again. Easily. But not through "business as usual." When we see that there's something else in the world that the world is pretending is *not* in the world, we have liberated Tibet in our mind. And then Tibet will become liberated on the ground. The zone of peace which should be the whole planet will begin in Tibet. ♦

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# THE KALACHAKRA FOR WORLD PEACE

by Diana N. Rowan

"*Tashi de leh!*" "Hello!" was a common greeting as thousands converged for an October week in New York City to attend the teachings of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and a raft of distinguished Tibetan lamas, and to take part in the Kalachakra Initiation for World Peace.

During the teachings, a simple phrase from *A Tibetan Phrasebook* (Snow Lion Press, 1987) repeated itself in my mind as resonantly as any sutra: *Sacha tsachenpo ray*. This is a sacred place. *Sah-cha tsachenpo ray*.

Madison Square Garden — with its hotdog stands, nonstop video buzz and tables of Tibetan wares in a foyer packed with mobs of the devoted, the politically fervent and the merely curious. *Sacha* (place), *tsachenpo* (sacred), and the gentle, bright word *ray* means simply: IS.

We dream of a common language, a common spiritual community, a common Mind of Clear Light. *Dhey shap-den che-gi-yo-ray-peh?* Do you have ceremonies here: *La yo-ray, tse-ba chu-ngah la*. Yes, on the full moon. The Kalachakra Ceremony did indeed culminate on the evening of the full moon, October 23. And somehow the sterile antechambers and auditorium took on the atmosphere of an old-time Lhasa street festival, tinged with the urgency of Tibet's current suffering under the Chinese regime. Part of the International Year of Tibet (March 1991 - March 1992), the week featured a rich offering of artistic and educational events around New York. There were films, lectures and fund-raising events to free Tibet, to stop the environmental destruction and genocidal policies of torture and executions, forced abortions and sterilizations of Tibetans, as well as suppression of their religion, language, and culture.

Monks from different Tibetan monasteries performed ritual masked dances, chanted mysterious harmonic chords, and created the Kalachakra Sand Mandala (undisturbed this time); and courses were offered to the public in Tibetan chanting, *t'hanka* painting, calligraphy, and even butter sculpture. As he had done at San Francisco's Asian Art Museum this past April, His Holiness opened the splendid "Wisdom and Compassion: Sacred Art of Tibet" show at the IBM Gallery, the most comprehensive collection of Tibetan sacred art to date. When His Holiness met with President Bush earlier this year, he presented him with the book of photos and text from the show, in an effort to emphasize how much will be lost unless world leaders take a more effective stand.

During the Kalachakra week, several thousand of us took a stand in different ways: delving into the teachings and involving ourselves in practical ways in

Tibetan relief efforts. New York's Tibetan community-in-exile was out in force, with young mothers in *chubas*, the colorful traditional dress, shepherding small children through the crowds. American Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns, some serene in their maroon robes, some a tad self-conscious, sat onstage behind the lamas.

In the midst of the group onstage sat the Gyuto Monks (the chanters), their faces familiar to me from their concert tour through the Boston area. Friends and I had prepared meals for them, including our best rendition of Tibetan-Irish beef stew. Spellbound by their resonant prayer of grace before the meal, my six-year-old daughter had peered shyly around the dining room door, before presenting them with homemade brownies. "Mummy," she whispered rapid fire. "Where are the girl monks? How do they make that spooky sound? Do they have any girls like me in their school?" All fifteen monks had beamed and made much of her.

Beginning the Path of Compassion teachings, the Dalai Lama drew a chuckle from the vast crowd when he told us to pay close attention and work hard if we considered ourselves to be on that path. And for others, if you're interested, fine; if you get bored, just take a little nap. Then he promptly launched into a thorny exegesis, in Tibetan, on the emptiness of existence and the theory of dependent origin, pausing only occasionally for his translator, Geshe (Dr.) Thupten Jinpa to wrestle it all into English. After one particularly lengthy statement (eight minutes and 33 seconds to be exact), His Holiness turned expectantly to Jinpa-La, who took a very deep breath — and received a wave of appreciative laughter from the audience as he launched into deep waters. The young scholar, now finishing a philosophy degree at a British university, was clearly equal to the task. Were we? As the days passed, some of us scribbled furiously in notebooks, and others sat motionless and intent, eyes closed and hands in *mudras*, and it seemed that the concentration deepened for everyone.

His Holiness emphasized that compassion should be complemented by intelligence and wisdom. He reminded us that compassion can take action in dealing with crime, misconduct or injury committed by others, but our confrontation of the wrongdoing should never come out of hatred. Rather, out of the realization that if we allow the perpetrators to continue in negative actions, they will suffer tremendously, as well as those they have harmed. "In compassionate consideration, and in humility," he continued, "we must analyze a situation and see the reason why counter-action must be taken. Considering my own situation, of national



struggle, for instance — our action becomes more effective if it is free from anger or negativity.”

But not free from sadness. One has only to look into Tibetan eyes, like those of Kalon (Minister) Gyalo Thondup, the Dalai Lama's elder brother, to sense the weight of their country's suffering. For four decades a senior political figure in their struggle, Kalon Thondup directed the Tibetan resistance movement in the early 1950s against the invading Chinese forces, while trying in vain to gain the Indian Government's support. Having studied language and political science in China, he remains a key liaison between Dharamsala and Beijing, trying to find a peaceful solution to the Tibetan issue. He is now Chairman of the Kashag, or Cabinet, of the Tibetan Government in Exile. At a small luncheon in New York, he told of his proud (and strategic) refusal to “be permitted” to return to one province of his homeland, while still barred from another for political reasons. “It is my homeland,” said this gentle man “and I did not consider it another's right to tell me where I could and could not go.”

Kalon Thondup also told the mesmerizing story of when he was eight, and the lamas came disguised as merchants to his parents' house, to test the identity of his two-year-old brother. It still amuses him, half a century later, that the senior lama, disguised as the lowest servant of the group, “hung about the kitchen, lugging firewood for our mother” and asked leading questions about the little boy — a little boy who headed straight for the lama and clung to his robes, crying when the party left, and then insisted for days that he was “going to Lhasa.”

When their entourage finally left for good for the holy city, Kalon Thondup recalls, they were accompanied by herds of wild deer and other animals, and flocks of migrating birds, all utterly unafraid since they'd never been hunted by man. Herds and flocks which have since been machine-gunned down for food, bringing many species to the brink of extinction, he reminded us impassively. Seventy percent of the old-growth timberlands clear-cut. Almost a million and a half people dead. Hearing him talk made us all the more determined to save what's left and try to help rebuild a new Tibet.

At the end of our days of ritual and prayer, the moon came full — visible if one searched judiciously between Manhattan skyscrapers. His Holiness concluded the initiation for World Peace with a Long-Life White Tara ceremony: Tara, the beloved Tibetan mother, goddess of compassion, and the “essential nature of wisdom” (prajna), also revered as a moon goddess, her light “dispelling shadows and defilements” as one 8th century prayer in Sanskrit has it. *Sacha tsachenpo ray.*

“The center of the temple and the center of the world are the same.” Yes, but what is *this* temple? What

is the American sangha? The teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha flood into this country from so many diverse sects and cultures, each with differing mores, social and religious traditions, and views of gender roles which often conflict with our own.

A small group of us met with His Holiness at his residence after the final ceremony. A respected elder of our community raised key issues from the American Buddhist Reform Movements: efforts to establish a clearer Code of Conduct for teachers and their sanghas, create healthier institutional structures and legal constitutions, confront teacher misconduct compassionately and effectively, and increase the number of qualified women teachers. In short, the American Dharma Revolution: the democratization and feminization of Buddhism in our country. His Holiness repeated his advice about trusting one's own deepest sense of the dharma way, challenging one's guru if he (or she) deviates from that — and reminded us with a smile that the concept of “Clear Light” is regarded in Tibetan Buddhism as female.

Before we parted, His Holiness presented us with white silk *katas* (scarves). I thanked him with a short venture into spoken Tibetan, having been coached the day before by a friend. I offer it here as a prayer you could repeat for His Holiness and his people, and for all beings involved, by simply inserting your own name in the blank;

“Natsö (\_\_\_\_\_) *khimsang-neh, Gyalwa Rinpoche, kut-tse shap-pe tenpai monlam shuki-yu. Natsö, Gyalwa Rinpoche, bö-la gyo-po peb-tubai renden shuki-yu.*”

“We of the \_\_\_\_\_ family wish you good health and long life, Your Holiness. And we hope that you may soon return to your country of Tibet.”

The Dalai Lama listened with that single-pointed attention of his, and responded with sudden intensity, “Thank you, thank you, I hope so.” Then turned with his wide familiar grin to ask Bob Thurman “Who taught her this? You, Thurman-la?” Even as Thurman (who trained as a monk for years in Tibet and speaks it fluently) shook his head, Geshe Thupten Jinpa saluted gleefully from another corner of the living room and we all broke out laughing. All of us just this: members of a farflung, tenacious and contradictory sangha, trying to learn each other's language, and speak in the common vocabulary of the compassionate heart. *Sacha...tsachenpo...ray. ♦*

*Diana N. Rowan is a writer and editor. She has served as an educational and management consultant and as a board member of various institutions, including a Zen center. She is a Consulting Editor of Tricycle: The Buddhist Review.*





*San Quentin Prison yard. Photo by Ruth Morgan.*



## Special Section: Prison Practice

Some months ago we put out the word for prisoners and former prisoners to write to us about their experience maintaining a spiritual practice in prison, and we are proud to publish the writing we gathered. There is nothing comprehensive about this section. With over a million people in prison in the United States alone (largest per capita prison population in the world), there must be all kinds of prisoners engaging in all kinds of struggles for a spiritual life, here and all over the world. All but one of our contributors are from the United States. The exception, a Tibetan nun, is also the only woman in this section. Our view here is focused in time as well as space: all our contributors are contemporary. But we remember that people have been praying and meditating in prison for thousands of years.

We all may feel imprisoned on occasion — by our bodies, jobs, families, poverty, sorrow, or isolation. But for these writers, being in prison is not a metaphor. We who are outside, at least for now, can be inspired by the example of people who practice the dharma under such adverse circumstances. And you who are in prison, at least for now, can know that you have made contact: we are connected.

The photographs are by Ruth Morgan, from a series she did at San Quentin Prison in California.

The Prison Dharma Network seeks to make the dharma available to prisoners. (See box, p. 23.) John Daido Looi, teacher at Zen Mountain Monastery, Mount Tremper, NY, has been doing the same for years. (See Mountain Record, Fall 1991, "Freedom Behind Bars," by Amy Shoko Brown.)

# PRISON MONASTICISM

by Fleet W. Maull

The Lama leaned forward from his brocade-covered teaching chair and said, "So, in your letter you said that you wanted to take the novice vows?" I nodded my head and briefly explained my reasons. Seemingly satisfied, Rinpoche asked me to kneel in front of the Buddhist shrine that had been set up for the *abbhisheka* ceremony and to focus my mind on the triple refuge of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, and on my aspiration to take and keep the vows. He then snapped his fingers and said, "That's it, you have made your commitment to keep the novice vows."

This was November 14, 1989, here in our prison chapel at the U. S. Medical Center for Federal Prisoners in Springfield, Missouri, where I have been incarcerated on drug smuggling charges since 1985.

The Venerable Thrangu Rinpoche, the abbot of monasteries in Tibet, Sikkim, Nepal, and Nova Scotia, had very generously made a special stop in Springfield to perform the *abbhisheka* ceremony for me while on the U.S. leg of a worldwide teaching tour. Since that day almost two

years ago I have been groping along, trying to discover how to live and practice as a monk in prison.

Several years ago, during a talk by Bill Bothwell, a visiting teacher from Los Angeles Dharmadhatu, one of the prisoners commented that we could see our prison situation as a kind of monastic experience. This comparison has been made frequently, and I tend to view my own

prison experience in this light. So I was quite surprised when Bill said "That's kind of a cute idea . . . It could be helpful. But it could be just more 'thinking' — further conceptualization of the situation which is actually just as it is." Bill's comment came from a fresh mind that had no need to romanticize the situation, and it stopped my mind on the spot.

It may be helpful at times to regard prison as a monastery, especially to the extent that it helps you see it as a total practice situation and as a potentially beneficial experience. In prison, as in a monastery, one is isolated in a separate community apart from the world.

One's life is simplified. There are no bills to pay and few responsibilities other than doing what one is told and fulfilling the duties entailed in one's prison job. One is



Fleet Maull and Thrangu Rinpoche, after the *abbhisheka* and vow ceremony.



also not involved in family life directly, although some prisoners try to remain as active in this regard as possible by means of correspondence and the telephone.

Most prisons, like most monasteries and nunneries, are single-sex environments, at least in terms of the prisoners themselves; however, the staff will most likely be of both sexes these days. (At this men's prison, over half of the 600 staff people are women.)

But apart from these similarities, prison is nothing like a monastery or any other environment designed for Dharma practice, and it could be just a fantasy trip to view it as such. Noise and chaos are its most pervasive qualities. Next come anger and hostility, and finally there is anxious boredom and an attitude of seeking entertainment and "killing time." There is also a feeling of hopelessness that casts a pall over the prison population, especially during the long winter months when the recreation yards close early and there is less to do.

I tried to describe what prison was like to a visiting friend who lived in a two-bedroom apartment. I told her to imagine cramming as many bunk-beds as possible into her living room and two bedrooms and then rounding up about 50 or 60 of the loudest, most inconsiderate people she could find to move in with her on a permanent basis.

The noise and lack of privacy are the greatest obstacles to doing formal meditation practice in prison. From 7 AM to 11 PM, the prison's overcrowded living areas are in an almost constant uproar. Even the quieter times are filled with the sound of "soft rock" music piped in over the public address system. In the evenings, the residential units take on the atmosphere of a nightclub, with loud card and domino games going on everywhere.

The halls are like busy streets on a hot Saturday night — everyone hanging out, yelling, hustling. It's very difficult to find a place to practice in all this chaos. In the large dorms, you can sit on your bunk in the dark, late at night or early in the morning. But during the day or early evening you would have to be able to stand both the noise and everyone looking at you. To practice during these hours, I used to clean out one of the sanitation closets where the mops, brooms, and trash barrels are kept. I would set everything outside, so that I wouldn't be disturbed, take a chair in, and sit for an hour or two. The noise level was still about the same, but the closet was at least a defined space in which to practice with a little less distraction. The doors to these closets have a small window, so people would look in; and also some people, not seeing that I had set everything outside, would burst in through the door to get a mop, only to be shocked by seeing me sitting there. During the summer the trash closet/meditation cell was like a sauna. I would sit with sweat pouring down

my face, into my eyes, everywhere. Looking back, I am amazed that I stuck with it.

I practiced in the closet for several years before I got a single room in the summer of 1987. Sometimes on weekend days I would even manage four or five hours of sitting practice. This "in-the-closet" practice was ironically quite public. A lot of people probably thought I was a little strange, sitting in the trash closet, but they got used to me being there. I have often recommended this option to other prisoners, but I only know of one who ever tried it. I was quite proud of him at the time. Most people are just too self-conscious to practice so publicly. Now when someone on my unit gets into practice, I encourage them to use my room while I am at work.

Prison chapel facilities could be ideal places for formal sitting practice, but unfortunately their use is very tightly scheduled to meet the demands of various religious practitioners: Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Native American, and others. The staff and the chapel environment tend to be dominated by Christian — especially fundamentalist Christian — values and programming. It is not uncommon to encounter prison chaplains who regard Buddhism as some kind of foreign and even dangerous cult.

Fortunately the attitudes here are not quite that rigid, and with some gentle persistence and the help of two other native Buddhist prisoners, a young man from Nepal and a middle-aged engineer from Taiwan, I was able to establish a Buddhist meditation group in

the prison chapel in 1986. For several years, we had an hour on Saturdays to meet in the chapel. We would just put a few chairs in a circle and sit. Eventually we were able to expand that to two hours. We managed to build a

portable Buddhist shrine, and we even acquired a number of meditation cushions.

About nine months ago, the chapel started staying open one additional evening each week, and we were able to obtain another hour for sitting meditation on Wednesday evenings. We now have a sitting and teaching program (a combination of talks or Dharma videos and discussion) on Saturdays, and just sitting on Wednesdays. On the first Saturday of each month, we do a three-hour session of sitting and walking meditation.

This being primarily a medical facility with a very transient population, our group has remained small with a constant turnover through the years. We now have three very regular members and several not-so-regular members. Until recently, the nearest Buddhist group or center able to provide some support to our group has been the Kansas City Dharma Study Group. They have only been able to visit us twice so far though, since it's a four- to five-hour drive each way and they are very

*People thought I was a little strange, sitting in the trash closet; but they got used to me being there.*



involved in just keeping their own group going amidst the pressures of city life, jobs, and family responsibilities.

Just recently though, a Buddhist meditation group has formed right here in the Springfield community. Fourteen men and women sit together weekly at a Unitarian church. A number of their members have come to sit with us on four occasions now, and we are all quite excited about having found each other. Two of them have now been approved as regular religious volunteers here at the prison, and we are looking forward to sharing resources and conducting joint programs.

We are extremely fortunate. Most prisoners trying to pursue the Buddhist path are completely on their own in non-supportive and even hostile environments where they are lucky if they can find a way to sit alone, much less together with other prisoners.

Although it is difficult to do formal practice in prison, the environment may be ideal for an ongoing discipline of mindfulness: prison is so intense and inescapable that if one has any experience of awareness practice at all, it becomes a constant reflection of one's state of mind, moment by moment. Instead of a monastery, a better metaphor for the prison practice environment might be the charnel ground of Indian and Tibetan Buddhism.

A charnel ground is a cemetery where the bodies of deceased persons are left out in the open to be devoured by scavenging animals. From antiquity, these haunts of jackals, vultures, and demons have been considered ideal practice places by yogins who would build their huts there and make meditation seats from piles of bones, in order to meditate on impermanence and to conquer their most basic fears. Over the years, the charnel ground has become a metaphor for any extreme practice situation full of obstacles. It is said that if one can practice under such difficult circumstances the potential for realization is greatly increased.

I have the utmost respect for prisoners everywhere who make any attempt to practice the Dharma. Although Buddhism and meditation are still regarded with indifference and even outright suspicion in most prisons here in the West, we are nonetheless fortunate to be allowed to practice at all. Our Dharma brothers and sisters who are political prisoners in a number of Asian countries are forbidden any outward form of Dharma practice under penalty of torture and death. That these courageous men and women maintain their inner practice and keep the essence of their vows for years under such adverse circumstances is the greatest inspiration to my own small efforts at practice under much easier circumstances.

In the dormitories where most prisoners live, it only takes a few inconsiderate people to make life miserable for everyone else. In most prisons, the large number of informants prevents any kind of organized management of their own world by the inmates, and one sim-

ply has to put up with all the obnoxious behavior or be prepared to fight a lot and do a lot of time in the "hole" (in segregation units). One could take the radical approach of intentionally going to the hole for the purpose of doing retreat practice, but even in the hole the cells are mostly double-occupancy.

I've been extremely fortunate to have one of only four single rooms on a 65-man ward for the last three years. While this provides only partial refuge from the chaos just outside the door, it has allowed me to complete the *ngondro* (foundation) practices in the Kagyu lineage of Tibetan Buddhism and receive the *abhisheka* empowerment.

The room assignments are based on seniority and staying out of trouble. Any kind of infraction of the rules can lead to losing your room and starting over at the bottom of the seniority list. Of course, one could also be transferred to another institution without warn-



*Fleet Maull (2nd from right) leading prison meditation group in prison chapel.*

ing, where one would start all over again in a crowded dorm. This reminder of impermanence has been a great inspiration to practice (and also a source of some guilt when I don't practice).

I was also fortunate to have a strong foundation in Dharma practice before coming to prison. My initial efforts in meditation practice started in 1974. I took refuge vows in 1978 as a student in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, and completed a Master's Degree in Buddhist and Western Psychology in 1979.

I would like to relate something here about my past lifestyle as a drug smuggler and a Dharma practitioner. The discontent I felt as a young man in the 1960s led me, like many others, to search for some kind of genuine experience, something beyond the artificiality that seemed to pervade the conventional world.

This search led me into the counter-culture and drugs as well as toward an exploration of Eastern religions. The former took precedence over the latter for a long time, and by the time I did begin to meditate on my own I had been involved in serious alcohol and drug abuse for many years.



I eventually turned to small-scale smuggling to support an expatriate lifestyle in South America and later to finance moving back to the United States, in order to go back to school, with a new wife who was pregnant with our first child. By the time I met my teacher and took refuge, I no longer felt the burning political and social alienation of earlier years, but I was profoundly addicted to alcohol, cocaine, and easy money.

For a number of years I led a dual life as an active member of a Buddhist sangha that encouraged its members to develop sanity in all aspects of their lives on the one hand, and as a secret smuggler/addict on the other. The few friends in the sangha who knew about my secret life continually encouraged me to leave it behind. Addictions, obviously, are not easy to let go of though, and by the time I quit it was too late to get off unscathed.

Past associations eventually brought about my indictment in May of 1985 on multiple charges of smuggling cocaine and conducting an ongoing criminal enterprise. With the strong encouragement of my teachers and advisors in the sangha, I decided to face the results of my past behavior, even though

a long prison sentence was almost a certainty. That is a decision I have never regretted. I am just glad that I finally had developed enough sanity and humility to accept such guidance.

I started sitting daily in a two-man cell in a hellish, overcrowded county jail where for seven months I awaited trial and sentencing, and I have been sitting daily ever since. When I finally acquired a single room in 1987, I was able to begin again the *ngondro* practices (hundreds of thousands of prostrations and recitations), for which I had received transmission in 1981 but had only barely begun on the outside. I would arise at 3:30 AM in order to do the practices while it was still quiet.

My door has a small window and people do look in sometimes. The guards come by to count heads at 5 AM, so they see me doing full prostrations on the floor beside my bed. In the middle of a session of 1,000 prostrations, with sweat pouring off me and my heart pounding, I would be gasping for breath and feeling very shaky, vulnerable, and out of control. This was quite scary. Generally, these are not the kind of feelings one cultivates in prison — it's just too threatening.

It took me about 15 months of intensive practice, sleeping only four hours a night, to finish the *ngondro* practices. This was a powerful time of purification and of intense mental and emotional energy that was difficult for me to handle in the already claustrophobic prison world.

During the approximately one year that I had to

wait for the *abbhisheka* after finishing the *ngondro* practices, I began taking the five lay precepts formally on a daily basis for the first time (not killing, stealing, lying, misusing sex, or using drugs). Before coming to prison, I had only worked with the precepts briefly in group retreat situations. Other than that, I had just ignored them.

I began trying to live by the lay precepts in a general way upon entering federal prison in 1985; however, when I began working with them formally on a daily basis in 1988, I found that this added a powerful new dimension to my mindfulness practice. What came into focus more than anything were my habitual patterns of false, harmful, and useless speech.

My growing interest in monastic practice and the experience of formal precepts practice led to a strong desire to take the novice monastic vows, at least for the duration of my prison time. Given my situation, it didn't seem reasonable to make a commitment beyond that point. I wanted to develop a practical and beneficial model of prison monasticism, with the idea of making such a model available to other interested prisoners at some point — possibly through a little book of some sort, or maybe even in the form of an actual

order for prison monks some day.

I fully realized that before I could consider any such grandiose ideas further, I would have to actually do it myself — “fully and properly” as my teacher, the late Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, would often say. So I was very happy when Thrangu Rinpoche agreed to let me take temporary novice vows for the duration of my time in prison. Upon release, I would then decide whether to continue on a monastic path or return to lay practice.

The novice monk keeps precepts that address three areas of behavior: refraining from actions that may be harmful to others, refraining from actions that may be harmful to ourselves, and refraining from actions that distract us from the discipline of moment-to-moment mindfulness in all our activities.

While the first two areas are of paramount importance, it is in the third area that the general environment of the monastic life is developed. This third area is a process of simplifying one's life. My advisor for monastic practice, Bhikshuni Pema Chodron, director of Gampo Abbey in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, speaks of this process as creating an unpainted canvas of our life, where our habitual patterns of egocentric behavior then stand out in sharp contrast.

I know from experience that trying to arbitrarily impose some form of strict discipline on myself normally results in fits of rebelliousness, followed by pangs of guilt and compulsive self-recrimination. This being one of my

*The guards come by to count heads at 5 AM, so they see me doing full prostrations on the floor beside my bed.*



habitual neurotic scenarios, it seemed best to avoid it. While making every effort to keep the basic five prohibitory precepts as purely as possible, the approach I have so far taken with the monastic precepts (restrictions having to do with diet, dress, speech, etc.) has been to begin somewhat loosely and then gradually tighten up through a trial-and-error process of learning what best encourages mindfulness. I find that I develop a genuine sense of appreciation for the disciplines and am able to integrate them into my life as something natural and desirable, even as a source of joy, rather than as some kind of externally imposed set of limitations.

It has now been almost two years since I took the vows, and it has taken me fully that long to really commit myself to working with this practice. Not being able to wear monastic robes in prison, I found it very easy to forget that I was indeed a monastic person. Nothing in the environment recognized this major life change I had made, so it was a challenge to continually remind myself of it.

At the time of the vow ceremony, Thrangu Rinpoche had said that my regular prison clothes (khakis) would suffice for monastic robes and that if shaving my head would be a problem in the prison environment, I could just keep my hair relatively short. He also suggested that it would be permissible to eat a moderate meal in the early evening if this furthered my studies in the late evening, even though the traditional practice is not to eat after midday.

It was hard to overcome my habits of compulsive eating and late night snacking at first, but I eventually decided not to eat solid foods past midday. When you

Knowing how difficult it is to practice and maintain one's inspiration in prison, I saw the need for some kind of support group for prison practitioners, and in 1989, with the help of some outside Sangha friends, I founded Prison Dharma Network, a nonsectarian support network for Buddhist prisoners and prison volunteers. We provide prisoners with qualified correspondent meditation instructors from the various Buddhist traditions active in North America which emphasize the practice of sitting meditation, i.e. Zen, Tibetan, and Theravadin.

We also distribute donated Buddhist literature free of charge to prisoners, based on interest. (We are happy to receive donations of books.) When possible we will connect prisoners with local Dharma centers or community resources in their area. Interested prisoners and non-prisoners should write to:

Clark Fountain, Corresponding Secretary  
Prison Dharma Network  
P.O. Box 912, Astor Station  
Boston, MA 02123-0912

—Fleet Maull

begin to experience the quality of spaciousness that simplifying your life provides, it actually becomes a natural inclination. So you just simplify further. I did take fruit juice in the evenings and even enjoyed a pint of ice cream at 5 PM on commissary night, our once-a-week night for shopping at the prison canteen. One shouldn't be too rigid in these matters after all.

Probably as a result of past abuses, I have recently developed a mild inflammation in the duodenum which has necessitated my taking a light meal in the late afternoon. To my relief though, this has not caused a resurgence of compulsive eating habits — not yet, anyway. At this point, I don't feel I'm making sacrifices as much as naturally letting go of what is unnecessary.

Of course this is something I have discovered in fits and starts, in between periods of tenaciously holding on to old ways. It's my way to be dragged kicking and screaming into something new, only to discover that I like where I have arrived when I get there.

For months after taking my vows I resisted cutting my hair very short, and then as soon as I did cut it short the first time, I let it grow out again. I also kept my mustache for awhile. It was hard to give up some degree of normalcy in what can be a very strange environment, where many prisoners are into peculiar hair trips (including shaved heads) anyway. A lot of the resistance was just simple vanity and my usual resistance to change.

When I finally started keeping my hair very short about a year ago, there was a great sense of relief in just going along with the discipline and simplifying further.

There are still times when I wonder why I am doing this. Prison is hard enough without looking for ways to make it harder. Sometimes when I see and smell the prisoners preparing the standard late-night snack of nacho chips and cheese sauce heated in the microwave, I long for this momentary relief from boredom and loneliness. Sometimes I would just like to forget the whole thing and spend my time hanging out, watching TV, reading novels, etc.

In the midst of such thoughts, I come back to the reality of how little real satisfaction there is in such things. I remember how wretched I felt when such activities were the substance of my life. Reflecting on that, the simple and spacious quality of the monastic discipline takes on a refreshing quality. I still have very little idea of what it really means to be a monk in prison, but it's a relief and at times even a great joy just to be alive and practicing Dharma in prison. ♦

*Fleet Maull is completing a Ph.D. in psychology. He founded the National Prison Hospice Association, beginning with a program in Springfield Prison, and he teaches in the GED program in the prison education department. He can be contacted at: #19864-044, P.O. Box 4000, Springfield, MO 65808.*



# RED TARA COMES TO SAN QUENTIN

## TAKING BUDDHIST VOWS IN PRISON

*Jarvis Masters is a prisoner on Death Row in San Quentin. His story, "Joe Bob Listens," appeared in the Fall 1991 issue of Turning Wheel. Last year he took his vows as a Tibetan Buddhist from the Tibetan teacher, Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche, in prison. The following story of Jarvis' "empowerment ceremony" is told in different parts. The introductory section is by Melody Ermachild, a Buddhist herself and a member of his legal team, who arranged for the Rinpoche's visit. Then comes Jarvis' narration of the visit, and inserted into it are excerpts from Melody's transcription of what the Rinpoche said during the ceremony itself.*

### INTRODUCTION

by Melody Ermachild

When I got a call telling me that Chagdud Rinpoche would be able to come to San Quentin Prison to perform an empowerment ceremony for Jarvis Masters, one of my inmate clients, I rushed up to the prison to let him know that it would be the next day, so he could prepare himself.

Jarvis' first reaction was fear. He wanted me to call and cancel the plan. He felt unworthy. I said that if he did not deserve the ceremony, if he was not a worthy person, no Tibetan Lamas would be coming around to see him. Just relax, I said. Just allow this good thing to happen. It will benefit you. Maybe the fact that you feel unworthy is a good thing, since the ceremony involves a lot of confession of wrongdoing. I think it's good you're scared, anyone would be. It shows you are taking it seriously. This is not happening on *your* schedule. You are just here. The Rinpoche is an old old man, he is ill, he is often not even in America. He happens to be nearby and ready to come to you tomorrow, so tomorrow is the day. So many things can still go wrong. If it happens at all it will be a miracle.

The associate warden had already denied the request for the ceremony to take place inside a locked room, where the Lama would have been able to touch Jarvis. Unlike Catholic and Jewish baptisms, this Buddhist ceremony is not recognized by the Department of Corrections. The ceremony would have to take place by phone, through a glass window. The Rinpoche would not be able to bring into the prison any of the sacred objects with which he usually does the ceremony. On my way out, I asked the friendly older man who guards the visiting room if he would please give us

the far telephone the next day in order to afford us some privacy. I told him that a real Tibetan Lama was coming to the prison. He said he had seen the movie, *The Golden Child*. "Is it going to be sort of like that?" he joked. "Is Eddie Murphy coming too?"

I arrived at the prison to find the Rinpoche and his interpreter, Tsering Everest, waiting on a hard bench in the crowded hallway outside the door to the visiting office. The hallway was jammed with waiting visitors — smoking, talking loudly, babies crying. The Rinpoche sat quietly, telling the beads of his rosary with his brown wrinkled fingers, his bright eyes taking in everything around him. He was quite a sight, in his floor-length burgundy skirt and his grey topknot and grey frizzled beard. As the noon-hour time for the door to be opened grew closer, the crowd, which had been waiting since early morning, grew more tense. The Rinpoche himself had waited two hours. Right in front of him, two young women began to berate an older man in a loud dispute over their place in line. They cursed in vulgar street language, while the Rinpoche watched quietly.

With several people in line listening to him, the Rinpoche told a story of a Chinese prison in Tibet. He said the Chinese made thousands of Tibetans dig deep holes. The hole was the prison of the person digging it. In the hole they were fed, in the hole they slept, exposed to rain or cold. In the hole they died, and the hole became their grave. Sixty thousand people, the Rinpoche said, were so imprisoned in Tibet.

At last we were processed. The Rinpoche removed his shoes and jacket for searching and passed through the metal detectors. I ran ahead to start the process of having Jarvis brought out. By the time Jarvis appeared in the dim light on the other side of the scratched and dirty glass, the hall was already filled with visitors — mostly wives and children — at the other windows. Loud voices echoed in the hallway, cigarette smoke wafted over us. This was the setting for the ceremony.

The Rinpoche's interpreter picked up the phone on our side of the window. Jarvis leaned towards the glass, his phone pressed to his ear, a dim light barely illuminating his face from above. His smiling and slightly worried eyes were clearly visible.

"Is your mind clear?" the Rinpoche asked.

\* \* \*



# THE EMPOWERMENT CEREMONY

by Jarvis Masters

When I was offered the chance to receive a spiritual empowerment by a Buddhist Tibetan Lama, the first feeling I remember was one of being undeserving. Then came fear at the thought of this ceremony being done where I was, in a violent state prison — San Quentin.

I was only a beginner in Buddhism. Through corresponding with people on the outside I had learned how to practice Buddhist meditation. It was, for me, a quiet practice that I kept to myself. To the extent that I could, I kept it secret from my fellow prisoners and the prison guards.

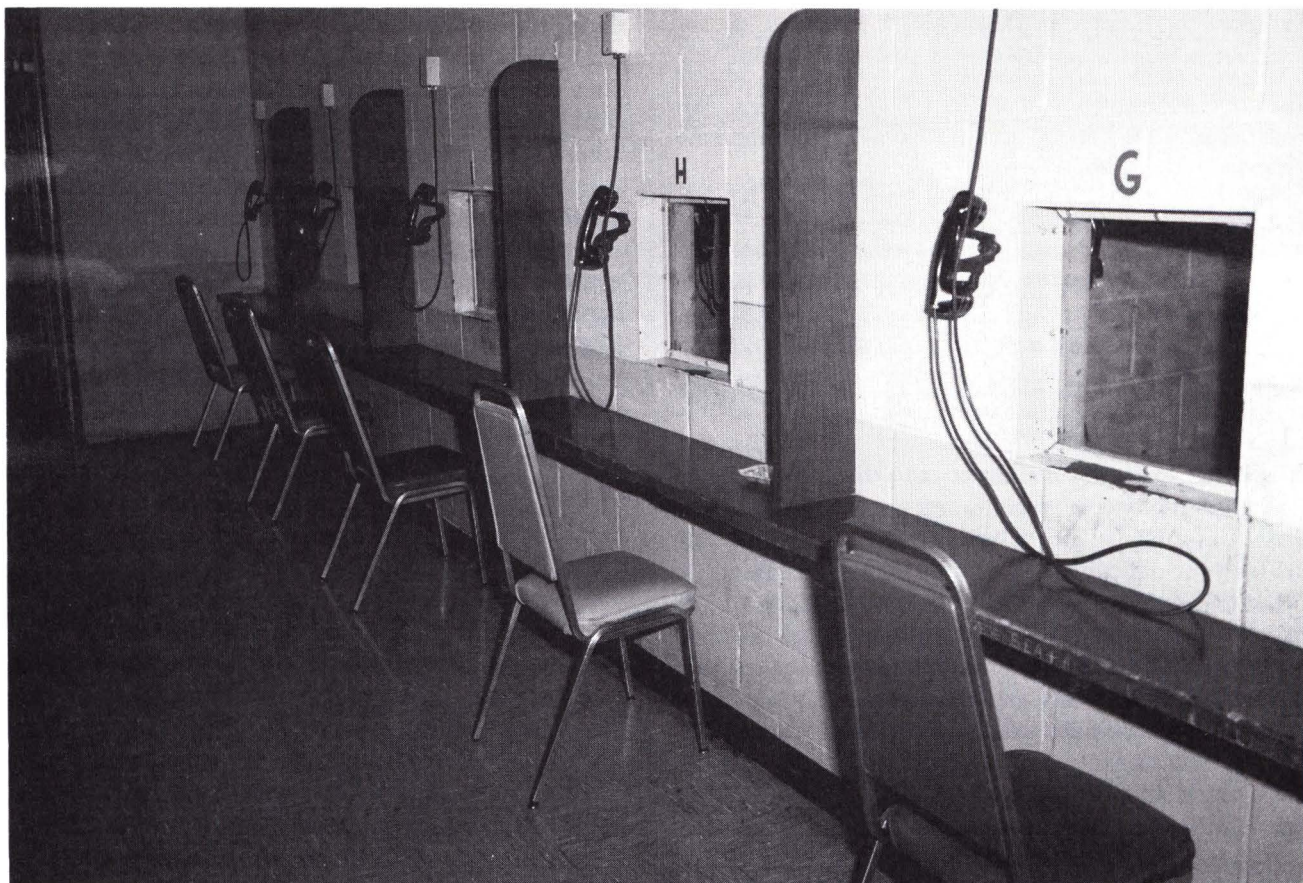
After eight years of incarceration, I felt a real fear of calling myself a Buddhist and of being seen by my fellow prisoners in a lotus position, praying or meditating. I was especially afraid of being seen receiving an empowerment. While my heart cherished this opportunity, other voices inside me questioned the ceremony. Could this be just a phase that I was going through?

Would I later betray myself and the sacredness of this empowerment? *Was* I a Buddhist? Would I take vows that would eventually call upon me to sacrifice my life? How would I resist all the violence of the prison?

In prison, no one believes that conversion to religion is real. Most prisoners think that anyone who catches a sudden belief in a religion is playing a game or conning their way out of the system.

I had spent almost a year overcoming these doubts, one by one, through my practice and through the teachings of Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche, the Lama from whom I would receive my empowerment. Yet somehow they had all reappeared on the morning of the ceremony. Sitting on the floor of my cell trying to meditate, I was scared. The prison echoed the voices of hundreds of prisoners, cursing and arguing all at once.

I just sat still, repeating the prayer of the Red Tara. "Illustrious Tara, please be aware of me, remove my obstacles and quickly grant my excellent aspirations." With each repetition I would search within my Tara prayer for the divine strength to dispel all my worries, to prepare me to openly accept my empowerment, to help me embrace this day of my first proclamation of Buddhism. But despite this prayer, I wanted to keep my practice secret, so it would remain pure in my heart when I sat in meditation. I wanted to protect the most



Visiting room at San Quentin Prison. Photo by Ruth Morgan.



tranquil hour of my prison life.

I had only met the Rinpoche once before. I had been deeply touched by that first unexpected visit of his to San Quentin to see me. The rules of the prison allowed us to speak only by phone in a small visiting booth, through a glass window. During the visit, I had felt the warmth in the Rinpoche's heart just by looking at him, and a trust in the Rinpoche's words. I hoped that through his showing me how to practice in prison, I would one day be able to openly receive my empowerment.

Now I felt fortunate to be sitting on the floor of my cell awaiting this opportunity. I remembered what someone had said to me long ago: "All you need is a pure heart. It's what's in your heart that counts the most. Quietly listen for it." This is what I was doing.

It was noon on the day of the ceremony when my name was called out. A guard handcuffed me and escorted me to the visiting building of the prison. I repeated to myself the prayer of Tara as I went, right up to the moment my eyes met the Rinpoche's, for the second time in my life.

I sat down facing the Rinpoche with a glass window between us. With him was Tsering, one of his close students, who was there to translate for him. Melody, a friend and a Buddhist herself, was also there to celebrate this experience with me. We greeted each other warmly and joyfully as other prisoners' visitors looked on.

I picked up the phone. Tsering already held the phone on their side of the booth. With a bright loving smile on her face, she asked how I was doing. I smiled back and assured all of them that I was doing fine. We were all smiling. Tsering then turned to Lama Rinpoche to receive his words.

She looked back at me. "The Rinpoche is asking if your mind is clear."

"Yes," I replied.

\* \* \*

*Excerpts from the Empowerment Ceremony, as transcribed by Melody Ermachild:*

**Rinpoche:** It doesn't matter we can't touch. The power of the ceremony is in your hearing the words. I ask you to look at things in a very broad way. Don't blame others for your difficulties. . . . You'll notice that an angry prisoner is really sad because he is making bad karma. All of that is behind you now. From right now, go forward. Before all beings make a promise: I won't be angry, I won't hurt anyone with my actions. That's my priority every day, even if it costs my life. If you keep this promise you don't create any more future unhappiness for yourself. In your own words compose your promise and say it three times, before God, Angels, Buddhism, and everyone. This provides for your safety. Like if you don't drink poison you don't get a bellyache. . .

**Jarvis:** From this day forward I will not hurt or harm other people even if it costs my life.

**Rinpoche:** The second vow: From this day forward I will try to end the suffering of all human beings and other beings. . . . We relate to our bodies since babyhood as solid. This is part of our karma, but not the whole truth. The empowerment changes our minds about our bodies. Now it is alive — now it is dead and gone. There is space in between the molecules. That's the body too. Vast openness, vast emptiness. There is continuity between the body and dream; the body and death and rebirth. Underneath there is sameness. Emptiness is the basis for everything — in it is wisdom, which doesn't get born and die but is forever true. Like the sky. . . . We label words good or bad, but it's all just wind on our vocal chords. The sound of the sky is the sound of emptiness. All sound is an expression of emptiness and so is your body. All are one — a ray of sunlight is part of the sun.

If it's hard to understand, think about dreaming. This life is only a dream. . . . Everything is in how I think of it. For example, a prison — you can think it's bad, but a person who lives in a beautiful house kills himself. Everyone sits somewhere, whether beautiful or miserable. . . . Hell is not elsewhere. Hell is one's own nightmare — hell is the result of hatred within one. There are two ways to change the mind. One is to think, think, think. One is to let go of thinking and just settle. The essence of all lives on earth is the same. They all taste the same. The concepts of the mind are what give us the idea that some lives are miserable and others are wonderful. Like movies, which are really only light on cellophane. Realize all this is really the movie of your mind. Try to understand that the nature of our body is deathless and your nature is true, faultless, and pure. The essence of mind is open, present. Thoughts are just firings of your brain. Like this window glass — if you look at it you won't see anything. If you look at thoughts you won't see perfection.

**Jarvis:** Helping others could cost me my life today or tomorrow in here. Can I qualify my vow by common sense? Can I use my intelligence not to cause my own death?

**Rinpoche:** If you help one person today and it costs you your life, you've only helped one person. But if you train your mind to help the best way, you'll help many — 100, 1000, countless people. There are three ways to be: harmless, helpful, pure. Eventually you will understand your own pure nature. Before you understand it you will feel heaven and hell. It's like being surrounded by 100 mirrors — if we are dirty and ugly we will see others that way; if we are beautiful others will be also. It's all a function of mind. The way to practice is to see everyone as pure whether they hurt or



help you — even animals, the guards, see their *perfection*. Hear every sound as perfection, as Tara talking. Everyone who is born will die. . . . Every moment is a chance to be harmless, pure, and helpful. Tara: you are her, completely perfect . . .

At the end of every day confess your bad thoughts and actions and recommit yourself. Every time you do something good, instantly give it all away. Every mistake — confess it, let it go. It's like swimming, just keep going.

**Jarvis:** I feel pure when I am with you, but it's easy to forget.

**Rinpoche:** Ask for support from Tara. . . . From Tara come blessings. From her body, liquid and light pour into you. She is with you, right over your head. She washes you, cleanses you, fills you with bliss . . .

**Jarvis:** [asks about a monk he saw on television who immolated himself because of the Gulf War.] What does it mean?

**Rinpoche:** He was showing his love, to stop war. For him it was good. For you it might not be — you might not be ready. His body to him is like a suit of clothes. We are not all like that.

Today as you've made these promises, you've become like family to us. We'll help you. You're in our prayers always. We'll always think of you.

**Jarvis:** I really feel that. Thank you, Rinpoche.

\* \* \*

Our visit lasted close to two hours. After the ceremony ended, it became very difficult to hear on my side of the phone. There was a tremendous amount of conversation going on around me. All those other inmates speaking through a chain of phones to their visitors made me struggle to hear the voice of my own visitor. "Wow," I wondered, "was it this loud during all those minutes of my empowerment?" It felt as though I had just taken ear plugs out of my ears — as though I had just re-entered the door of prison reality again.

At the end of my visit, I spoke to Melody, who had been sitting close to the window all during the empowerment ceremony. I thanked her for being there and asked her to thank the Rinpoche and Tsering later for all the blessing they had brought to me. I told her that I had already done this, but had stopped short of speaking fully because I felt tears of gratitude in my eyes, and didn't want to be seen crying. Melody understood and said she would. She hung up the phone and departed, waving goodbye with the Rinpoche and Tsering. I waved back.

As I waited for my escort to take me back to my

housing unit, an inmate called over to me and asked if I was a practicing Buddhist. I paused. Just as I began to answer, a prison guard came and stood between the inmate and me to listen in. When I looked at this guard, his eyes wandered away. "Sure I am," I said to the prisoner. "Aren't we all, in some way or another? Life," I said, as I looked at the guard, "life, I think, may just put a piece of Buddha in us all."

The guard turned to me with a surprisingly nice smile, and then walked off. I was amazed! I turned to the window where the Rinpoche's chair still was, and felt a powerful sense that he was still there. I bowed three bows to the empty chair. ♦

*Jarvis Masters writes from Death Row at San Quentin Prison. He can be contacted at: C-35169, Tamal, CA 94974*

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## DOORS

by Robert Aitken

*The following is an excerpt from Aitken Roshi's words at the BPF Institute panel on "What is Engaged Buddhism?" Panelists were asked to share an event from their lives which taught them something of the dharma in a social-action context.*

I have been visiting an inmate named Larry Pagán, in Halawa high-security prison in Hawaii. Larry, who is of Puerto Rican descent, is known to his guards and to the administration as "Larry Págan," which is ironic, considering his Christian background. He's very enthusiastic about zazen and we sit together once a week in the little visiting room for about twenty minutes. It is, as you may imagine, heavily enclosed, but nonetheless we can hear the very loud sounds of steel doors slamming outside. We sit in chairs.

One day, after a particularly noisy zazen, I said, "Larry, how do you handle those sounds of the steel doors slamming?"

He said, "I remember that there are many doors."

Well, Larry has another five years to go on his fifteen-year sentence, and he will be 34 I suppose when he gets out. He is already a student of the dharma, and a teacher of the dharma. So, I gassho to Larry. ♦

*Larry Pagán can be contacted at: HCF, 99-902 Moanalua Hwy, Aiea, HI 96701.*

*Robert Aitken is one of the founders of BPF. He is the teacher at the Diamond Sangha in Honolulu, and is active in bringing the dharma to prisoners.*



# SPIRITUAL PRACTICE IN PRISON

by Ladon Sheats

*As a conscientious objector to nuclear war, Ladon Sheats has served many prison sentences, ranging from a few weeks to a year, for acts of nonviolent resistance at nuclear weapons facilities. For the last 20 years or so, his life has been devoted to this quiet, faithful, unsung resistance to war. The last sentence he served was one year in a prison in downtown Los Angeles (his third one-year sentence) for trespassing onto a missile silo on ancient Indian land in South Dakota. Ladon writes from a Trappist monastery in Colorado.*

What spiritual practice is possible for me in prison depends on the circumstances. Since I non-cooperate with the prison system, I have served most of my sentences in disciplinary segregation (the "hole" in federal prison jargon) where I have been locked down 23-24 hours per day, and that usually with one other prisoner. What is possible for me is dictated by the noise level and the presence of other prisoners. Usually, it's too cacophonous for reflection or prayer. During my last four-month stretch in a county jail, the only time the television was off was between 4 AM and 7 AM. The guards accommodated me by awakening me about 4 AM. As I walked back and forth in the common area, I prayed. And then I read by the light filtering through the bars from a book of prayers sent by Trappist monk friends. I gained strength from the fact that my time of prayer and reading coincided with theirs, especially since we were in each other's prayers.

In the county jail where I awaited trial for praying inside the high security area at Pantex where nuclear bombs are assembled, I had a different experience. I was in a large, windowless room which sometimes housed undocumented aliens from Mexico. Often I was alone for days at a stretch. One morning after praying, I was whistling a song of gratitude. I was indeed happy. Suddenly a loud voice boomed over what I discovered was a *two-way* communication system: "Sheats!! Do you have to whistle so \*!#?!\*#!\* loud?!"

Strength comes from other sources too. I correspond with a wide circle of caring friends. Our connectedness is a continuing source of strength to my spirit. During my 45-minute exercise period walking around a 20-foot by 20-foot room with lots of windows, I saw that a mourning dove had built her nest between the torn screen and the window. Each exercise day I felt her beauty, and I learned from her patience. My life choices flow from the love of that which I shall never see.

To be touched by beauty helps me maintain some

sense of balance in dismal circumstances. Knowing this, friends send pictures of nature, and of children dear to me. I affix them to the bottom of the top bunk so that I can see them (and the guards can't) when I lie on the bottom bunk. In a recent imprisonment, I had a flower garden in my gallery. Once, in 24-hour lock down, in a 5-foot by 8-foot room in a federal prison, I had a window that looked out onto a small flower garden. There were birds, for whom one prisoner smuggled bread crumbs. And a lovely tree. I watched its leaves change colors and fall to the earth at the same time that a dear friend on the outside was dying.

My exercise was outside in a yard bounded by three brick walls and a fence. Sensing my joy in the autumn chill, the female guard would sometimes "forget" to return me to my cell at the end of my 45 minutes.

Others have not been so sympathetic. When I am led in handcuffs down a long hall to appear before the disciplinary committee to explain my refusal to work to help the prison operate, I pray for patience. I pray that I will treat them with the dignity every person deserves. I do not distinguish between such prayers and those that happen in this monastery where I write these words, or the prayers I have prayed where nuclear bombs are made. Each is a longing of my heart.

A friend recently asked: "What gives you hope during the hardest times?" I do not hope for measurable results. The writings of Thomas Merton on detachment and Thich Nhat Hahn on non-attachment have helped me. At the end of our time of prayer inside the high security fence at Pantex, while security guards with rifles yelled for us to stand, I prayed in silence: "Into your hands I commend these moments as our best response to these difficult times." My reflections and my acts of will were met by Spirit's gift of *metanoia* — transformation. Not once during the ensuing year of imprisonment did I wonder if it was worth it.

The hope which lies at the heart of my faith is articulated by Rubem Alves:

*Hope without suffering is  
naiveté,*

*drunkenness.*

*Suffering without hope is  
despair,*

*disillusionment.*

*But hope flowing out of suffering is  
to hear*

*the melody of the future.*

*And faith is to dance it.*

Whether in prison or out, prayer-as-communion strengthens me to walk the path I have accepted as the truth for my life. ♦

*Ladon Sheats, 1012 Monastery Rd., Snowmass, CO 81654*



## BUDDHISM BEHIND BARS

by Temujin Kensu

I am one of the growing number of incarcerated Buddhists in the Michigan prison system. My life is an endless stream of visual and aural input that confirm so many of the Buddha's teachings. "To live is to suffer" comes to mind. The first of the Four Noble Truths is surely the standard in this place. "Suffering is caused by Ignorance and Blind Desire" trails close behind, for prison is nothing if not a place of suffering, ignorance and blind desire.

After a particularly trying day, I retire to my cell to seek solace in the sutras and the inner quiet that comes from meditation. My thoughts (or my no-thoughts) are jarred by the sounds of heavy iron doors slamming, of large brass keys jangling, of booted feet on the walkway, or by the screams, taunts, shouts and threats of hundreds of tormented beings. I also sadly know that in the time between sunrise and sunset some of those taunts and threats will be followed by physical responses. Perhaps fatal responses.

I am reminded of a young man who occasionally would question me on matters of life. Always I tried to be there for him, but the Dharmic path was too foreign to him. He could not set aside his anger long enough to learn, and a short time later he died from a stab wound. How sad for his parents that their young son, who should only have been here a few short years, was taken from them so cruelly. Truly life is suffering.

But there is joy in my heart too. As I teach others, I watch the calming of their spirits and I hear the softened tone of their speech. When their release dates draw near, I know they will be allowed to go because the parole board sees the dramatic change in their behavior and attitude. I have had students go from being so violent that a wrong look incited an attack to being so nonviolent that they refused to kill the cockroaches that roam about our cells and crawl on our faces when we sleep.

I take no credit for this change, for I have done nothing more than share the Dharma. I must admit that I do feel a certain amount of satisfaction at hearing others remark about the difference in the Temujin of now and the one of

many years ago. I never forget that even this is due not to my efforts but to the efforts of the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and saints who came before me.

You would be surprised to learn how small the return normally is on our requests for books and materials. With 49 students in this prison alone, we are woefully undersupplied, but we struggle on. As a test we once sent out requests for literature to twenty Buddhist groups and twenty Christian groups. We received five books from Buddhist groups and *seventy-one* books from Christian groups.

One man is more alone in the midst of hundreds here than is a man alone in the middle of the Sahara.

I'd better close now. It's almost lights out and I'd hate to lose my yard privileges for the rest of the week.

With great Metta, In the Supreme Dharma,

*Temujin Kensu, Temple Abbot  
189355, P.O. Box E, Jackson, Mich. 49201*



*Holding cell, San Quentin. Photo by Ruth Morgan.*



# A TIBETAN NUN IN GUTSA PRISON

by Namdol Tenzin

*Namdol Tenzin, age 18, is a nun from Tsamkhung Nunnery in Lhasa, who was arrested, imprisoned and tortured by the Chinese for participating in pro-independence peace marches, and for celebrating the Dalai Lama's Nobel Peace Prize. Though she was finally released without a prison sentence after five months' torture and interrogations, it was with such severe restrictions on her mobility and freedom of religion that she decided to escape into exile. She is now living in India. Following is her own account of her ordeal.*

When I was 15, I enrolled in Lhasa Ani Tsamkhung nunnery. When I joined, there were 116 nuns. Seventeen of us have since been expelled for participating in pro-independence peace marches and for celebrating the conferment of the Nobel Peace Prize on His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Of these, two were initially imprisoned: myself and Jampa Dolkar. Kunsang la was later arrested and imprisoned for protesting our arrest. She is still in prison.

Before our arrest, and in the wake of repeated pro-independence demonstrations, a "work team" consisting of four men and two women came and stayed on in our nunnery for about four months. Their mission was "political education" and, of course, investigation. While they stayed on, there was no possibility of getting on with the normal religious functions of the nunnery. The daily schedule, under their program, consisted of meetings at which Chinese publications, magazines and newspapers were read out loud and discussed. Those among us who had taken part in "separatist" activities were condemned and threatened with expulsion. They declared that "it is one or two separatists among you who bring a bad name to the nunnery and threaten to bring about its ruination." The Dalai Lama was roundly condemned at each session, and the prospect of an independent Tibet was laughed off as wishful thinking and as an undesirable return to an old feudalistic path which, by the grace of the Communist Party, Tibet was, in their view, rid of.

About that time (January 1990), Losar (Tibetan New Year) was approaching, and Jampa Dolkar and I asked for permission to go home to celebrate it. We were told that we were first required to attend a meeting on the following day. But on that day we found

not a meeting about to start, but six men who hustled us into a jeep and drove us to Gutsa Prison.

Kunsang la from our nunnery protested our arrest. She had written her protest on a piece of paper and thrown it into the section of the nunnery where the Work Team members lived. Though the letter was written anonymously, her handwriting gave her away, and so she too was arrested, and to this day remains in Gutsa Prison.

We reached Gutsa Prison around 3 PM and our interrogation began in earnest. I was asked, "What reason did you have for performing a *lhasang* (fire ritual) and throwing *tsampa* (roasted barley flour) into the air?" I replied that we did so in celebration of the Dalai Lama's Nobel Peace Prize, which is a sure sign that Tibet will be free soon. This angered the interrogators beyond words. I was showered with blows, even on the delicate parts of my body. When I still gave the same answer to repetitions of the questions, they started using sticks and electric batons. Many times I fell

unconscious, but each time they revived me and repeated the tortures. I was also asked why I took part in protest rallies when already there was unrestricted freedom of religion in the land. They told me I was deceived by the Dalai Lama, that he left Tibet of his own free will, and was

free to come back any time he desired. I was told that I was fortunate to be born in liberated Tibet, and that I did not know how happy I was because I did not know the past.

Interrogation on the first day went until 6 p.m. Thereafter, it was conducted for about two hours every three days. At each session about three or four policemen in civilian dress would ask questions and inflict torture. The interrogation was mainly directed at finding out names of others who participated in the rallies and in the celebration of the Dalai Lama's Nobel Peace Prize.

An especially painful torture consisted of wiring one finger on each of my hands, while I was seated on a chair, and connecting them to an electric installation. As the handle on the installation was turned a full circle, I felt every single part of my body being seized by a powerful bolt of electric current. The intensity of the shock would fling me across the room, invariably rendering me unconscious. The interrogators would, however, try to revive me by slapping me and throwing water on me. Often the wires would snap, and then

*They told me I was deceived by the Dalai Lama, and that I was fortunate to be born in liberated Tibet.*



they had to reconnect them. People subjected to this method of torture most often had to be taken directly to the hospital. This instrument of torture, I learned later, had been newly installed.

There were already about 500 prisoners in Gutsa, all females but for a few children, and almost all undergoing varying sentences for politically offending the Chinese. About 40 of them were nuns. While we awaited sentencing, we were kept in solitary confinement. There were also 18 children in the prison, no older than ten, who had been put there for committing petty

*The intensity of the shock would  
fling me across the room, invariably  
rendering me unconscious.*

offenses. They were given some education of the kind available in village schools, but there were more beatings than teachings. Many of the children were near death due to excessive beatings. Yet the Chinese authorities told us that the children were being educated so that when they came out they would be good citizens.

There were a few Chinese prisoners too, but none of them remained there for long. They were, of course, not political prisoners. On one pretext or another, a friend or relative would come to fetch them.

After about three months at Gutsa Prison, some officials from the criminal court in Lhasa came calling out my name. They asked me questions, and I was expected to answer as tutored by my interrogators, who also remained present throughout. I did not conform to the line and was again tortured. These Lhasa officials determine whether the stage for imposing the sentence has been reached. I was not sentenced but was temporarily released for four days, then re-arrested. I remained in solitary confinement and was subject to torture for a further period of one and a half months, after which I was finally released, without ever having been sentenced.

Life in the prison was harsh. Besides the solitary confinement and the interrogatory torture, there was barely enough to eat. For breakfast we were given a mouthful of steamed bread and a mug of black tea. Lunch consisted of a couple of leaves of green vegetable boiled in plain water. Dinner was the same as breakfast. Sometimes there was no lunch. For bedding we were given a thin dirty cotton quilt to use on the concrete floor, whether for blanket or mattress.

On my release, I was handed over to Lhasa Police, who in turn handed me over to local authorities. I was allowed to return to my family with these conditions: I was prohibited from practicing religion by myself or

with anyone else; I could not enter any nunnery for the rest of my life; I could not leave the village without obtaining prior permission and a pass from the authorities; and I could not talk with any fellow villagers. This last condition was imposed to prevent me from talking about the situation in the prison. I was specifically warned against talking about torture in the prison.

The effect of these conditions was to alienate me from my own people even while I lived among them. Because my basic human rights were so violated, and because I was made a social outcast, I felt I had no alternative but to escape into exile, and I made up my mind to do so.

Accordingly, I asked permission to go to Lhasa on the pretext that I needed medical treatment. I was allowed to go, and while in Lhasa, I went to my nunnery, incognito, for a last glimpse of it. I told two of the nuns of my determination to escape into exile, and they said they wanted to come with me. Everyone in the nunnery was living in constant fear of being arrested.

We left Lhasa at dusk dressed in men's clothing, posing as traders. We paid a truck driver 250 Chinese rupees for each of us. At the border town of Purang, we were lucky to meet 13 other Tibetans, including two nuns from Kham, who were also escaping into exile. Here we got a Nepalese guide whom we paid 1,200 Nepalese rupees per person. To avoid detection by the border patrols, we crossed into Nepal in the middle of the night. After walking for 25 days, we came to a road, and spent the last of our money to take a bus to the nearest Nepalese town. We reached India in November 1990. ♦

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*Today, like every other day, we wake up empty  
and frightened. Don't open the door to the study  
and begin reading. Take down a musical  
instrument.*

*Let the beauty we love be what we do.  
There are hundreds of ways to kneel and kiss the  
ground.*

— Rumi (13th Century Sufi poet)  
translated by John Moyne and Coleman Barks



# NO TURNING BACK

by John Buhmeyer

The path of Buddhism has led me through many twists and turns of self-discovery and self-deception, from moments of sublime clarity to the pain and frustration of prison.

My first encounter with Buddhism took place in Japan, where I was stationed with the U.S. Air Force from 1970-72. I was fascinated with the ancient Zen monasteries and temples, the spare beauty of Zen art and the sense of inner peace that seemed to pervade the entire culture.

Coming back to the hard-driving life of a graduate student at the University of Chicago, I found myself longing for those glimpses of serenity I had experienced in Japan. I began to read books on Zen, I discovered a small Zen meditation group, and I learned to meditate.

In 1973 I went to a public talk given by an odd, gnomish man from faraway Tibet — Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche. I was so impressed that I became involved with the Chicago Dharmadhatu, where I remained for several years. I also spent about a week at Shasta Abbey, a Zen monastery in California. I was searching, searching for a way through the senseless muddle of my life, yet at the same time afraid to commit myself, to really face myself.

In 1979, a move to Maryland precipitated a crisis in an area of my life I had been doing my best to avoid for many years, my sexual identity. (This crisis later led to my present incarceration.) After the storm broke, I practiced hard and made real progress. I attended several levels of Shambhala Training, took Refuge Vows, attended the Kalachakra *abhisheka*, and generally felt connected to the Dharma and good about myself. I even started feeling comfortable with my sexuality, reaching out to form several satisfying relationships.

Then my past actions caught up with me and I wound up with a ten-year prison sentence. For a long time I wallowed in a sea of despair, unable even to think about practice. When I arrived at the Maryland House of Correction in 1987, I began the long road back. Lucky enough to have a single cell, I began to practice sporadically. When I was practicing I felt much calmer and more able to cope with the stressful environment of prison.

As I slowly progressed up the steep slope back to stability and sanity, and as I read of prison groups forming in Springfield, Missouri and Greenhaven, New York, I thought I might try to organize a meditation group at

the House of Correction. From time to time other inmates would observe me meditating or find out I was a Buddhist, and several expressed an interest in learning how to meditate. But my attempts to get permission from the prison administration to organize a group were simply ignored. Finally, after several years of trying, I received a terse note from the prison chaplain, an ex-guard, who baldly stated that no such group would be permitted, and that any inmate wanting to meditate could jolly well do it in his cell. What those inmates living in dormitories were to do was left unsaid.

Several months ago I was transferred to the pre-release camp where I am now. My present situation precludes any formal practice as I am in a dormitory with 69 other men. Nor is there any room available in the camp for me to use. I am presently working on a job

which entails a good deal more physical labor than I have ever done before. The whole situation was at first very difficult for me but I have learned to see it as an excellent opportunity to put meditation into action. By focusing on the moment and practicing mindfulness, I have experienced much less resentment than before.

After my release in about a year I plan to go to Zen Mountain Monastery. How long I will stay I cannot say. It could be for a month or it could be for good. The idea of entering into a practice environment totally, of finally making a real commitment, is very appealing to me, but I know that the reality may be quite different from the fantasy. Therefore I plan to go slow, one day at a time, just as I have learned to take life in prison.

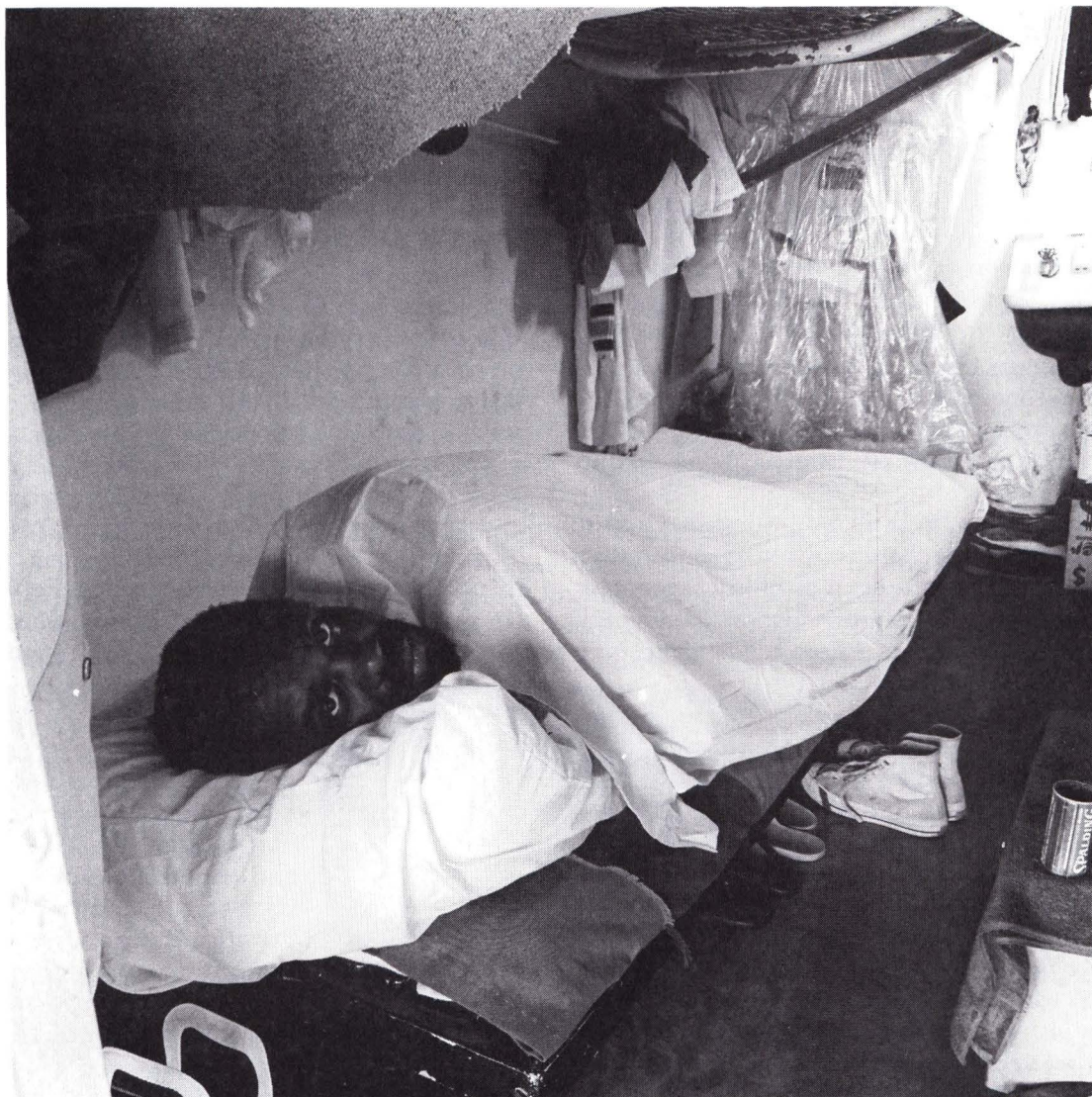
Practice has brought me no earth-shattering insights; I have experienced no satori at the sound of a key turning in a lock, yet over the years I have changed. Like the slow, almost undetectable growth that pushes the lotus blossom up from the muddy pond bottom toward the light above, I have undergone a gradual opening, a barely perceptible alteration in my thinking, a slow disruption of my habitual behavior patterns. I have approached and withdrawn, approached and withdrawn from the teachings, but each approach has taken me a little closer. Practice has made me face many things about myself I tried very hard to avoid. There is nothing easy about practice. It is, rather, as the Vidyadhara says, a streetcar racing downhill without brakes. Once you begin, there is no turning back. ♦

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John Buhmeyer can be reached at: #189502, P.O. Box 536, Jessup, MD 20794

*I have experienced no satori at the sound of a key turning in a lock, yet over the years I have changed.*





Two-man cell, San Quentin. Photo by Ruth Morgan.

## Idea

*Here I am in the darkness, waiting for whatever will happen to begin. I am here waiting.*

*A boy on a bicycle is carrying an armful of flowers to a building. Grey shade upon grey shade descends over the city. He bicycles straight ahead, without moving, straight ahead, straight ahead.*

*My head is twisting around and around to see what is not there in the invisible blackness. From out of a head (my twisted head) some quick broken thought escapes.*

*There is something in a dark room. It is my brain. They say that it is waiting, that it is going to have an idea. But perhaps it is not here at all; it may have been taken away or destroyed by someone. And if there were a brain in here, how would we know? It is invisible in the darkness, and makes no noise.*

*These are the thoughts that go through my head as I wait for some kind of idea that would . . . No, such thoughts are forbidden.*

— Noah de Lissovoy



# WAKE UP!

by Mark Davis

*Mark Davis is one of five Arizona Earth First! activists who were convicted of vandalizing a Flagstaff ski lift on sacred Navajo land. Plea bargaining had resulted in the dropping of more serious charges of conspiring to sabotage nuclear power plants and an Arizona water project. He is now serving a six-year term in federal prison. The following statement is reprinted from the Earth First! Journal.*

A few days ago I stood in front of a federal judge as he sentenced me to six years in prison on monkey-wrenching charges; I had destroyed machinery with the intention of slightly slowing the accelerating destruction of our planet.

A few days from now I will begin to serve my term. I am in terrible pain at the thought of separation from my two little daughters. I am a severe claustrophobe, and I lost 40 pounds in the two months of incarceration that followed my arrest. Prison will be difficult for me. But none of it matters much in the context of the crisis in which we find ourselves.

We humans are collectively killing this planet and dooming our own children by indulging in an orgy of consumption and denial. The killing is quite legal. Whatever fragile legislative protections are enacted to slow it are abandoned when it becomes economically inconvenient to retain them. We yearly release millions of tons of chemical and radioactive poisons into our food, air and water — poisons that in some cases carry the threat of harm for 100

times longer than humans have had written records. It is, we are informed, not economically feasible to do otherwise. The Smithsonian Institute recently informed us that one-third to one-half of all existing species will become extinct in the next few decades. The Earth, in plain terms, is dying. The battle over environmental issues is not about logging jobs versus hiking trails, as our captains of industry would have us believe. It is about the continued existence of life forms higher than the cockroach on this planet. We are losing.

We are gobbling the seed-stock of life and pretending that the free lunch can go on forever. The biosphere in which our species evolved has served to sustain us quite well for millennia. Yet those who seek to stop the brutal assault on our shared home are condemned as radicals by men whose self-proclaimed conservatism is really nothing more than a demand to be allowed to enrich themselves at any cost.

An intelligent conservative knows some deep truths, including the illusory nature of free lunches and the inadvisability of taking irreversible actions without understanding the consequences. Our behavior is neither intelligent nor conservative.

I have learned through working with the dying and the addicted the incredible power of denial in the human psyche. Denial is what allows the addict to consume more poison, allows the smoker to assign the pain in his lungs to a temporary cold. The dying classically progress through certain easily recognizable stages on their journey. Denial is first, followed by bargaining, anger and finally, for those fortunate enough to reach it, peace and acceptance. We are, as a culture and a species, mostly in the denial stage, with a tentative reach into bargaining as we grudgingly accept the need to recycle a very few of the most convenient items we demand from our industries. Denial seldom solves anything, but it does allow an extended period of pretend well-being and good feelings. Our cultural denial is reinforced by an economy that is structured in such a way that survival can only be assured by growth.

Growth by its very nature means an increase in the speed and efficiency of environmental destruction. All of our political and corporate leaders owe both their wealth and their power to growth. Anyone who says aloud that infinite growth on a finite planet is impossible is ridiculed. Denial has become official policy.

If what I and my three colleagues did has no effect other than to further damage an already tattered social contract, then I apologize for my part in it. That was not

the point. I acknowledge the necessity of courts and laws, and accept my prison term. But I am not sorry.

We are in desperate trouble on this Earth, and unless the thick veil of denial is torn, and quickly, we will march ourselves and the rest of the beings with whom we share this sweet planet into possible extinction. Our actions were an attempt, ill-conceived or not, to wake our dreaming society. The effort was made not for personal gain but on behalf of all beings and their unborn offspring. I hope someone is listening. ♦



*Mark Davis. Photo by Brent Boone-Roberts.*

*Mark Davis can be contacted at: 23106-008, Federal Correctional Institute, RR#2, Box 9000, Safford, AZ 85546*

*Peg Millett, an Earth First! singer who is serving a three-year sentence for aiding Mark, can be contacted at: 23118-008, 37900 N. 45th Ave., Dept. 1785, Phoenix, AZ 85027*



# MY SHRINE'S ON THE FOOTLOCKER

by Bill Dyer

My involvement with Buddhism came from an enjoyment of reading. At the age of 14, I had committed a very serious crime, was subsequently arrested, certified to stand trial as an adult, convicted, and sent to the Missouri State Penitentiary in 1978. Over the years I have learned to "do time" by writing colleges and universities requesting old or damaged books on subjects of interest to me. These books not only provided a means of escape from the routine of prison life, but provided a source of education in a system where any programs above the G.E.D. level are hard to come by.

In 1988 I had written several letters requesting books on Chinese philosophy. I received a number of books, and the most interesting were those dealing with Buddhism. They seemed aimed towards developing a proper state of mind, but they were often hard to follow. *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* seemed like it had a great point to make, but I didn't have a deep enough understanding of Buddhist thought to appreciate it.

I wrote a few letters to local colleges asking if there were any basic books on Buddhism available. A woman on the staff of one of these colleges forwarded my letter to the Institute of Buddhist Studies in Berkeley, California, and they sent me a little book called *The Teaching of Buddha*. Reading this book was like discovering common sense right in front of your face. It covers Buddhist principles in such a basic way that anyone can grasp the concepts. These principles were more than just religious ideology — they were truths, plain and simple. People suffer because of attachments of one sort or another. This whole prison is full of people who couldn't control their attachments, their greed, lust, hate or whatever.

By synchronicity or karma, a professor of the Chinese language with whom I had been corresponding wrote to me that he had just learned of a new organization, The Prison Dharma Network. Through PDN my name was matched with that of Gelong Tsultim Tondrup, an American who, while serving with the Peace Corps in India in 1970, became a monk in the Tibetan tradition.

Tsultim soon became more than just an instructor; he turned out to be a friend. One of the important lessons I learned was that, monastic vows or not, Tsultim was still a person. Monks don't just cash in

their personalities for robes. This helps me believe that perhaps I too can gain control of my thoughts, curb my attachments, and maybe even attain enlightenment in this lifetime.

Tsultim started me on a practice of *shamata-vipashyana* meditation twice a day, for twenty minutes in the early morning and an hour in the evening. I sit on a small square of carpet on the floor of my cell. It *sounds* easy, and for a couple of weeks I was actually in love with the *idea* of meditating. After that, boredom started to set in, and that's when the meditation really begins.

I've been practicing now for seven months. I have a small shrine set up on the wooden footlocker they give you here. It contains photographs that Tsultim has sent: a Vietnamese Buddha, H.H. the Dalai Lama, Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche riding his horse, several other rinpoches, and of course Tsultim. He said this was like displaying a lump of coal on a shelf of diamonds. The way I see it, the diamonds had to start somewhere.

The prison administration here hasn't really reacted in a negative way to my Buddhist practice. Even when a *mala* (string of prayer beads) was sent to me, they passed it right

through, to my surprise. The Education Department approved a Dharma-related Tibetan language course, and Buddhist books have come right in without any problems. I have received a few strange looks from guards if they happen to pass the cell while I'm meditating; and if they see me working sticks for an I Ching reading, they really get to scratching their heads. But overall, they don't mind as long as I'm not causing any problems.

I wouldn't go so far as to say I'm a totally new person: I still smoke and get disgusted with myself for doing it, and I'm a long way from renouncing the world. I think I'm on the right path though, and things will get better as time goes on. That diamond I mentioned earlier wasn't made in a day, but it *was* made. And for some reason I believe that once the change has begun, it can't be stopped. ♦

*Bill Dyer can be contacted at: Reg. No. 35324, P.O. Box 900, Jefferson City, MO 65102*

*I have received a few strange looks from guards if they happen to pass the cell while I'm meditating.*



# I FEEL HUMAN

by Scott McGauley

I am currently at the Federal Correctional Institution at Fort Worth, Texas. I have about a year and a half to go on an eight year term.

I became interested in Buddhism, specifically Zen, after watching the movie "Sharkey's Machine," which contained a character who studied Zen. Before that I knew absolutely nothing about it. As is my nature, I quickly read up on Zen and felt it described what I had felt for a long time, but couldn't put into words. Other than reading, however, I didn't practice until I came to this neck of the woods.

None of the institutions I have been to have been particularly helpful in providing time and locations for zazen; however, this place has been the best. The chaplain here was kind enough to order a couple of zafus and some literature. None of the inmates are hostile about my practice and many are quite interested, though I'm leery of lecturing on Buddhism when I really don't know what I'm talking about. There is one Theravada Buddhist here from Thailand, but he

doesn't meditate. There is also a Hindu who meditates occasionally, and I believe one or two Taoists.

I have been trying to get a visit from a Zen priest from the Dallas Zen Center, and though he is willing, the chaplain has been putting off the proper paper work for over six months, which has me a wee bit upset. I remind him every week to no avail, and so I am thinking of filing a lawsuit.

Practicing zazen has helped me become more relaxed and more in control of my temper, and I have for what seems like the first time developed a human conscience. Before I came in, I lived in a nightmare world of drugs, alcohol, and complete indifference to those around me who loved me. I treated people as badly as I was treating myself, if not worse. Now, thanks to zazen and staying off drugs, I feel human. And though I have shed many tears over the people I've hurt and the harm I've done myself, I wouldn't trade my position now for anything. The future, though kind of rocky-looking, also seems full of many positive possibilities. I can't wait to be released, to practice zazen and to practice being human. ♦

Scott McGauley can be contacted at: #40487-066, Mail Box #18, 3150 Horton Rd., Ft. Worth, TX 76119-5996.



*Talking with mirrors, San Quentin. Photo by Ruth Morgan.*



# THE OLD LADY WHO WOULDN'T SELL OUT

by Denise Lassaw-PalJOR

"There's nothing we can do about it," the corporate lawyer said. "I researched every angle and she has Grandmother rights to that land."

"We've offered her more money than it's worth for parts, but she says no. She calls it seed land, says it's worth more than the whole planet," said the second corporate lawyer. "Hump, it's the strangest deed I ever saw but it's legal. The old Grandmother clause . . . says she owns all the minerals, water, everything, right down to the core of the planet!"

"Well, OK, that's it. We've wasted too much time already. We need the rest of the materials at the new site. Just go around her place. Get to work boys!"

"Yes sir!" said the engineers, and off they went.

First they attacked the planet using the giant Sucko-Vac which separated out the various materials on the surface, like oceans, top soil and forests. But they left her land alone, five thousand acres surrounded by orange survey tape. Then they used the laser cuber and cut off chunks of the planet. Once through the Vac and out of gravity range, everything was processed down to atomic particles and beamed to Condoalaxy. Everyone was building these days and the planet de-construction business was booming.

The old woman sat on a hill in the middle of her land. All her human neighbors had sold out and gone, but as many of the creatures as she could accommodate were on her raft. Because now it was a raft — this large square of forest, mountains, and few lakes whose borders were an abyss. The day after the de-construction work was done the lawyers had offered her another chance to sell. How could she do that! This was seed land! But they no longer remembered what they meant. They said she would be real happy in a Condo-cluster, "rich and happy." But they went away, and now it was time to work.

It was twilight. She sang the old song, and as she repeated each round her voice grew stronger, grew deeper . . . now she started to feel it again, the power. Her heart beat like a drum, her breath, poem, song, the vibration of that heart drum flowed out . . . out to the borders . . . out over the abyss. That song spread out, filling the place, the empty space where the rest of the planet had been. A ghostly aura, shining with the pain of an amputated limb. She sang the earth. She sang the seas. She sang a planet back into existence. Bit by bit her land expanded, curving gently into a horizon. The animals walked over the land; streams stretched out their courses; new mountain ranges felt

the starry night. And by morning it was complete. That was the first night.

In the new day she chose good clay and kneaded it until it was useable. She made a lot of clay. That night she sang for the clay and molded many beings with her smart fingers. At dawn she sang a blessing for what she had created . . . and let them go. Seeds blew in the wind; animals took hesitant steps; birds sailed out, but no humans.

"No, I won't make them again," she thought, "so much trouble!"

In the evening she pulled a large hill over herself for warmth and settled in for a long sleep. ♦

*Denise Lassaw-PalJOR lives in a log cabin in Anchor Point, Alaska.*

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## *The Layman's Lament*

*Shame on you Shakyamuni for setting  
the precedent  
of leaving home.*

*Did you think it was not there —  
in your wife's lovely face  
or your baby's laughter?*

*Did you think you had to go elsewhere  
to find it?*

*Tsk, tsk.*

*I am here to show you  
dear sir*

*that you needn't step  
even one sixteenth of an inch away — stay  
here — elbows dripping with soapy water*

*stay here — spit up all over your chest  
stay here — steam rising in lazy curls from  
cream of wheat*

*Poor Shakyamuni — sitting under that Bo tree  
miles away from home*

*Venus shone all the while*

— Judyth Gong

reprinted from *Mind Moon Circle*, Journal of The Sydney Zen Centre, Autumn, 1991



## LESSONS FROM "LITTLE TIBET"



### *Ancient Futures: Learning from Ladakh*

by Helena Norberg-  
Hodge

Sierra Club Books,  
1991, \$25

### Reviewed by Charlene Spretnak

If you have ever been called unrealistic for imagining a human society characterized by secure yet flexible networks of interdependence, harmonious interactions with nature, balanced respect for both sexes, and mind-states of gentleness and joy, you can take heart in Helena Norberg-Hodge's account of her early years in Ladakh, also known as western Tibet. Ladakh, which is now part of the Indian state of Kashmir and Jammu, opened its borders only in 1975. Norberg-Hodge, a linguist who went there with a European documentary film crew that year, became the first Westerner fluent in Ladakhi. She has returned every summer since then in order to initiate and nurture the Ladakh Project, which seeks to counter the standard destructive forms of modern "development" with cultural renewal and appropriate technology. The project also seeks to export the wisdom of traditional Ladakhi society to the "developed" world.

The first part of *Ancient Futures* is a recounting of Norberg-Hodge's perceptions, skepticism, and gradual reorientation as she immersed herself in a largely timeless world that for centuries had maintained a stable population (via widespread polyandry, plus the monastic option for men); a Buddhist orientation toward life; sustainable agriculture in an arid ecosystem; a non-monetary flow of barter and other reciprocity; interfamilial associations that help members at times of birth, weddings, and funerals; and informal village self-governance with rotating leadership. Most of the work within the family or village was done in a relaxed, spontaneous manner by either sex. At first Norberg-Hodge discounted the frequent smiles on Ladakhi faces, assuming that no people could be *that* happy. But she discovered over time that Ladakhis were indeed sincerely happy, secure, and wryly playful. She also had assumed that our modern sense of personal freedom,

achieved via an assertive breaking-away from constraints of family and hometown, was the effective way to self-realization. Eventually she came to see that the extended families and closely knit relationships were liberating rather than oppressive: secure in positive self-images, Ladakhis were able to accept others with all their differences.

We all know, however, of examples of oppressive dynamics in extended families and interwoven communities; clearly, the quality of mindstates is as important as the particular social structure. Ladakhis traditionally address nearly everyone as "mother," "father," "brother," or "sister," depending on age. Norberg-Hodge says she has "never observed in Ladakh anything approaching the needy attachment or the guilt and rejection that are so characteristic of the nuclear family." Similarly, she notes that Ladakhis have "no word to express our Western preoccupation with an exclusive, passionate, romantic attachment," although she adds that they are neither sexually repressed nor promiscuous. The high value placed on maintaining

*At first Norberg-Hodge discounted the frequent smiles on Ladakhi faces, assuming that no people could be that happy.*

friendly relations with all beings is reflected in their insulting term for "one who angers easily." One can readily see in all this the influence of the Dharma, which is ubiquitously expressed via fluttering prayer flags, *chortens* (stupas), mantras chanted silently or quietly to the rhythm of hand-held, spinning prayer wheels, and public dramas teaching Buddhist concepts. Almost no one except the monks, however, has a meditation practice; "popular Buddhism" instead is the general mode of transmittal and observation, as is the case in most nominally Buddhist countries. That such impressive results could flow from simple presentations of the Buddha's teachings is a testimony to the power of the Dharma.

The second part of *Ancient Futures* is a factual account of the effects of the modern model of "development" that has been imposed on Ladakh since the late 1970s by the Indian government, with the usual blessings and incentives of the international (actually Western-plus-Japanese) monetary institutions that shape the current transformation of the Third World. A cash economy has been introduced with an influx of tourism plus a supply of subsidized rice, sugar, and gasoline. Jobs that yield wages are centralized in the capital, Leh, so that extended families are often broken up as workers go to the city in order to live what is



supposed to be the good life and to help their families. Living quarters are cramped in Leh, and the pace of life has accelerated. Children are robbed of their self-esteem in Eurocentric schools and taught to respect only knowledge that is (said to be) universally applicable, rather than specific to their own ecosystems and culture. As the fabric of local interdependence has disintegrated, so have traditional levels of tolerance, cooperation, and caring. Competition for jobs and political clout in the centralized sector has made Buddhists, Muslims, and Christians tend to regard each other now as enemies. Individuality has become suppressed as the orchestrated global monoculture imposes images of the modern person — complete with Barbie and Rambo dolls for the children.

In the final section of the book, Norberg-Hodge analyzes the dynamics she has observed. She notes that the modern model of development assumes that its processes are starting from zero rather than being imposed on a fully formed culture worthy of care and respect. This kind of development results in economic dependence, cultural rejection, and environmental degradation, substituting a single monoculture and economic system for regional diversity and self-reliance. As is typically the case, Ladakhis have plummeted from contentment and relative self-sufficiency to a new and painful awareness that they occupy the low-

est rung of a global economic ladder — in which, by the way, the middle rungs do not really exist because of growing ecological constraints, plus the concentration of wealth and power at the top. Norberg-Hodge's analysis and proposals for alternatives, such as decentralization and community-based economics, read like a manifesto of the international Green politics movement (except that her text is much more gracefully written than the genre of political declaration!). This insightful book should be required reading for all development agencies and macroeconomists, and I hope its urgent message reaches the three-quarters of the human family called the Third and Fourth Worlds.

"Engaged" Buddhist readers of this journal may also be interested in two recent and related books: *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology, and Development*, by Vandana Shiva, and *In the Absence of the Sacred: The Failure of Technology and the Survival of the Indian Nations*, by Jerry Mander. For information on the Ladakh Project, contact: International Society for Ecology and Culture, P.O. Box 9475, Berkeley, CA 94709, ph. 510/527-3873. For information on the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO), write to their San Francisco Coordination Office: 347 Dolores St., Suite 206, San Francisco, CA 94110. ♦

*Charlene Spretnak's most recent book is States of Grace: The Recovery of Meaning in the Postmodern Age (HarperCollins).*



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# BPF'S TIBET PROJECTS: AN UPDATE

by Gordon Tyndall

It's hard to believe that 12 months have gone by since my last "Progress Report" on BPF's Tibetan Projects, and that it's already time for another one. We now have two projects: in addition to the Tibetan Refugee Project, we now have the Tibetan Refugee Revolving Fund.

The Tibetan Refugee Project continues to provide much-needed assistance to four Tibetan Settlements. At Tashi Palkhiel in western Nepal we continue to provide twice-a-day servings of milk and other basic supplies for the cooperative nursery, and we are now sponsoring the education of 35 children from the neediest families (up from 25 last year). A similar program is in place at the Cholsum Settlement in northwestern India. At the Kham Kathok Settlement, also in northwestern India, we assisted ten children who had arrived from Tibet suffering severely from malnutrition. In a recent letter the President of the Settlement wrote, "All the ten malnutrition children are now extremely in good health. But the new academic session has 15 new faces. Out of them six have red-line symptom of malnutrition and six have worms. These affected children are given special treatment — more fruits and vegetables." So the work of saving children goes on.

In Tezu in northeastern India, we are covering one quarter of the food costs for fifty elderly and infirm refugees.

We have been able to send \$4,200 every four months for these programs, thanks to the generosity of many BPF members and other friends, including a \$2,000 grant from the Buddhist Churches of America. We hope that this support will continue.

The Tibetan Refugee Revolving Fund was established by the National Board of BPF at its January 1991 meeting. Its purpose is to provide meaningful employment for the refugees in the 52 Settlements in Nepal, Bhutan and India. This will be done by making low-interest loans available to certain Settlements so that they can purchase equipment such as weaving machinery, build simple buildings to house the equipment and purchase the necessary supplies. These loans will be repaid over a three-to-ten year period. As the initial loans are repaid, the funds will be available for loans to other Settlements.

After a slow start because of our failure to obtain any foundation support, the project has begun to make good progress in the last few months. My letter of September 1991 to all BPF members has produced gifts of \$8,500 and pledges of \$8,300 (as of Nov. 30, 1991), which will be met with a matching contribution. Our goal is \$120,000. We will make our first loan of \$5,000 to the Cholsum Society, which will permit them to expand their weaving facilities, and we are negotiating with the Kham Kathok Society regarding a somewhat larger loan.

You'll be glad to know that, thanks to the help of the



*"The Reincarnation of Khensur Rinpoche," a film by Tenzing Sonam & Ritu Sarin. Photo: Pablo Bartholomew.  
(See announcement for Tibet film festival, page 45.)*



East Bay Chapter in getting out the big mailing, our administrative and fundraising costs for the Fund have been kept to less than two percent of our total gifts and pledges. I suspect that is a record low!

The gifts and pledges which we have received for the Fund have ranged in size from \$3 to \$1,500, with several in the \$1,000 to \$1,500 range. As you can imagine, my eyes always light up and my heart beats faster when I see a check or pledge of the larger variety; but I was most touched by the \$3 gift. It consisted of three worn dollar bills accompanied by an unsigned, pencilled note which said, "I'm a cleaning woman and I can't give much but I wanted to help your noble cause." I shall treasure that note!

If you haven't given or pledged already, I hope that you will find it possible to support one or both of these BPF projects. Please let us hear from you soon. The address is:

Buddhist Peace Fellowship  
c/o D.G. Tyndall  
88 Clarewood Lane  
Oakland, CA 94618

Checks should be made payable to BPF and should indicate either Refugee Project or Refugee Fund.

May all beings find Peace and Happiness (especially that cleaning woman). ♦

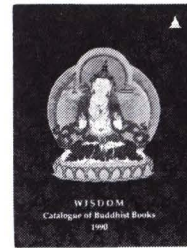
## BPF BOARD ELECTIONS

The annual board elections were held this fall, and I'm happy to report that the five candidates were elected by the membership. They are: Nanda Currant (Soquel, CA), Margaret Howe (Chapel Hill, NC), Sandy Hunter (Berkeley, CA), Stephanie Kaza (Burlington, VT), and Kenneth Kenshin Tanaka (El Cerrito, CA).

For the past three years our election process has been as follows. The membership at large is asked by the Board to suggest nominees. Board members in the Bay area act as a nominating committee, which then prepares a slate of candidates, keeping a number of criteria in mind: 1) representation of different Buddhist traditions, 2) past involvement in BPF, 3) involvement in social action, 4) gender balance, 5) geographic representation, 6) expertise that will be helpful to BPF, 7) time commitment.

We have followed a process used by many nonprofits called a "white ballot" — a slate with exactly the number of candidates as vacancies to be filled. We feel this has been a good process, with our widespread membership, for finding committed people for the Board. This is one of many models for selecting Board members. The Board will be looking at our election process, and we welcome your ideas. Happy New Year!

— Linda Cutts, BPF Board President



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## COORDINATOR'S REPORT

### Lost in the Imperial City

I flew east in mid-November to take part in the first U.S. meeting for solidarity with Burma. Margaret Howe, old BPF friend and staffperson for the conference, met me at Washington's National Airport, and we managed to get lost before we were a mile from the terminal. We hear constantly about Washington's murder rate and mean streets. Having grown up in New York, I discounted much of it. But here we were lost. On every corner there were clusters of young men, sullen and edgy, gathered by a pay phone, circling an oil drum bonfire, huddled in doorways with the lights out. It was astonishing and scary, so close to the vast marble constructs of our Imperial City. In this year of empty Quincentennial celebrations and national elections, how can we reckon with the suffering just around the corner, just down the block?

### Burma Meeting

The conference itself was well planned by Paula Green of the Karuna Center and Rand Engel of Wisdom Books, with the support of BPF, Amnesty International, Peace Development Fund, and others. From Friday, November 15 to Sunday afternoon, a dynamic group of North American and European activists, Burmese in exile, congressional staff, and representatives of NGOs discussed and strategized about our work for democracy in Burma. There was a spirit of cooperation among the groups, including the Burmese, who are united in their call for democracy and freedom for Aung San Suu Kyi. Suu's Nobel Peace Prize lifted all our spirits as we held a vigil outside the Burmese Embassy and the Military Attache's office on Saturday night of the conference. Out of all this talk and work an International Burma Campaign was born — with an interim steering committee from the North American and Burmese communities and a clear mandate to press for full democracy. More about this as the Campaign unfolds.

### East Coast Tour

Continuing from Washington, I took Amtrak to New York, then on to Boston. Out the train window, bright autumn foliage grew scarcer, long afternoon light threw shadows across crumbling brick buildings, angular flights of geese headed south over marshland and sound.

In New York City I met with Mannik Mahna of Sarvodaya U.S.A. to work out details for Dr. Ariyaratne's California visit and workshop in April. Later that day, I had a cup of tea with Amy Krantz of the NY chapter, and we talked about the recent Kalachakra Teachings, Burma work, and the shifting of BPF chapter energy in the dismaying aftermath of the Gulf War.

The Boston/Cambridge Chapter has had a similar dispersal of energy, although they also have a core of dedicated people whose activism is deeply rooted in everyday Buddhist practice. I enjoyed a stimulating chapter meeting and several periods of meditation at an all-day drop-in sitting at Cambridge Insight Meditation Center, as part of Oxfam's national fast day. So refreshing in the mad scramble of visits and meetings.

Also in Cambridge, I talked with Diana Rowan, who has been writing here and elsewhere about sex and power abuse in Buddhist Sanghas. She is helping to organize an American Buddhist Reform Movement — one way to establish ethical guidelines for teacher/student relationships, and to raise these questions in a public forum. I met her daughters and showed off photographs of my little girl. For their sake, not just our own, we need to take care of the precepts.

I am glad for these opportunities to meet our members where they work and live. It makes BPF more vivid and real from both sides.



*Sulak Sivaraksa*

### Breakfast with Sulak

Last week we met Sulak Sivaraksa for a breakfast of tea and scones, as he stopped to discuss his new book with our friends at Parallax Press, before continuing to Hawaii for an annual Buddhist—Christian dialogue. It was a cold morning for California and Sulak wore a long khaki coat as if it were the icy depths of winter. But his smile was very warm and his words full of energy as he related the story of his asylum in Bangkok's German embassy and his decision, urged on by friends' concern for his safety, to temporarily leave Thailand for Europe. There was much to discuss and not enough time, so we look forward to his return visit in February, when his Parallax book, *Seeds of Peace*, should appear in print. ♦

— Alan Senauke



## CHAPTER NEWS

### Mendocino County Chapter

Our chapter continues to focus on the issue of displaced persons. At our last meeting we invited a speaker from one of the urban communities to discuss the work of a local soup kitchen. We hosted a successful performance on the Mendocino Coast by the Gyuto Monks. The hall was filled to standing room only. Following the monks, Thubten Chodron graced us with a week of teachings, touching many of our lives.

As of this writing, we are looking forward to a December dharma talk in Ukiah on "Buddhism and the Environment," by Bhikshu Heng Ch'an of the Sagely City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, and to a slide show by Sean Sprague on his recent trip to Eastern Europe, Siberia, and Ethiopia.

### Santa Cruz Chapter

Since January we have been meeting regularly on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month. We begin with fifteen minutes of silent sitting, followed by discussion. Most often we key off something that is an issue for one of the members. We are more a group of friends helping each other than an action committee. At most meetings we share letters to send to various agencies and governments. At one meeting, we even repaired a vacuum cleaner.

On the other Tuesdays we sit together for two hours. On the 2nd Sunday of each month, we gather at one member's house for sitting, recitation of the Tiep Hien precepts, discussion, then a walk and picnic in the nearby hills. The fourth Sunday there's always a half-day sit.

In affiliation with the Resource Center for Non-Violence, we've had a series of monthly speakers on the subject of living with awareness. We are planning a benefit performance at a local theater while they are showing films from Tibet. — *Tom Misciagna*

### New York Chapter

In November many of us participated in the teachings given by H.H. the Dalai Lama in New York City. Some of us attended a December 10 rally at the United Nations to free Burma and Aung San Suu Kyi. David Arnott, secretary of the Burma Peace Foundation and longtime member of BPF, attended our December meeting. David informed us about the situation in Burma, and helped us to organize letter writing to Amoco, Unocal, and Pepsico, urging them to divest until a legitimate Burmese government is installed. Early in 1992 we hope to have one of the military resisters from the Gulf War address the group.

On the weekend of April 10-12, we are co-sponsoring a retreat with the Community of Mindful Living, "The Practice of Peace." Sisters Anabel and Jina, senior students of Thich Nhat Hanh, will lead this retreat at the Chuang Yen Monastery, near Peekskill, NY. For

retreat information, contact Miriam Hipsh, 85 Riverside Drive, NYC, NY 10024, (212) 595-7525.

— *Amy Krantz*

### Vermont Chapter

The newly formed Vermont chapter has held two presentations for local sanghas — Zen Center of Vermont and Burlington Dharmadatu — discussing the work of BPF and the role of spiritual practice in social action. Both were well received, and another is planned for the local Vipassana sitting group. In January we will be hosting Joanna Macy for a public talk, to which we are inviting all Vermont BPF and FOR members, as well as local Quakers, Unitarians, and environmentalists. We have published a first issue of a local BPF newsletter, listing opportunities for meditation, with short articles on events, actions, and guest speakers. We are working with others to sponsor twenty-five Tibetan refugees in a resettlement program here in Burlington.

### East Bay Chapter

Our chapter meets the second Monday of each month, and we welcome visitors. Members discuss ways to relieve the suffering of war and poverty at home and abroad, and how we can refresh our own spirits in mindful ways. One new aid project is directed to Malawi, one of the poorest nations of Africa, where a pair of second-hand shoes costs weeks' or months' wages. A chapter member has undertaken the collection of serviceable used shoes to ship to Malawi.

Tibetan refugees in India and Nepal continue to be a focus. We send approximately \$1000 per month to provide milk and help with educational costs at three refugee settlement camps. Responses to BPF's Tibetan Refugee Revolving Fund, which will create employment for residents of the camps, continues to come in. Also, some of our members are searching for sponsors for Tibetan immigrants who will arrive in the Bay Area early in 1992.

Bi-monthly Saturday "Days of Mindfulness" give us an opportunity to sit and walk together, and to share thoughts and readings over a cup of tea. The next "Day" is February 8. We continue to hold a vigil of protest against the U.S. export of weapons at the Concord Weapons Station on the third Sunday of each month. For more information, call the East Bay Chapter contact, Margo Tyndall at (510) 654-8677.

### Seattle Chapter

At our last meeting, Ed Byrne brought us a report from the Church Council of Greater Seattle Peace Task Force. We decided to join their efforts and explore ways of organizing neighborhood groups to discuss local issues. We do this on the basis that community building is central to peace. A regional BPF meeting is scheduled for Seattle, January 26. — *Kelly Byrne*





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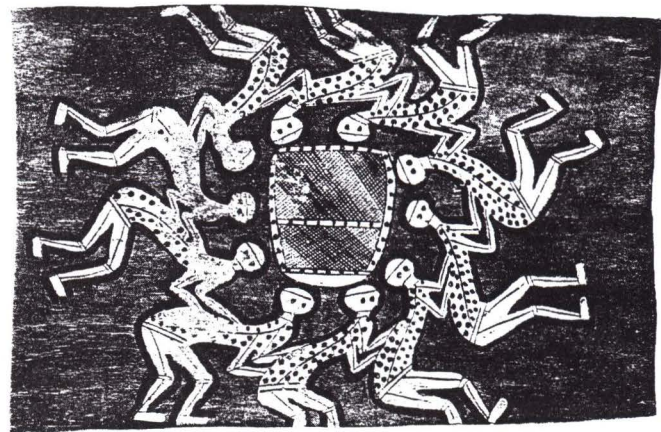
## Letter from the Past President:

In the last few months my perspective on the Buddhist Peace Fellowship has shifted radically — from West Coast to East Coast, from dry coastal hills to Vermont's snowy Green Mountains. In June, I accepted a sought-after tenure track teaching position in the Environmental Studies program at the University of Vermont at Burlington, where I will focus on environmental ethics and religion and the environment. Here I join six other faculty members in the task of preparing the next generation to do the work in the environment that will go beyond my lifetime.

Leaving California meant leaving the executive committee of the BPF Board. Following my first tumultuous year on the board, I served as president for two years, seeing the organization through a period of growth and stabilization. It has been very rewarding and satisfying to see BPF become a strong voice for engaged Buddhism under capable staff and board leadership. In my last six months in the Bay Area, I was a regular at the BPF office, planning the summer Institute, helping with staff transitions, and offering ideas when needed. The camaraderie and collaborative exchange I miss quite a lot, but the work goes on.

So I am exploring the Buddhist community in Vermont and getting involved in starting a new BPF chapter in Burlington. I feel great confidence in BPF's capacity to remain stable through this transition in leadership. Though I have passed on the president's role to Linda Cutts, I am still on the phone to the office every other week, and with the marvel of fax machines, I can respond to matters of urgency when needed. You can be sure I will still be writing my charming fundraising letters twice a year to the membership.

So count me in, I'm still working for BPF — but from a different spot in the universe. ♦ — Stephanie Kaza



*Oobarr ritual*

*Australian aboriginal painting on bark cloth*



# ANNOUNCEMENTS & CLASSIFIEDS

## Announcements

**GAY/LESBIAN/BISEXUAL BUDDHISTS** will be the focus of an upcoming issue of *Turning Wheel*. Tell us what it's like to be queer in your sangha, whether in or out of the closet. How is sexual orientation important in your encounter with the dharma? (How is it unimportant?) Tell us your stories, and help give voice to the not-so-straight Buddhist community. Send articles, letters, poems, artwork to: *Turning Wheel*, P.O. Box 4650, Berkeley, CA 94704.

**TIBETAN DELEK HOSPITAL** in Dharamsala, India, seeks assistance through the Delek Hospital Aid Foundation (DHAF) in Vancouver, B.C. The 45-bed Hospital, which provides care to the Tibetan and indigent Indian communities of Dharamsala, is overseen by the Ministry of Health of the Dalai Lama's Government in Exile. Additional funding will allow the Delek Hospital to improve its current limited services and offer free treatment to those who cannot afford it. DHAF has already sent antibiotics, local anesthetics and broncholidators to Delek Hospital. Please help by donating and becoming a member of DHAF! Send \$10 or more (payable to DHAF) to: Andrew B. Cooper, M.D., Delek Hospital Aid Foundation, #103-876 West 16th Ave., Vancouver, B.C., V5Z 1T1; tel. 604/872-4766.

### TIBETAN BUDDHIST REVIVAL IN RUSSIA:

St. Petersburg's historic Tibetan Temple, built during the reign of the last czar and then stripped of its furnishings and turned over to secular use under Stalin, is once again becoming an active center for the study and practice of Tibetan Buddhism. Now under the leadership of the Buryat abbot Ven. T.K. Samayev, the temple is in immediate need of funds for renovation (future plans include the establishment of a training school for lamas, a publishing house, and a day-care facility), and contributions, fully tax-deductible, may be sent to the following: Wisdom's Goldenrod Ltd., P.O. Box 40, Hector, NY 14841.

## Coming Events

**CULTIVATING THE GROUND OF COMPASSION**, a lecture series benefiting the rebuilding of the zendo at Green Gulch Farm. Jan. 15, MALCOLM MARGOLIN on "Mythic and Practical Knowledge"; Jan. 23, BRO. DAVID STEINDL-RAST on "Word and Silence"; Feb. 2, JOANNA MACY on "Being Bodhisattvas"; and Feb. 23, JACK KORNFELD on "Emptiness Into Form." All lectures at 7:30 PM in the entryway to the Meditation hall. Donation requested. Call 415/383-3134 for more information.

**TIBET FILM FESTIVAL** will premier at San Francisco's Castro Theater Jan. 24-30, then show at Berkeley's U.C. Theater Jan. 31- Feb. 4, before beginning a tour to 13 U.S. cities including Washington D.C., Philadelphia, Chicago, Seattle, Santa Fe, Tucson, Boston, Cleveland and Columbus, OH. Call 212/274-1989 for more information.

**JOANNA MACY AND DUGU CHÖGYAL RINPOCHE** will appear together four times in the S.F. Bay Area to share stories and teachings from their long friendship. Dugu Chögyal Rinpoche is an incarnate of the Dragon Kagyu lineage of Tibetan Buddhism and a well-known painter and spiritual teacher. Friday, Feb. 7, 7:30 pm, at Northbrae Community Church, Berkeley; Sun., Feb. 9, 1:30 pm at Community Congregational Church, Tiburon; Fri., Feb. 14, 7 pm at All Saints Episcopal Church, San Francisco; Sun., Feb. 16, 1:30 pm at Pacific Cultural Center, Santa Cruz. Proceeds go directly to Tibetan organizations working to preserve Tibet's spiritual and cultural heritage. For more information, call 415/345-8497.

**TWO WRITING WORKSHOPS** with Natalie Goldberg, presented by Santa Cruz Zen Center, Friday eve., May 1, and Saturday, May 2, in the Santa Cruz area. For information, contact Santa Cruz Zen Center, 113 School St., Santa Cruz, CA 95060. Tel: 408/426-3847.

### NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON TIBET

March 7, 1992 at U.C. Berkeley: "Tibet: The Road to Independence." Speakers include THUBTEN JIGME NORBU, the eldest brother of the Dalai Lama; ROBERT THURMAN; JOHN ACKERLY of the Int'l Campaign for Tibet; and PEMA DECHEN, a woman representative of the Tibetan Assembly in Dharamsala, India. For more information, contact Phurpa (Phil) Ladenla, 415/493-8714.

### 1992 RETREATS WITH SISTERS ANNABEL & JINA

Senior Students of Thich Nhat Hanh. Berkeley: Mar. 17-19 & 24-25; Santa Cruz: March 20-22; Venice: Mar. 28-29. Other retreats in Houston, TX; Missoula, MT; Evanston, IL; New York, NY; Takoma Park, MD; Barre and Cambridge, MA; and Montréal, Quebec. For dates, addresses, and local contacts, call the Community of Mindful Living at 510/527-3751.

### RETREAT WITH THICH NHAT HANH IN FRANCE:

"Vipassana in the Mahayana Tradition," a 21-day retreat & seminar at Plum Village, France, June 6-28, 1992. English will be the primary language of the retreat. Cost from \$800 to \$1050 depending on housing. Those enrolled must participate in the whole retreat. For application or more information, contact: Community of Mindful Living, P.O. Box 7355, Berkeley, CA 94707, 510/527-3751; or the Église Bouddhique Unifiée, Plum Village, Meyrac, 47120 Loubès-Bernac, France; tel. 53/58.48.58.

### F.O.R. NAT'L CONFERENCE.

July 15-19, 1992, at Snow Mt. Ranch, Colorado, with theme "Building Community, Breaking Free." Speakers include North and South American Indian representatives and many others. For more information, contact: FOR Nat'l Conference, Box 271, Nyack, NY 10960. 914/358-4601.



## Classifieds

**THREE WOMEN MARTIAL ARTISTS** in founding stage of building a monastery/retreat center in the mountains of Northern California are looking for other hardworking visionaries. We've had our farm for one year. We're looking for one or two more residents, preferably with some martial arts and collective experience. Our monthly rent is \$300 each plus utilities. Write for more information: Young Forest c/o Coleen Gragen, 5680 San Pablo Ave., Oakland, CA 94608.

**OPENING WITH NONVIOLENT COLLECTIVE:** New Society Publishers is a worker-managed trade publisher dedicated to promoting social change through non-violent action. We are activists building an alternative business. Long-term position open in marketing. Experience in consensus decision-making and commitment to nonviolence required. For information write NSP/Personnel, 4527 Springfield Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19143.

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### FOR SALE FROM BPF:

- ⊗ Thich Nhat Hanh tapes: "The Practice of Peace" talk in Berkeley, April 1991. Two-tape set \$14.
- ⊗ Thich Nhat Hanh letterpress broadside, beautifully designed, 6 1/2" x 12"; text taken from *Peace Is Every Step*. Suitable for framing — these are wonderful gifts. \$3 for first one; \$1 for each additional.
- ⊗ T-shirts with BPF logo in turquoise or white: \$12. Specify S, M, L, or XL (Supply variable.)
- ⊗ BPF buttons, with BPF logo: \$1.
- ⊗ Tapes from the 1991 BPF Institute for the Practice of Engaged Buddhism: \$90 for complete set. \$12 for individual tapes: contact BPF office for order form. (Postage included in all prices.)

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The Buddhist Peace Fellowship Board gratefully acknowledges generous contributions above and beyond membership between November 1 and December 15, 1991:

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Our belated and embarrassed thanks to some people whose efforts for last summer's Meditation in Action Institute were key to its success:

Margaret Howe ♦ Stephanie Kaza ♦ Donald Rothberg ♦ The Tara Foundation ♦



*The Kitchen Garden, by Prudence See*



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## STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

- ❖ To make clear public witness to Buddhist practice as a way of peace and protection of all beings;
- ❖ To raise peace, environmental, feminist, and social justice concerns among Western Buddhists;
- ❖ To bring a Buddhist perspective to contemporary peace, environmental, and social action movements;
- ❖ To encourage the practice of nonviolence based on the rich resources of traditional Buddhist teachings;
- ❖ To offer avenues for dialogue and exchange among the diverse American and world sanghas.

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Members receive a one-year subscription (four issues) to *Turning Wheel*, the BPF Journal. For contributions of \$60 or more, we will also send you a copy of *The Path of Compassion: Writings on Socially Engaged Buddhism*.

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