

# TURNING WHEEL

*The Journal of Socially Engaged Buddhism*



BUDDHIST PEACE FELLOWSHIP  
P.O. BOX 3470  
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## FOOD FROM THE GROUND UP

**Compulsive Eating • Vegetarianism  
• Organic Farming • Fasting  
• Food Guilt • Resources on  
Sustainable Food Production**

**Plus Recipe for Georgia Prison Pocket**





## From the Editor

You have to have it, whether you're a Buddhist or a Baptist. Even if you don't hunt for your food in the tundra or gather it from the fields or catch it on the Grand Banks, you still have to bring home the bacon, even if it's made of tofu. Without it you go hungry.

Working on this issue of *TW*, I've been noticing how much time I spend thinking and talking about food, along with most other people I know. I've also been thinking about the other side of food: hunger.

There's a big difference between hunger and craving. Craving causes suffering. It can never be satisfied. Craving is when you want chocolate, and then you eat chocolate, and then you keep on eating chocolate until you wish you'd never heard of chocolate. It's hard to find that point of satisfaction between craving chocolate and regretting having eaten too much of it.

But hunger is a need that can be satisfied. Your body needs food so that your heart can pump your blood and your arm muscles can hug the ones you love. A baby cries when she's hungry, and when you feed her, she stops crying.

In the world there are many hungry babies, and hungry children, and hungry adults. They need enough to eat, and we who have too much to eat should study "enough." The Korean Zen teacher Seung Sa Nimh encourages us to have "enough-mind." And one of the eight awarenesses of the enlightened person is "knowing how to be satisfied."

Like many of you, I have more than enough to eat. I have never been hungry, except by choice, for longer than a couple of hours. I forget to stop eating at the point of satisfaction. So I've been watching the shifts in my own mind, the way hunger turns into craving, the way satisfaction ebbs away.

At first, "enough" sounds boring. Just enough—is this all there is? *You mean I can't have seconds?* But I don't think enough precludes a chocolate bar now and then. It certainly doesn't preclude sharing and celebration. Enough can be a humming, joyful place. Everything is fine; everything is just right. How beautiful it would be to live on that balance point between lack and surfeit, not tipping to either side.

We have two good reasons for developing enough-mind. One is nothing less than to eradicate world hunger. We in the West, the North, the "developed" world, need to stop eating more than our share so those who are hungry can be fed. And it's not a matter of giving away some extra bread. It's our attitude of entitlement that needs to change, before it leads us to eat the planet itself. We mistakenly think we can satisfy not just our hunger but our craving. So developing enough-mind is a place to begin.

The other reason to develop enough-mind is in order to be happy. Buddhist that I am, I actually believe that when I know how to be satisfied (allowing for an occasional lapse into overindulgence in M&M's), I'll be released from craving. I'll let you know when I get there.

The practice of gratitude comes in handy here. Gratitude is an antidote to craving—gratitude that I have exactly what I need. So find a way to thank your food before you eat it. If it embarrasses you to bow or say a prayer, then just wink and smile at the carrots and under your breath let them know you appreciate their willingness to let go of the dirt.

In our Zen meal chant we say, "May our virtue and practice deserve it." I used to think that sounded prudish, or harsh, as if only the virtuous ones among us should be eating. But that's not what it says. All of us chanting are about to eat, whether we are virtuous or not and we are asking ourselves to try to be worthy of the food. It's a statement of intention. ❖ —*Susan Moon*

Coming deadlines for *Turning Wheel*:

Summer '04: **Technology**. Deadline: March 1, 2004

Fall '04: **No theme**. Deadline: September 7, 2004

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# TURNING WHEEL

The Journal of Socially Engaged Buddhism



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**CORRECTIONS** to "Buddhist, Heal Thyself"  
(*TW*, Fall 2003, p. 20): Lynda Caine-Barrett  
was born in Tokyo not in El Paso, TX. Also,  
the correct spelling of the chant written in  
the interview is *Namu-myoho-renge-kyo*.



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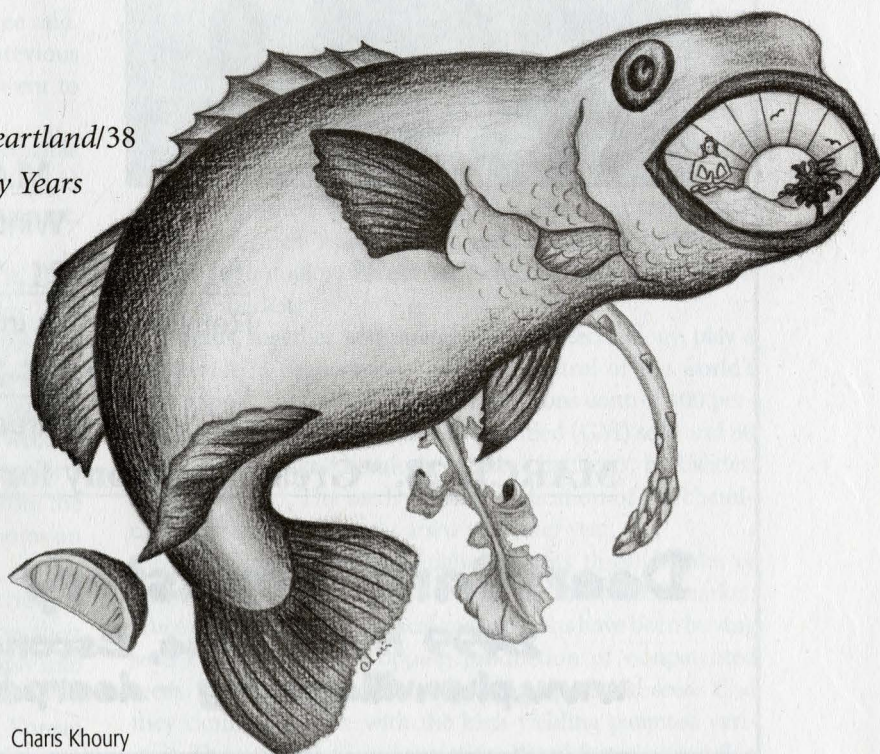
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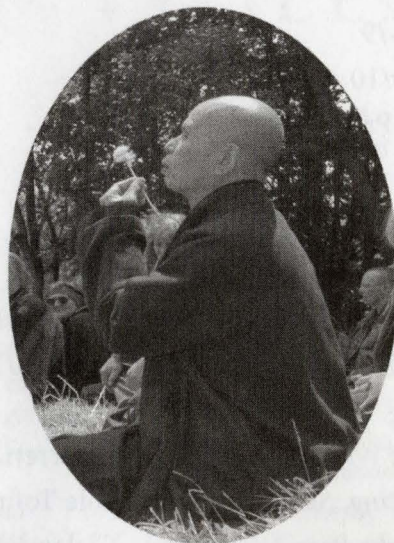


Charis Khoury



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# Indra's Net

*In the image of the "jeweled net of Indra," found in the Avatamsaka Sutra, the universe is represented as an infinite network of jewels, each one reflecting all the others. We are always struck in putting this section together by the way all our lives touch each other, as symbolized by Indra's Net.*

## So Lovely Rural Communities May Still Flourish

Kyung-Hae Lee was one of thousands of farmers marching toward the conference center in Cancún, Mexico where World Trade Organization (WTO) ministers were meeting last September. Lee carried a sign reading: "WTO kills farmers." When the farmers reached the fence that kept demonstrators six miles from the conference, Lee plunged a knife into his heart.

Lee, 56, had devoted his life to defending South Korea's farmers. He had traveled to Europe, America, and Japan, to see how small farmers coped with trade liberalization. And last February, Lee set up a tent in front of WTO headquarters in Geneva. He explained that soon after the WTO was created, he and "Korean fellow farmers realized that we could not do anything but just watch the waves that destroyed our lovely rural communities. Now...at the front gate of the WTO, I am crying out my words to you, words that have been boiling for a long time in my body."

South Korea is mountainous. Only 22 percent of its land is arable and most of that is unsuited for industrial monoculture. With high land values and high wage levels, Korean agriculture is "uncompetitive." The WTO allowed South Korea to keep tariffs on rice until 2004 but required a gradual opening to other food imports. These imports grew 20 percent between 1998 and 2002, devastating rural communities.

"Imported products were flooding the market," Lee said. Prices sometimes fell suddenly to a quarter of their previous level. "Those farmers who gave up farming earliest went to urban slums. The others had to declare bankruptcy."

He told of a farmer who "because of his uncontrollable debts abandoned his life by drinking a toxic chemical. I could do nothing but listen to his wife howling. If you were me, how would you feel?"

Mushim Ikeda-Nash, who was a nun in Korea in the late 1980s, remembers the communities Lee gave his life for: "The small farms in South Korea were very beautiful—tiny rice paddies, little vegetable plots, and sweet potato fields. The monastery where I lived owned some land and it was farmed by laypeople and sometimes the nuns went out and weeded the fields. Wild herbs (the omnipresent "suk," or mugwort) were harvested in quantity over the growing season from the margins of fields, and the nuns gathered wild mushrooms on the mountain in the autumn."

The Cancún negotiations collapsed as industrialized countries refused to cut the lavish subsidies that allow their agricultural producers to "dump" their products cheaply into developing countries and destroy the local agriculture.

But even if industrialized countries cut subsidies, Korean agriculture could not compete with imports. For Lee, the sur-

vival of local agriculture was essential to food security and quality of life. He understood the myriad benefits that flow from small farms: the care small farmers take of soil, water, and wildlife; the variety of crops, landscapes, and community uses; and the invitation to all to see nature and farmer together bring forth food.

So in March Lee called on the WTO to omit agriculture altogether from free-trade agreements, leaving each country to decide upon its own agricultural policy and use protectionist measures as it saw fit. But he could not get anyone's attention. Just before stabbing himself on September 10, he told the Korean farmers around him: "Don't worry about me. Just struggle your hardest."

## Patents: Plundering Third World Farming Communities and Depleting Food Biodiversity

Basmati rice, famous for its delicious fragrance, did not come from the wild. It evolved over centuries through the countless efforts of farmers in the Himalaya foothills, as they selected the best seeds for the next crop and experimented with natural cross-pollination.

Yet in 1997, a Texas company, RiceTec, obtained a U.S. patent for "inventing" rice varieties with grain similar to basmati's. The patent allowed RiceTec to use the name "basmati." RiceTec's "invention" relied on conventional techniques: crossing true basmati with North American varieties. Their 20 claims to "novelty"—required for patents—were of two kinds: some concerned the qualities of the grain itself; others concerned aspects of the plant's cultivation—high yields, disease resistance, and cultivability in the Americas.

Patents give their holders exclusive rights to make, use, or sell an invention for 20 years. Most disturbing, farmers may not save seed from their own crop to plant the next one. For thousands of years before the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (PTO) started issuing patents for seeds in 1985, farmers saved and shared seed freely—practices judged essential to food security.

Although the PTO ruling would not prevent Indian and Pakistani farmers from growing and selling their usual varieties, it *would* allow RiceTec to seize a share of the world basmati market.

Patents, together with mergers and biotechnology, play a major role in corporations' growing control of the world's food supply. Six transnational corporations control 100 percent of the market for genetically modified (GM) seed and 80 percent of the agrochemicals market (fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides). The seeds require application of the chemicals; both must be bought anew year after year.

Agribusiness, to ensure highest profits through sales of patented seed, has moved to control the entire seed market. Since the 1970s, agrochemical corporations have been buying seed companies and stopping production of nonpatented seeds. Farmers who continue using nonpatented seeds find they cannot compete with the high-yielding patented varieties. The number of seed varieties offered for sale has fallen



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**Earth BASE (Massachusetts)**

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dramatically, endangering the biodiversity that is essential to a secure food supply.

Alarmed by RiceTec's patent, the Indian government asked the PTO to reexamine it, arguing that true basmati grain already had the qualities RiceTec claimed for its varieties. Before the PTO made its decision, RiceTec withdrew all its claims about cultivation advantages. The PTO, concurring with the Indian government, then rejected the claims about the novelty of the grain itself. But it granted a patent anyway, for the "novelty" of the particular cross-breeding used. RiceTec could not name its hybrids "basmati," but it could advertise rice "equal or superior to true basmati."

Indian and Pakistani farmers won a partial victory in this instance, but the PTO has issued thousands of plant patents. Few will ever be challenged, since poor countries, let alone their growers, cannot afford to hire patent lawyers.

Most troubling, without traditional basmati, there would be no RiceTec varieties. Why should companies profit from (arguably) "adding value" to traditional varieties but owe nothing to the communities that developed them? Corporations now use patents to appropriate the plants and traditional knowledge of poor countries—a practice known as "biopiracy."

Corporations claim that patents—or the prospect of huge profits from patented products—lead to a flowering of inventions, and will help feed the world. But the inventors of so-called golden rice—GM rice with a high beta-carotene content—decided to forgo giving Africans their invention for free because their research infringed on 70 patents and the gift would have required the approval of 36 corporations.

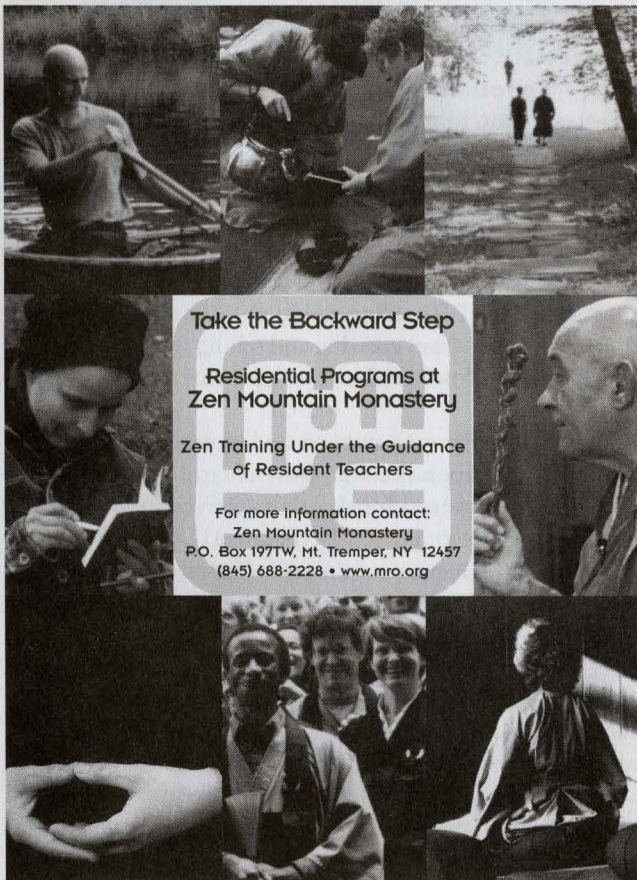
Generosity—in Pali, *dana*, the first Buddhist "perfection"—sustains all life. Some Buddhists chant: "I vow not to be avaricious....From the beginning, there has been no stinginess at all." If the free flow of seeds is interrupted, the poorest—small farmers and peasants in the South—will suffer. If the profusion of food plant varieties withers, we are all at risk.

**Vietnamese Government Continues Persecution of the Church of Thich Nhat Hanh**

The patriarch and the secretary of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV) have been incarcerated, in exile, or under house arrest most of the time since Vietnam was unified under Communist leadership in 1976.

The UBCV, founded in 1964, united Vietnam's Mahayana and Theravada schools. Focusing on compassionate action in the world, it established hospitals, orphanages, schools, and the School of Youth for Social Service, led by Thich Nhat Hanh.

The Church took the lead in opposing successive South Vietnamese regimes, which "used the money and blood of the people mercilessly" (Thich Nhat Hanh). Unwilling to resort to violence and aware of Vietnamese Communists' totalitarian inclinations, Buddhists attempted a "middle way." Attacked by both sides, they suffered many losses.



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The Communist government formed in 1976 feared the Buddhists' popularity and ruthlessly suppressed the Church, confiscating all UBCV properties. When security forces took control of an orphanage in 1977, massive demonstrations followed. The government arrested six UBCV leaders, including patriarch Thich Huyen Quang and secretary general Thich Quang Do, who were sentenced to 20 months in jail for "spreading misinformation."

To control religious activity, the government established its own Buddhist church in 1981, but Thich Huyen Quang and Thich Quang Do refused to recognize its authority. They were sentenced to internal exile. The UBCV was banned.

In the late 1980s, Vietnam initiated *doi moi* (renovation), which encouraged private enterprise and eased restrictions on religious worship. Village temples reopened; thousands of pagodas were returned from granaries or schools to their original use. Visitors now report impressive numbers of young people studying in pagodas, and say monks and nuns speak freely about Buddhism and its role in Vietnam. But the government controls the selection, ordination, and movements of clergy, and continues to harass UBCV leaders and other dissident Buddhists.

Thich Huyen Quang remained in exile, held incommunicado, until recently. Thich Quang Do returned to Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City) in 1992, but he was again incarcerated in 1995, for another three years, accused of organizing a flood relief mission. In 2001, he was placed under house arrest for planning to bring the patriarch, 84 and ill, to the city for treatment.

But 2003 brought hope. In April, Thich Huyen Quang went to Hanoi for medical treatment and met with Prime Minister Phan Van Khai, who admitted the Communist authorities had made many mistakes toward Buddhism. In July, Quang Do was released and visited Huyen Quang in the central Vietnam monastery where he was restricted, to discuss UBCV's future.

Then, in September, the government cracked down again. Security police interrogated monks planning to attend a UBCV assembly. Three weeks after the assembly, a group of monks, including the patriarch and secretary, was stopped by police just as they left the monastery for Saigon. Some 1,200 monks and followers then gathered around their van, and, after a nine-hour standoff, police let it go. But the van was stopped the next day and everyone arrested, and the two leaders are again under house arrest, accused of "espionage."

Vietnam today is a confusing blend of liberties and repression. Books and movies from around the world flow in freely, but the state still fears religious freedom. Indeed, the April thaw may have been a trap to bring out UBCV's supporters. Thich Nhat Hanh still cannot visit his country.

✉ Write on behalf of UBCV's patriarch and secretary to Prime Minister Phan Van Khai, Hoan Hoa Tham, Vietnam; or fax 01+844/823-1872. ❖

*Indra's Net* is researched and written by Annette Herskovits.

## Wisdom and Action Conference:

### A Tribute to Joanna Macy

Several hundred people attended the Wisdom and Action Conference, sponsored by the California Institute of Integral Studies in Berkeley, California, in September 2003. The weekend of workshops and presentations honored one of the leading eco-philosophers and compassionate activists of our time: Joanna Macy. She is also an important BPF elder and longtime member of our International Advisory Board. The climax of the weekend was a tribute to Joanna.

Such tributes can be boring—but this one was not! Various threads of Macy's life were celebrated, including deep ecology, systems theory, socially engaged Buddhism, nuclear guardianship, and poetry. John Seed from Australia recounted a rollicking version of one of Joanna's trademark teaching stories about using the dharmic weapons of wisdom and compassion; Stephen Kent made the auditorium come alive as he played the sounds of the rain forest on his didjeridoo and rattle; Anita Barrows opened our hearts by reading from Rilke's poetry translated into English by her and Joanna; Donald Rothberg cracked us up with his declaration that the coming of Joanna Macy had been predicted in early Mahayana texts, and then laid out some of her contributions to the body of socially engaged dharma today. Joanna's husband Fran spoke movingly about her commitment to nuclear guardianship and the wholeness of our living world; and Susan Griffin told stories about their early kitchen-table meetings to demystify and then act upon the horrifying information they had uncovered about the nuclear age. Finally Joanna's entire family led us to a labyrinth that had been set up outside the church where the conference was held, as Jennifer Berezan sang. Charlene Spretnak wove the whole tribute together, holding our attention and leaving most of us teary-eyed at the wonder of living alongside this extraordinary woman.

Other gems of the conference included Drew Dellinger (go hear this man—he's an amazing rap artist); Angana Chatterji, a passionate and articulate activist-professor who wove Indian and American politics into a talk on global capitalism; Daniel Ellsberg, the man who blew one of the biggest whistles ever in this country; and Brian Swimme, professor of cosmology at CIIS, who has the unusual ability to make the interconnectedness of the universe both funny and specific.

Perhaps a comment of Joanna's captures what we all seemed to be feeling: "How wonderful that this is happening while I'm still alive!" Indeed. Let's not wait till our giants die to celebrate them. And let's hope that Joanna continues to share her wisdom with us for a long time to come. ❖

—Diana Lion



## IN MEMORIAM

# Charlotte Selver, 1901–2003

by Lee Klinger Lesser

Charlotte Selver was a remarkable teacher, though she often declared, “I have nothing to teach!” From her point of view, she simply invited people to wake up and be true to their own natural responsiveness. For over 80 years, thousands of students from the United States, Western Europe, Japan, and Mexico came to her to study the practice she named “sensory awareness.” Charlotte was a pioneer in the Human Potential Movement and a longtime friend of many Zen teachers. Erich Fromm, Alan Watts, and Fritz Perls were among her students. Her good friends included Suzuki Roshi, Maezumi Roshi, Baker Roshi, Kwong Roshi, and Eido Roshi, and she was often invited to work in their centers with their students.

Charlotte was born in Ruhrort, Germany, in 1901. She emigrated to New York City in 1938 to escape the Nazis. She died at her home in Muir Beach, California, on August 22, 2003. She continued giving workshops and classes until four months before her death at age 102.

Sensory awareness is a mindfulness practice. It is a practice of being present for what is needed in each moment. It is not about feeling good or relaxing or getting rid of tension, although all of those things often happen. Charlotte frequently quoted her teacher Elsa Gindler’s invitation to her students to live constantly with the question, “What does this moment ask of me?” She often said, with glee, “Every moment is a moment!”

Charlotte often described the horror of living in Nazi Germany and of being terrified of what would happen to her and the people around her. Elsa Gindler gave classes throughout the war and she also hid Jews underneath her studio. Her students, including Charlotte, would go to great lengths to come to the class in order to find the strength to survive. They would not speak with each other about what was happening around them. Instead they would work quietly together.

Sensory awareness practice can never be just for ourselves. It is about meeting the request of each moment in the deepest sense. Through her own example, Charlotte deeply inspired the people around her. She gave herself to life with great gusto and with profound trust in the practice of Sensory awareness.

Charlotte spent the last months of her life in her Muir Beach home on the top of a hill overlooking the ocean.



When she could, she sat in the garden with delight and wonder. When she was tired, she slept. When she was hungry, she ate. When she could be in connection with others, she was. There was still a twinkle in her eye when she sucked the juice out of a strawberry, or when Smoky, her cat, jumped up to sleep on her chest.

From last February until the night she died, a weekly sensory awareness class was held in Charlotte’s living room. Charlotte gave these home classes for as long as she could; then I began to give the classes and Charlotte participated in whatever way she was able.

One evening before class, about five months before her death, Charlotte said, “I could weep...I could weep with joy at letting go.” She settled down even further on the couch. “I don’t have to be strong anymore. And yet,” she said, “It’s not so simple. There’s a place deep in my heart that is resisting. I have to get to know that place.”

Charlotte led the class that night. For over an hour, people sat and simply bent forward and came to sitting and came to bending and came to sitting. Charlotte asked everyone to feel what said “yes” and what said “no.” She was exploring the questions that were most

acute for her in how we come to living, how we come to dying. This was one of the very last classes that she gave. Charlotte lived her dying.

For so many years and on many different occasions, we had expected Charlotte to die. And then somehow over the past 20 years she never did, and it seemed that maybe she wouldn’t, that somehow Charlotte might make it out of this life alive. And even though we were expecting her to die at any time over these past years, it is still a shock that she has actually died and moved on.

The last Thursday night class we had was on August 21. Charlotte was in a deep sleep all through class, while five of us sat with her and spoke to her. Sometime in the middle of the night, after we had gone home, she died. When one friend found out about Charlotte’s death, he said with joy, “She made it!”

One day, about two months before her death, some of us were gathered around Charlotte as she lay in her bed. She seemed very, very far away, and in a slow, careful way she said, “Die Flut ist ja ganz von selbst aktiv—man braucht nichts zu tun—alles kommt von selbst.” *The tide comes naturally—there’s nothing you have to do—everything happens by itself.* ❖

*Lee Klinger Lesser studied sensory awareness with Charlotte Selver for 33 years and has been an authorized expert on the work for 27 years. She and Charlotte often led workshops together, and Lee continues to offer classes and workshops. Lee is also a longtime Zen student. If you are interested in the practice of sensory awareness, you can contact Lee at 415/307-6043 or <leeless1@aol.com>.*



## Flying Oryoki

by Stephanie Kaza

Six AM flight—rag! Getting to the airport an hour early means no meditation, no journaling, no quiet breakfast at home. What to do? Food courts and airline snack packs are not the answer. The mall mentality of airport eating is too jarring, the industrial food too sterile—the odds for true nourishment seem slim. Here, amidst the aromas of desire (salt, grease, sugar), the main practice is profit and efficiency. Mindfulness in food prep is limited to basic safety standards, if that. Airline offerings aren't much better, if they're provided at all.

Once again, I face a classic choice: should I yield to the prevailing mind-set or should I resist? The rationalizing mind thinks, *Just eat what's here or A single shoddy meal can't make that much difference. Hey, I just need to eat something, anything! It might be a lot less hassle to just eat the Egg McMuffin and stop grousing.* Is there another option?

Long before the airlines instituted their enforced austerity anti-bioterrorist cost-saving no-meals-on-board-short-flights policy, I was dealing with food allergies. Food court fare and airline meals often meant stomachaches and gut cramping. So out of self-defense I learned to travel prepared. At first it was an irritation—to feel different, to have to plan ahead, to carry extra weight in my pack. But now I take up this effort willingly as yet another permutation of food mindfulness practice. I make use of *oryoki*, the formal Zen meal ritual.

Flying oryoki, step one: breakfast. Here's how I do it. Bring rolled oats in plastic container, flavored with a dash of salt and cinnamon, a few raisins and nuts. Get a large cup of hot water from the flight attendant (if on board) or Starbucks (if you're in the airport). Pour hot water into oats to make oatmeal; add traveling tea bag to rest of hot water to complete the meal. A minute or so after the oatmeal has cooked, add banana (chopped with plastic spoon from Starbucks) and soy milk from a single pack, or bring a small plastic bottle full of milk from home. Settle in to your onboard monastic cubicle or find a non-TV-penetrated lounge to support your thoughtful meal, and offer Zen meal chant quietly. After eating, wash bowl out with remaining tea. Recycle spoon and containers or reuse on return flight.

Step two, lunch or dinner. Bring along mindfully prepared rice and tofu or a sandwich with known ingredients. Or to repeat the Starbucks interdependence ritual, bring a healthy cup-o-soup in lightweight package, add hot water, and let steep. Find a quiet spot in earshot of your gate, eat mindfully, and practice contentment in the midst of alluring distraction.

What is the point of oryoki? In the Zen tradition, this elaborate meal ritual is helpful in bringing attention to the

endless process of eating and nourishment, core to keeping the self alive. You learn to handle the bowls with care and attention, avoiding loud clinking or ungraceful movements; you practice eating with awareness and consideration of others (no slurping or burping); and you observe the mind throughout with its various "trips on food"—needs, desires, grasping, anticipation—all the little animal yearnings we have come to associate with food. Oryoki is also a practice in interdependence. You can develop environmental literacy about your own participation in the food chain, considering the stories behind each item in your food bowl. And you can consider the various people involved in your eating process—those who prepared the food, perhaps served it to you, and who are eating with you (across the aisle, or across the way in the food court). You can even remember your links to the petroleum used to ship the food (and to ship you too!).

One of the great benefits of this kind of food preparedness is enhanced peace of mind. Air travel is now fairly unpredictable—you can be late, stalled on the runway, dropped at an unexpected destination. If you are well provisioned for potentially challenging circumstances, you have self-care firmly in hand, thereby generating equanimity and reducing anxiety. Calmer yourself, you may even be in a position to help others who are stressed by unforeseen situations. Focusing mindfulness on food (and water, always bring a bottle of water) helps you stay alert as well as supported by some version of your usual practice routine.

Flying oryoki is a modest practice of awareness, but it can carry a big intention. And...it can be undertaken anywhere any time, from O'Hare to LAX.

Now I offer Buddha's eating bowls...

May all sentient beings in the universe be fully nourished. ❖

*Stephanie Kaza is an associate professor of environmental studies at the University of Vermont.*

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## History

### Sengai

by Diane Patenaude Ames

The rice harvest had been bad in the Hakata area. The hunger of the poor worsened daily, yet the local *daimyo* (feudal lord), being a decadent aesthete, ignored the situation. When he was not hosting sake-drinking parties in his garden, he devoted all his energy to growing exquisite chrysanthemums and peonies. One day a gardener's dog got loose in his chrysanthemum garden and trampled several prize blooms. The enraged *daimyo* imprisoned the gardener and sentenced him to death.

On the morning after the incident, the *daimyo* discovered to his horror that someone had mowed down all of his chrysanthemums with a scythe. Before he could recover emotionally, a Zen monk knocked on his castle gate and confessed to the deed. "Which is more important," he asked, "the lives of humans or of flowers?" With that he publicly charged the *daimyo* with cruelty and with neglecting a famine.

If this bold monk had been a Buddhist nobody, he would surely have shared the fate of the chrysanthemums. But as it happened, he was Sengai (1750–1838), very possibly the most famous Zen teacher, artist, and calligrapher of his day. Such was his prestige that the *daimyo* not only listened humbly, he released the gardener and began to organize famine relief.

Sengai was born into a farming family in Mino Prefecture and became a Zen monk at the age of 11. At 19 he was awarded his *inka* (confirmation of enlightenment) by the famous Rinzai Zen teacher Gessen Zenne (1701–1781). Soon he had built up a reputation as a Zen adept—and been kicked out of Mino for criticizing the incompetent *daimyo* there.

In 1788, Sengai journeyed to Kyushu, where he took up residence in Shofuku-ji, the oldest and at the time practically the most dilapidated Zen temple in Japan. In a few years he became the abbot. Although he did much to restore the temple's prestige as a teaching center, he continued to live the simple life of a Zen monk, rejecting the pomp and luxury normally associated with the abbots of large temples. Besides teaching a great number of monks, he threw himself into teaching Buddhism to the peasants and other lay devotees. This was unusual at the time because it was considered politically suspect. The Tokugawa government demanded that strict guidelines be followed in teaching Buddhism to lay devotees in order to keep popular religion otherworldly and hence apolitical. It is possible that Sengai, who used his famous ink drawings as teaching tools, created his down-to-earth, often gently humorous drawings of Buddhist subjects partly in order to present a different view of Buddhism without attracting official suspicion. Certainly his record suggests that he was capable of this. But be that as it may, it is for his superb Zen drawings that he is best remembered. ❖



## Food Wars

by Mushim Ikeda-Nash

"You can't leave the table until you eat your hamburger," the boy's mother says.

His sisters and brothers and parents leave the table. He stares at his plate. He hears the sounds of dishes being done in the kitchen; then it is quiet. His friends ring the doorbell and ask if he can come out to play. His parents say no, not until he finishes what's on his plate. He won't eat meat; the thought makes him want to vomit. He sits, stonily, feeling shamed and resentful.

Finally, when no one is around, he slides the cold hamburger into his pants cuff and pretends he's eaten it. Sometimes he manages to slip things to the dog. He can leave the table now. He feels relieved. He has survived another family meal, but he's still hungry. He hopes that later on he can sneak into the kitchen and make himself a peanut butter sandwich.

\* \* \* \*

That's how I imagine a typical scene from my husband's childhood. Chris says he engaged in food wars with his parents until he left home and went to college. He has no happy memories of family meals or holiday feasts.

That's almost inconceivable to me. When I was a kid there was a television commercial that showed an Italian American family tucking into a huge meal, with a voice-over intoning: "We are people who like to eat." Replace the actors with five Japanese Americans and that was my family of origin, sitting down with gusto to a dinner of spaghetti with meatballs and Ragú tomato sauce, garlic bread, and iceberg lettuce salad.

But I didn't take food for granted. My father, who had grown up on a farm in Indiana during the Great Depression, often commented that farming was back-breaking labor; he also said there were people starving to death in the world, and we must not waste any food. Later, when I took up Zen Buddhist practice, I lived in a temple where we ate just two meals a day and dug up the back-yard to make a large vegetable garden. We lived on a tight budget, and food was precious.

For Buddhists, eating is a sacred act, and eating together is an opportunity for immense gratitude and reflection on what it means to consume life in order to live. My husband, our teenage son, and I hold hands before eating, look into one another's eyes, and recite:

*We venerate the Three Treasures  
And give thanks for this meal,  
The work of many beings  
And the offering of other forms of life.  
Thank you, Buddha.*


As we say "thank you" we each place our hands

palm-to-palm and bow. When we bow, our heads bending forward in unison, I always feel the poignancy of that particular moment. After all, we may not always have food to share together. And it's certain that the three of us will not always sit down to eat together. My heart expands in a gentle rush when I look at Chris and Joshua. I still feel the warmth of their hands.

But Chris's experience is very different from mine. For many years, I felt angry and frustrated when I would call everyone to the table and end up waiting for Chris to finish watering the plants he suddenly went out to water or to emerge from the bathroom as the food went cold. It embarrassed me when we sat down to Thanksgiving or Christmas dinners with large groups of friends and Chris was always the last to seat himself. Even though he became more aware of these behaviors and slowly changed them, and also explained to me his deep-seated physical anxiety around meals, it's been difficult for me to be patient. As we go deeper into our marriage, I see that those 18 years of food wars with his parents left wounds that remain to be healed. It is difficult for him to trust others deeply.

*We venerate the Three Treasures and give thanks for this meal.* Food is survival, and it can also be warmth, nourishment, connection, love. When I was a single mother, constantly breastfeeding, I could see and feel how much Josh loved to nurse, and how relaxed and complete he felt as he was dozing off at the breast. Dean, my housemate at the time, who was dying of AIDS, had never been around babies very much, and he once commented that "watching Josh breastfeed was a revelation." I think what he saw revealed was that being nourished means feeling truly connected—not only to what is going into our stomachs, but to our mother's body, her smell, her gaze, the sound of her voice. It is one of the most fundamental forms of happiness and peace we can know.

*We venerate the Three Treasures.* Returning to this daily ritual, I ground and steady myself. I want home to be a refuge where there are no wars. After dinner, Josh finishes his homework, Chris and I read, or sometimes we watch a movie until bedtime. The last thing we do before turning out all the lights is to make sure the cat's dish is filled. ♦



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# Vegetarianism as Spiritual Practice: A Tibetan Perspective

by Lama Khyimsar Rinpoche

*Born in southern Tibet, Lama Khyimsar Rinpoche is an eminent teacher of the Yungdrung Bon spiritual tradition. As director of the Tibetan Yungdrung Bon Institute in the U.S. and the Tibetan Yungdrung Bon Study Center in the UK, he is one of two Bonpo Lamas residing in the West. Renowned for his lively teaching style and sparkling wit, Rinpoche is accomplished in the philosophical and spiritual practices of Bon and Buddhism, Tibetan medicine, ancient folk remedies, healing arts, Tibetan astrology and astronomy, Tibetan feng shui (authentic Jung-wei Trog-Chod), and various types of ritual crafts. For more information go to [www.yungdrungbonUSA.com](http://www.yungdrungbonUSA.com).*

I know that there are many people in the world, particularly in the West, who are vegetarians, which is very good to hear from a spiritual point of view. But simply saying “I’m vegetarian and I’m a good person” doesn’t make sense. There should be some authentic concept in it. Also there are different kinds of vegetarians.

From a Tibetan point of view, there are so many contradictions among the vegetarians in the West. Some people say “I am vegetarian” and suddenly we see them eating fish. So it is a contradiction because in Tibet, *vegetarian*—pure vegetarian from the Buddha’s teaching point of view—means if you are not eating meat, then you should not eat fish either. For us, fish is also life. Killing one fish and killing one elephant is the same thing. It’s not the flesh we are talking about; it’s the soul. So that kind of vegetarian is not really a vegetarian. If you are eating fish, you are eating meat. Maybe you are not eating pork or beef but still you are eating meat. If you are pure vegetarian, then you should also not eat eggs. Eggs are nothing other than chicken. There is life in them. Chickens hatch from eggs. Therefore pure vegetarian means not even eating eggs.

Being vegetarian is a good concept that fits with one of the most important of the Buddha’s teachings: to abstain from taking life. People are vegetarian for different reasons. Some are vegetarian because they care for animals and have some kind of compassion toward them; others may want to lose weight; and some do not like meat, and so forth. However, it would be beneficial for those who are vegetarian, for whatever reason, to take a vow from an authentic lama, proper teacher, or spiritual master—not necessarily a lifelong vow—but one for at least six months

or a year or two years. If you are already vegetarian and then you take a vow, it really validates what you are doing and then it becomes pure spiritual practice. After taking the vow, not eating meat contributes toward accumulating positive merit for this life as well as for the next life. If we take the vow properly, we can accumulate merit until we get enlightened. At the same time, abstaining from meat also purifies the negative karma that we might have accumulated for many lifetimes through our body, mind, and speech actions.

In Tibet, those who are vegetarian are not vegetarian in a vague sense because they always take a vow from a lama. There are so many vegetarians in the West. Why don’t they take a vow? People complain that they have no time for spiritual practice because life is busy, which is quite alright, but this is a way of having a spiritual practice that does not require extra time.



*As a result of not eating meat, the person is more calm and compassionate and less angry.*

There are a couple of reasons for not eating meat. One reason is to not harm sentient beings. We believe that whether sentient beings are in animal form or whatever form in this life, they have before been our father and mother. Maybe these animals are born this time in the form of an animal due to their karma. So we should not eat meat, the flesh of our parents—our mother, our father. Another reason not to eat meat is that when you become a good practitioner, or a fully ordained monk or nun, eating meat affects the blood system. When blood is affected in this way, it contributes to emotions such as anger, jealousy, and pride. Not eating meat does not reinforce those energies. As a result, the person is more calm and compassionate and less angry.

However, there are some aspects of Tibetan spirituality that may appear contradictory. For example, there is a tantric tradition in which we do something called a *tsok* offering. Even though there is no English translation, I would translate it as “abundant feast offering,” where you offer all kinds of food, flowers, incense, and water. Strictly speaking, one should not include meat in this offering. In Tibet, in this *tsok* offering tradition,



people do add meat but it is a specific kind of meat—meat of an animal who has died a natural death. Otherwise, you do not offer meat. When it comes to other practices that are considered to be advanced, there are some practitioners who you may see eating meat, a lama for example, even as they teach to you to abstain from eating meat. I can understand that Westerners get upset when they see this contradiction. But we cannot judge because there are also concepts in the Buddha's teaching where things can be transformed. It is not easy. One cannot simply say, "Oh, I can transform it and eat it." You have to have the ability to transform it. One should be a practitioner who is highly realized. If a highly realized practitioner consumes meat of an animal, I think it would create good karma in that the animal's karma could be purified. Who knows, that highly realized person could be eating a piece of meat on purpose with great compassion toward the animal in order to liberate it. That is an exceptional case. But general people should abstain from taking meat.

Lamas, spiritual masters, and teachers would advise you to not eat meat. To abstain from taking life. In the monasteries we have fully ordained monks and nuns, ascetics who have taken 250 vows, and one of the vows is "to abstain from taking life." So the monks and nuns have taken a vow not to eat meat. But from the Tibetan medical point of view, which is also Buddha's teaching, if somebody is sick in the monastery who has taken a vow and if a doctor advises him or her that it is essential to eat meat, then the person is not breaking the vow. One can eat meat under the direct instruction of a doctor, and when meat is no longer required, one again resumes their vow.

There are many nonvegetarian people also around the world including in the West. For them too, my first

advice would be to not eat meat out of compassion for the animals. But if they are eating meat, it would be very helpful each time before they eat meat or meat products, to say some appropriate prayers from their heart or some specific mantras taught by an appropriate spiritual teacher, while also visualizing that meat as the whole animal standing in front of them. Think also about its karma, about how ignorant this animal is so as to have been born as an animal in this lifetime and to have no choice but to be butchered by humans. Think, too, "May the piece of meat that is lying in front of me and all the pieces from this animal's body that have gone to different houses contribute toward purifying or paying the negative karma of that particular animal, and may that animal be reborn again in a better human land where there is enlightened teaching and enlightened teachers. And ultimately, may this animal also get enlightenment as soon as possible." And if meat-eaters can also say prayers and mantras after thinking such thoughts, then that will be again another way of helping.

However, I am not encouraging anyone to eat meat. I am encouraging people to not eat meat, but if you are nonvegetarian, then you should say prayers. If you do not eat meat, you are not creating negative karma; you are creating positive karma because you are helping the animal who cannot express itself and that might again be reborn an animal and be slaughtered. As a nonvegetarian, try to use a piece of meat as well as other means toward paying that particular animal's karmic debts. ❖

*[Based on an interview conducted by Giovanni Singleton in Berkeley, California, on September 8, 2003.]*



Photo by Meredith Stout



# A SHIN PERSPECTIVE ON EATING MEAT

by the Reverend David Matsumoto

Pure Land Buddhism arose as a Buddhist path for lay householders, not for monks who might renounce the world and devote their lives to meditation and abstinence in far-off monasteries. As a result, Pure Land Buddhists—and Jodo Shinshu Buddhists in particular—have never been prohibited by rule or precept from eating meat.

Many Buddhists choose not to eat meat. Many of them are, one might say, simply “putting their palates where their mouths are” and trying their best to observe the precept not to take life. [This is] wonderful and admirable. However, if the reason that a person chooses to become a vegetarian is to avoid taking life, then one must go an awfully long way in order to be consistent with one’s beliefs. Perhaps a person does not eat the flesh of animals, but would butter, milk, or eggs be okay? Are we not killing a living being when we eat a carrot? Is there anything we can eat that does not involve the taking of life?

This, I must emphasize, is not a criticism of vegetarianism. Rather, my point is that we do not become better people simply by following a nonmeat diet. For Shin Buddhists, the question of whether or not to eat meat is not one of right or wrong. Eating tofu will not bring us any closer to the Pure Land. But, of course, neither will eating a steak.

Instead, the purpose of Jodo Shinshu is to bring us face to face with our own true selves. What we eat—whether meat or vegetables—is all a matter of our karmic conditioning. Moreover, the very fact that we, as living beings, must eat in order to survive reveals the true nature of our karmic selves. Buddhism causes us to reflect deeply upon ourselves and it brings us to an awful realization: *as living beings, we can live only by destroying other living beings.*

We all try to be good people. We seek to avoid harming others. But, despite it all, we cannot avoid one terrible fact: in order to live, we must kill other living beings. We cannot escape this fact by eating only tofu and brown rice. All we can do is face this fact of life and accept it. And when we finally understand this truth about ourselves, we cannot help but be filled with a deep sense of shame.

At the same time, however, we also find within ourselves the awakening of a profound sense of gratitude. We come to realize that the living beings that we have just devoured have in effect given their lives to

us, despite the fact that we are totally undeserving of that precious gift.

Ultimately, we come to realize that there can be no true gratitude in the absence of true shame. Nor will true shame fail to lead us to true gratitude. True shame and true gratitude are really two aspects of a single religious experience. When we simply say, “Thank you for this food,” without feeling keenly the deep shame of having to kill in order to live, we do not feel true gratitude. We do not taste the wondrous delicacy of life itself. ❖

*The Reverend David Matsumoto is a member of the faculty of the Institute of Buddhist Studies, which is the seminary of the Buddhist Churches of America. This piece is an abridged excerpt from his essay “Encountering the World with Gratitude: Shin Buddhist Words Before and During a Meal.” (The abridging was done by Diane Ames, with the kind permission of Rev. Matsumoto.)*

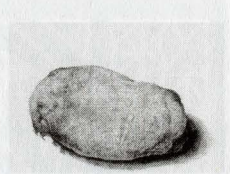
## INSTRUCTION FOR THE TENZO: AN EXCERPT

by Zen Master Dogen

*Eihei Dogen, the founder of the Soto School of Zen, wrote poetry, philosophical essays, and practical instructions for Zen monastics. One of his best-loved pieces is “Instruction for the Tenzo,” written in 1237, in which he gives specific directions about the running of a monastery kitchen. In a Zen monastery in 13th-century Japan, the tenzo, or head cook, was second only to the abbot in authority.*

A refined cream soup is not necessarily better than a broth of wild grasses. When you gather and prepare wild grasses, make it equal to a fine cream soup with your true mind, sincere mind, and pure mind. This is because when you serve the assembly—the undefiled ocean of buddha-dharma—you do not notice the taste of fine cream or the taste of wild grasses. The great ocean has only one taste. How much more so when you bring forth the buds of the way and nourish the sacred body. Fine cream and wild grasses are equal and not two. There is an ancient saying that monks’ mouths are like a furnace. You should be aware of this. Know that even wild grasses can nourish the sacred body and bring forth the buds of the way. Do not regard them as low or take this lightly. A guiding master of humans and devas should be able to benefit others with wild grasses. ❖

[From *Moon in a Dewdrop: Writings of Zen Master Dogen*, edited by Kazuaki Tanahashi (North Point Press; Farrar Straus and Giroux, 2001. Translation copyright 1985 by San Francisco Zen Center). Reprinted by permission of the publisher.]





# Seeing Too Deeply

The Hazards of Knowing Interdependence in the Global Economy

by Diana Winston

Following is a list of some of the species of fish that have become extinct (from [www.extinctanimal.com](http://www.extinctanimal.com)):

Alien splitfin  
Alvord cutthroat trout  
Ameca shiner  
Amistad gambusia  
Ash Meadows killifish  
Bagangan  
Banff longnose dace  
Baolan  
Bitungu  
Black kokanee  
Blackfin cisco  
Blue pike  
Cicek  
Clear Lake splittail  
Cottidae  
Cuitzeo silverside  
Cyprinodontidae  
Dallia pectoralis  
Deepwater cisco  
Disa  
Duck-billed bunting  
Durango shiner  
Dwarf sturgeon  
Fera  
Ganolytes cameo  
Ginger pearlfish  
Graceful priapella  
Gravenche  
Greasefish  
Harelip sucker  
June sucker  
Kandar  
Katapa-tapa  
Kilch  
Ladakh snowtrout  
Lake Ontario kiyi

The salmon was dead. It was artfully displayed on my plate on a bed of arugula with a dollop of mango salsa. I was dining at one of those California bistros where they fuse ethnic and California cuisine. I felt hip, at home, hungry. I extended my fork to sample its flesh and suddenly my discriminating wisdom kicked in. Was this fish farmed or wild? Atlantic or Pacific? Mercury high enough to worry about? Had this one been injected with antibiotics, pesticides, dyes? Didn't that article say that 90 percent of all fish in the ocean have been caught and there are no more fish? Did it have a family—did someone murder the mother of a happy fish family? Did it come from some fishing industry that overturned the livelihood of small fishermen who were only making 50 cents a day anyhow because they were displaced by the large fishing boats? And how on earth did it get to me? Transported in trucks running on gasoline? For that matter, I drove to this restaurant. Great, I was supporting the war in Iraq by eating this fish. Shouldn't I be a vegetarian, anyway? I'm a Buddhist, for God's sake!

I thought I was out for a peaceful dinner with friends, but instead I was treating myself to a full-on guilt ritual, one that I undergo frequently now, and drown out only with denial or intense conversation on a subject other than salmon.

Was I experiencing a deep insight into interdependence, fomented by years of spiritual practice? Or was this just too much knowledge guaranteed to ruin my dinner? Where does one draw a line?

I ate the salmon. It was on my plate and we shouldn't waste food. After all, there are millions dying of starvation in Africa.

\* \* \*

Yet even with all the theoretical knowledge about a food's history, I don't have much direct connection with my food. This salmon came from hundreds of miles away. I didn't fish for the salmon. I didn't catch it, filet it, or remove its bones. I didn't even cook it, in this case. I have no personal relation to that which keeps me alive.

At a family barbecue, Marina, my eight-year-old cousin, proudly announced her discovery: "Daddy," she observed, "There's a *food* called chicken, and an *animal* called chicken!"

\* \* \*

Whether hypervigilant or out of touch, Americans are more food-obsessed than ever. Even in so-called alternative circles, social lives revolve around meeting for lunch or dinner. We fantasize about where to go or what to prepare at home. *If I get to the store on time I can get that sundried tomato paste for the olive bread. Or, Should we do Vietnamese, Italian, Thai, or Ethiopian tonight?* In Ethiopia do you think they sit around wondering whether to go out for American? No, they make do, like most of the underdeveloped world, with the daily special: rice and whatever else they can get. In the U.S. our bookstores are stuffed with cookbooks and gourmet magazines. At the checkout counter we can purchase two different simple-living magazines that tell us to meditate daily and offer fabulous recipes using whole grains and cilantro. Even simple eating is a marketing device.

It's possible we are trying to fill a hole that's never going to be filled in this way—the hole of loneliness, fear, lack. When I feel depressed I head straight to the refrigerator. I make myself macaroni and cheese when I start to feel the pain of loneliness. I numb myself out with Goldfish crackers. I feel momentary relief as the crunchy cheesy salty creatures hit my tongue, but the underlying dis-ease is merely masked.

In the U.S. we are glutted with food and worried daily about our fat thighs and butts. The dieting industry makes billions yearly off our low self-esteem while in another part of the world, let's say Somalia, people are drinking from contaminated streams to quench their thirst—and that's it for the day, that's their nourishment. You want thin, I'll give you thin!

In the overdeveloped world, the privileged can eat whatever they want whenever they want it. What an odd state of affairs. The result: depletion of the *world's* resources. Fish are now the canary in the coal mine. The world has overfished. Fish are becoming extinct. According to a recent scientific report, fishing should be completely banned in a third of the world's oceans in order to reverse a catastrophic decline in fish stocks. Biologists recommend that large areas of ocean—including the North Sea, around the Falklands, and the Gulf of California—should be made into legally protected marine reserves, policed by naval patrols and satellites. Otherwise fish will be a thing of the past, and the millions of people who currently survive on fish will have to find an alternative, like soylent green.

\* \* \*



*In this apple I see the presence of the entire universe.*

—Thich Nhat Hanh

One eating meditation practice is to trace the food on your plate back to its origin. Can you see the tree, the seed, the wind, the rain, the farmers, the ancestors of the farmers, the air, the sky, the...? The results are often revelatory, especially when this practice is done for the first time.

A few years ago I taught eating meditation to a group of teens. I wanted to teach them about interdependence and I surprised them with a bag of Hershey's chocolate kisses. They surprised me with their deep seeing:

"I see the rain," said one.

"I see the sun," said another.

"I see slavery in the Ivory Coast," said a third who had spent a semester interning at a social justice organization.

"What?" I asked.

He pointed out that children in West Africa have been sold into slavery to harvest the cocoa beans. He told us that these children, some as young as nine, are lied to about jobs and wages and suffer through beatings, insufficient meals, lockups at night, and workdays of more than 12 hours without breaks.

"They say there could be up to 15,000 child slaves there," he informed me. "It's horrible, these poor kids."

We sat together in silence staring at the kiss. One girl began to cry. "It's just so sad," she said. "I look at this kiss and now I see small children dying."

When the Buddha realized interdependence in 500 BCE, it was not so complicated. "Let's see," he mused. "With my divine eye I realize this chapati is made from flour that comes from a village one day's walk away, where it was milled by the hand of maidens. Aah, we are all interconnected." But in 2001, the flour I'm eating usually comes from a corporation whose



Thomas Rude, *Restoration*

business practices I may or may not know anything about. My wheat may be distributed by a corporation without a union. My corn has been genetically modified. It was flown in from Peru, where it was picked and sorted by 12-year-old peasant children making a heartbreakingly low wage. The airplane that transported it uses fuel that's linked to the war in Iraq...and I'm back to where I started.

\*\*\*

*Thomas Rude (here and page 22) is a self-taught artist living in Portland, Oregon.*

*He continues to unfold a practice of art that aims to tear down walls.*



Lake Titicaca orestias  
 Las Vegas dace  
 Least silverside  
 Longjaw cisco  
 Manalak  
 Maravillas red shiner  
 Mexican dace  
 Miller Lake lamprey  
 Monkey Spring pupfish  
 New Zealand grayling  
 Ninespine stickleback  
 Opal allotoca  
 Orkney char  
 Pahranaagat spinedace  
 Pahrump Ranch poolfish  
 Palata  
 Palaeoesox fritzschei  
 Parras characodon  
 Parras pupfish  
 Pfarrig  
 Phantom shiner  
 Plateau dace  
 Poeciliidae  
 Popta's bunting  
 Raycraft ranch poolfish  
 Rio Grande bluntnose shiner  
 Salado shiner  
 Salmonidae  
 Sarasin's minnow  
 Scharff's charr  
 Scioto madtom  
 Silver trout  
 Siråang  
 Snake River sucker  
 Stumptooth minnow  
 Suwa gudgeon  
 Syr-Darya shovelnose  
 Tanypterichthys pridensis  
 Tesselated pupfish  
 Thicktail chub  
 Tiefseesaibling  
 Umbra limi  
 Utah Lake sculpin  
 Vag baligi  
 Whiteline topminnow  
 Yellowfin cutthroat trout  
 Zona

I live with the constant presence of what I might call Unhelpful Awareness of Interdependence (UAI). Helpful interdependent awareness might be seeing the presence of the entire universe in your morning grapefruit. You sigh with joy and oneness, yes, we are all connected. UAI, however, is another story. For me, it is made of layer upon layer of thought processes present in nearly every experience of daily life, tormenting me in that knowing voice.

It's not helpful. It *can't* be helpful to feel shame and guilt every time we eat nonlocal food...it just can't be.

Guilt is a *kilesa*, or defilement, according to the Buddhist *abhidharma*. It is an unskillful state of mind that leads to suffering. It is a form of self-flagellation. The Buddha distinguished it from *hiri* and *ottappa* (moral fear and moral dread, respectively). *Hiri* and *ottappa* are wholesome states of mind that invite us to reflect on past actions and make different choices. We feel fear or disgust when thinking about an ethical breach and we vow to act differently. That's the good kind of remorse. We're not paralyzed by thinking we're fools, we simply learn our lesson and don't do it again. Later when we even *think* about transgressing, we are turned off.

\*\*\*

We can't be pure. This is the reality of the global economy. In order to live, most of us in the West depend on structures that perpetuate oppression. We are stuck—face it—living off the backs of the global poor. In luxurious America, we who live well live as well as we do only because the poor take the brunt. This is a very serious notion for a Buddhist to contemplate. If we take seriously that first precept, and look with interdependent eyes, we will see harming in nearly everything we eat, wear, ride, or enjoy.

\*\*\*

So how do we tap into an understanding of interdependence that helps us feel more compassionate without falling over the edge into guilt and self-flagellation? I have a few thoughts:

### 1) Personal Approaches

Abandon guilt. It's OK to enjoy our food. Actually, it's a good thing. It's helpful to remind ourselves of the impossibility of purity in this interdependent global econo-

my. It's okay to make mistakes, to not buy locally from time to time, to get your coffee in a styrofoam cup when you're in a rush.

Make smart food choices. The above is true only if we can cull the wisdom from the guilt. We can work with *hiri* and *ottappa*. We can use the discriminating wisdom embedded in Unhelpful Awareness of Interdependence to make skillful food choices, such as buying organic, buying local, and aiming for mostly vegetarian. Eat healthy whole foods; you'll feel a whole lot better.

Work with the UAI mentally. Notice the voices. When they arise unbidden in your mind, gently say to them, "Not now." Note the number of times they come to your mind; treat them as thoughts that don't need to be identified with. When they arise, what does your body feel like? Are these voices tied into other self-judging voices? Investigate.

### 2) Slow Food

The Slow Food Movement, which originated in Italy, is in keeping with mindfulness practice. Slow down and taste your food. What a concept! As we learn to appreciate our food more, we will begin to make more sustainable food choices. And there's something extremely pleasurable about eating in community, sharing meals, cooking for each other.

### 3) Structural

We can take social or political actions on behalf of better food, whether it's protesting genetically modified organisms (GMOs), writing congresspeople, organizing community-supported agriculture, facilitating farmers' markets, creating campaigns to boycott inhumane production methods, or fighting against overfishing. If we actually are doing something out in the world, it seems to appease the guilt. We have a retort when the UAI voice gets nasty: "I'm working on it!"

### 4) Gratitude

Gratitude goes a long way toward wiping out UAI. I try to transform guilt into gratitude by reminding myself how lucky I am to be alive and to have such a variety of foods to eat, to have sentience, to be able to smell and taste. Before I eat I take a moment in prayerful silence. Sometimes I say a traditional Buddhist prayer. Sometimes I send *metta* (lovingkindness). Sometimes I just sit there until I really and truly feel gratitude: How amazing that the salmon gave up her life so that I could eat. May my life be worthy of that little salmon. May my work in the world do her justice. ❖

*Diana Winston worked for BPF from 1994 to 2002. Currently she is taking a break. She is the author of the newly released Wide Awake: A Buddhist Guide for Teens.*



# Craving

by Linda Hess

Between 1975 and 1980, I kept a detailed journal on the experience of compulsive overeating, a problem that started in the mid-'60s and increasingly came to dominate my life. I had begun Zen practice in 1974. The "eating notebooks" turned out to be a very long, cumbersome (since everything had to be recorded in words on paper), and powerful exercise in mindfulness. Combining Zen with this writing practice, I began to see addiction as the whole problem of human life, the cause of suffering that the Buddha tried to help people understand.

Doing the notebooks was an act of despair. Having always been a writer, I felt I might as well write while dying. There seemed no way to change my disastrous habits: I had tried everything and failed. What I learned in the writing—impossible to anticipate—was that the "eating problem" was connected to many other things, to everything really. It was connected to sex, rage, fear, bodily encodings of childhood experiences. For a long time, as these matters came to consciousness, I could experience only the ways in which I was imprisoned and suffering. But eventually I began to experience ways of release: fear and rage melting to sadness and even love. I also learned about the patterns of my behavior, previously unknown to me. For example, I learned that the "payoff" to a fully successful binge was a short period of utterly unconscious sleep. The binge would be structured to produce unconsciousness; there would be cravings not only to eat, but to eat lying down, while reading, under blankets, until I fell asleep. Sometimes I compared this perfectly blank sleep to the sleep one falls into after lovemaking.

Acting out my addictive inclinations in a very gross way on my body, I had to learn through the body, not just the mind, how to get free. I knew, of course, that body and mind were not separate. But if I hadn't been regularly destroying my body through my eating habits, I might have been inclined to focus excessively on the mind. The following excerpts highlight bodily experience, body-mind connections, and the continuing thread of Buddhist practice. During these years, I was moving back and forth between California and India; the settings are part of the story.

Since the point here is more process than plot, I'll tell one version of the ending. By 1980, compulsive eating was gone from my life. There has never been another binge. This leads me to doubt the 12-step gospel that the particular form of one's addiction is an

incurable disease that one must expect to bear till death. Addiction in general, I believe, is definitive of the human condition. I equate it with the word often translated as "craving" in the second noble truth. [First noble truth: Suffering pervades life. Second noble truth: The cause of suffering is craving.] The forms of addiction are legion, and transformable. They are a major part of what we study when we "study the self."



## *Stopping in Israel on the way to a period of doctoral research in India*

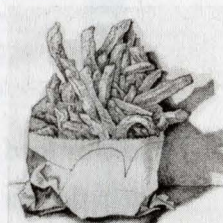
Yesterday at 1:30 I bought food in the street, ate walking, stopped short of a binge but craved figs, bought them, craved to get them home, lie down in bed with a newspaper and eat till I slept. I felt the relief of a baby getting its sucker and blanket as I finally lay down with my figs and newspaper.

## *Visiting a Zen group in Jerusalem*

Friday, after not eating too much during the day, I came home with Hannah. She is dieting, and we had a healthy dinner. Then came the usual cravings and nervousness, my evening withdrawal. Intending to get up early for an all-day sitting, we went to bed at 9:30. But at 9:45 I got up and started to hunt everywhere, quietly, as is normal for me in such situations. I found two pieces of candy in a bowl and ate them. There was practically nothing in the kitchen—just her tomatoes and cucumbers. But I kept searching and found a box of sweet cocoa that belonged to her housemate. Mixed one full cup with a little milk to make a thick sauce and ate it in bed while reading. Made a second cup, even fuller, and took it to bed. Then fell into a drugged sleep...

Sat through four hours of meditation this morning. Body feeling terrible as it feels only when I've overdosed, this time on chocolate and sugar. Kept falling asleep while sitting, no power to resist. Then the violence and anger. First: want to die, want to kill myself. Then: want to break the windows in front of me. To smash, smash. I imagine smashing people, beating their bodies against pavement until they are dead. My body shakes, tensely, because I have to sit still.

I think of the space I would have to get through in order to resist the urges to eat—an empty space, a no-man's-land of yellow flat rock—and I know I can't do it, can't do it, can't do it. A scream starts up in my head: *I hate you, I hate you, I hate you.* Immediately I remember the time when, as a small child, I screamed this at my mother. Enormous crying, tears and snot



**I felt the relief of a baby getting its sucker and blanket as I finally lay down with my figs and newspaper.**



running down my face, but silently because I'm sitting in meditation.

§

Yesterday's *Jerusalem Post* quoted a woman from the U.N. saying how intolerable it is that in poor countries millions are starving or undernourished, while in rich countries people are making themselves sick by overeating.

The old woman at Kare Deshe on the Galilee saying to me, "Eat, eat," and I making a joke about it, and she saying seriously, "I have been hungry. It is better to be killed in war than to be hungry."

#### *Staying with friends in New Delhi*

Last night I broke apart, stuffing myself with a big extra meal at midnight after everyone had gone to bed. The 10-day resolution was forgotten. I made no attempt to stop, to be conscious of the conflict for even one minute, but waited impatiently till the coast was clear, went down and got two successive bowls of heavy leftovers from dinner, ate while reading Jack Kerouac's description of a horrible alcohol hangover and despair. I fell asleep in a stupor.

This morning, *my* familiar hangover. Body puffed-up, especially face and stomach. Surfaces deadened, especially eyes which feel like cold gels. I want to avoid contact with people. Imagining everyone is angry with me. When the cook says, "Good morning," he speaks angrily because he's noticed how I've eaten the leftovers. Karen and Michel are annoyed with my presence at the table. I've made my chest worse and interrupted my recovery from bronchitis.

§

The symptoms of malnutrition seem to be the same as those of overeating: "A malnourished child is listless, lacking in curiosity, and unresponsive to maternal and other stimulation... the mother herself is often a victim of nutritionally induced lethargy" (Alan Berg, *The Nutrition Factor*).

#### *A trip to Bodh Gaya*

After giving in to the binge, I started to wander around eating. From stall to stall, eating cookies and sesame cakes, and with each bite closing myself off to the life around me. Finally I bought a large bag of roasted shelled peanuts, intending to eat them while lying in bed in my room. As I walked across a field toward the guest house two little girls came running at me, dressed in dirty cotton. They were laughing, about nine years old. Thoughts flickered as legs kept moving. "Beggars. I'm not giving them anything this time. Often I give. Not this time." But as they approached they saw the bag of peanuts, smelled the roasted nut smell. Their eyes glittered with desire. They reached for it. I couldn't keep it. The planned completion of my binge receded as I started giving peanuts to them

and two others who had come up. Soon there were 10 ragged children, clamoring, pushing, and grabbing while I tried to distribute the peanuts fairly, tried to make them keep quiet and not attack each other. One tiny girl started crying, hit by a bigger boy. I gave her more. Another girl, the most aggressive, kept trying to rip away my bag like the monkeys at the red temple. After I had distributed nearly all the nuts as equally as I could, the bag was torn from my hands and ripped to shreds, with children scrambling for fallen bits. I went away appalled, wanting to kill myself for my hopeless inability to come to grips with my crude craving, even in the midst of such raw hunger, even in the very place of the Buddha's enlightenment.

#### *At San Francisco Zen Center*

Came home with inner peace and quiet from sitting, and immediately overate badly. Unless I refrain from overeating, I will never penetrate anything. Only by refraining can I see the life I have been missing.

§

From 7 to 8:30, moving from dining room to kitchen to living room and back again. Finished dinner at 7 but can't leave. I eat about five more helpings of salad. Heavy. Can't leave. I stand in the hallway browsing through cookbooks and eating salad. People walk by. I am withdrawn and ashamed. I go to the bread room but someone is there, and I'm ashamed to take bread right after dinner, where people can see me. Back to reading room. I read a whole magazine just to fill my mind the way I fill my stomach. I stand in the hall. I pace. I stand still with hands dug into pockets. I am not free to move my limbs or break the spell that is on my head.

I am trying to get to the stairway. I get close to the bottom of the stairway but don't go up. I walk to the front door, pretending to look at messages. Back to the bread room. Still someone there. Don't go in. Survey dinner leftovers and fruit bowl. Don't take any. Stare at people in a class. Somehow I push myself upstairs. It has taken one and a half hours. Even then I don't go to my room but stand in the hall, pretending to look at notices. Someone passes and says, "What's up?" I say, "My usual evening..." and then make a gesture of tension and difficulty. He smiles and says, "Me too." This brief moment of normalcy breaks the spell long enough for me to get to my room. I go in, go out again to the bathroom. Then I realize I've done it, broken through it, got through that bewitched period without eating, and *moved away* from it. Realizing this I start shaking all over and crying, a dry, teeth-chattering crying. It was so difficult! Just that much! And not in the clear yet. While writing I am still crying, teeth still chattering. Desires to eat still come, threatening to take me over. But I know I have got through something.

**...hold your food  
up to the sun  
before you have a  
binge, as a gesture  
to light and life.**



Rates on in evening —  
 - more wine  
 - 2 pieces of licorice  
 - 1 slice persimmon  
 - 3 cookies  
 - several grapes  
 - a hunk off coffee cake

Sunday Oct. 28

stayed in bed for hours  
 + ate — bread, butter, cocoa,

whatever I could take,  
 keeping it a little quiet  
 because of Audri — 7:30 a.m. to 2:00

This was another easy  
 lie — I told Alan I  
 wouldn't eat at night. Ha  
 Ha Ha.

I went on eating on  
 + off thru the afternoon.  
 Gave up.

Maybe I didn't eat at night

Monday — because of HR's  
 arrival — I didn't eat.  
 Almost anything. But at  
 6:00 before he came I  
 had bouillon with mushrooms  
 + water chestnuts — prac-  
 tically no calories. But  
 I managed to wolf it.  
 Wolf bouillon — whole  
 can of water chestnuts  
 Reading.

Tuesday — Salad at lunch  
 Home at 6. Talked to  
 Jill. Started eating.  
 Before group — 1 hour.  
 Bread, butter, matzos,  
 biscuits, honey.  
 Stopped when Allison  
 called. Told her.

§

Following lunch I was caught in the iron grip of compulsion. With all my will I held back from eating more, then returned to my room and went through the most infantile crying. It was down at the bottom of the breath where you keep sobbing like hiccups, like a tiny baby who is out of control and cries till it is exhausted and falls asleep. I imagined someone coming and trying to comfort me, holding me while I cried, and in my fantasy I told them, "I'll kill you, I'll kill you," though I actually wanted them to hold me and care for me.

A life's worth of love is locked up behind the dam of my stomach. That is the greatest thing that has to be got out, that is the whole secret of life, but before that, all this pain, murder, fear has to be got out, again and again. Just this guts-emptying crying, not worrying about what it means.

§

#### *Experiences remembered from a seven-day sesshin*

A woman sits next to me, overweight, with a pile of extra cushions to make it possible for her to sit. She is in pain. I know just what kind of pain she is experi-

encing. I imagine putting my arm around her and encouraging her. The thought that I could help someone brings tears to my eyes.

§

I am looking at breakfast, served carefully in three bowls in front of me. The first bowl holds steaming oatmeal, the second a mixture of cantaloupe, bananas and peaches, the third a heap of fragrant, herbed eggs. My legs are crossed, my hands held formally at the center of my body. I wait while everyone is served; after a signal and chant we all begin to eat together.

It looks like so much food, each bowl piled with something different. I think of the children who lived around my house in India. Most of them hardly ever tasted fruit—it was too expensive. I think of children in railroad stations chewing on leathery bits of bread. I remember holding babies with snotty faces, scabby scalps, dirty hair, who looked at me with dull eyes. The glistening pile of fruit in front of me—how can I want to eat all this when they exist? Not just that I shouldn't eat it; I shouldn't want to.

(continued on page 23)



# You Eat What You Get

by J. D. Barrett, Sr.

If you hang around prisoners who are new to prison, chances are that they will be talking about 1) their criminal escapades, 2) sex, or 3) how much money they were making “on the streets”—and in that order. But eavesdrop on a conversation between guys who have been around for a long time (like myself—15 years) and they will most likely be talking about food.

Prison food is terrible, so I fantasize about food, and about what I will eat when I am released and can

once more choose for myself. In the meantime, here in prison, I am like a monk who lives on what’s put in his begging bowl. I have to eat what is put on the tray and slid through the window to me.

I have Buddhist friends who don’t eat meat, and I applaud them. But I have read that Buddha ate meat under certain circumstances. I believe that he refused meat only when the animal was killed specifically for his consumption. If someone put meat in his begging bowl, he ate it. I follow this course myself. My vegetarian friends have filed grievances asking for a vegetarian diet, only to be told by officials that they should simply trade meat for veggies. The only problem is that trading food is against the rules (albeit not usually enforced) here in Georgia prisons. So the official word is that if one wishes to obey a religious prohibition against eating meat, one must risk disciplinary action.

So I eat the meat. I make this choice for three reasons. First, the Buddha himself ate meat under similar circumstances. Second, a reason for not eating meat is to avoid the creation of karma brought about by causing harm to the animal, but were I to abstain, the state would kill just as many animals. Third, the stuff served to us as meat is hardly meat anyway! It’s usually made of soy-bean meal, because the meat gets stolen at some point along the way.

I respect the commitment of those who put themselves at risk of disciplinary action by abstaining from eating meat. I hope that with the number of Buddhist inmates rising, we may some day be given the same consideration as Islamic prisoners regarding our dietary restrictions. And I hope that if the possibility of being vegetarian were offered, I would choose that path. Not only would this agree with my religious beliefs but my political belief is that far too many food resources that could feed starving people go into feeding animals for slaughter.

In closing, I offer a bit of vegetarian prison cuisine. This recipe has been handed down from prisoner to prisoner in Georgia.



Thomas Rude, *Reuben*



## Georgia Prison Pocket

### Ingredients

- ◆ 1 packet of ramen noodle soup, any flavor
- ◆ 1 individual pack of cheese crackers  
(I use "Cheese on Cheese" by Little Debbie)
- ◆ 1 individual bag of hot barbecue potato chips
- ◆ 4 tablespoons of dehydrated refried beans
- ◆ optional: extras such as cheese, onions, peppers, or mystery meat from the prison cafeteria
- ◆ hot water

### To prepare:

Without opening the ramen noodle soup package, slam it on the floor several times to begin breaking up the noodles. Then continue breaking the noodles into very small pieces by mashing the unopened package between the fingers.

With fingers, crush the cheese crackers without opening the package. Crackers should be mashed almost to a powder. Put soup and crackers aside.

Next, carefully open the top of the chips bag about an inch to allow air out, so that the bag doesn't burst when you mash the chips. The bag *must* be kept whole for later use. Crush chips by hand into very small pieces. Then open the top of the bag the rest of the way. Open ramen package and pour noodle pieces and flavor packet into chip bag. Add beans and optional ingredients to chip bag. (If you are using a lot of extra ingredients you will need a bigger bag.) Shake bag until contents are well mixed.

Carefully add hot water to bag until contents are just covered. Water should not be boiling but should be about the temperature needed for instant coffee. (The hot-water tap should work here.)

Fold the top two corners of the bag down on a diagonal to form a point at the top. Then fold the point down two or three times and secure with a clip (I use the clip on my identification tag) so that contents will not leak.

Wrap the bag in a towel to keep it hot, and let it set for 20–30 minutes.

When contents have set, unclip and unfold the top of the bag and tear open the seam down the back of the bag. Then tear open the bottom seam so that the bag can be opened and used as a plate.

Enjoy! ❖

*J. D. Barrett, Sr. has been a practicing Buddhist for about 10 years and is a member of the Atlanta Soto Zen Center through its prison program. He was a featured poet in Emory University's Lullwater Review. He has a master's in addictionology from St. John's University.*

## Craving, continued from page 21

§

*I am happy. I am happy.* For the first time these words keep coming up, and I don't know why. Then: *I am beginning to feel. Beginning to feel. Beginning to feel.* From the bottom of my gut to the top of my heart, melting.

The teacher is saying, "In Buddhism we have no revealed teaching. So you just have to reveal yourself. Is there a way to end suffering? Is there a way of living that puts an end to suffering?"

And inside I am shouting, "Yes! Yes!" like someone at a football game. "Yes, there is a way to end suffering!"

§

Months ago I asked about the "mystery of responsibility." Why does one person stand up and another lie down? How does a person who has been lying down all her life find it in herself to stand up?

I know the answer now. It is simple effort. Effort is an inner movement that has nothing to do, or only incidentally to do, with results. You make a big effort, a small effort, an infinitesimal effort. When you're up against something enormous, you make a tiny, a pitifully tiny effort. Never mind. It is a movement. It can be "merely symbolic." You may hold your food up to the sun before you have a binge, as a gesture to light and life. Or you may just consciously stop for one second to hold the thought, "Sunlight." For me the effort was often writing in the notebook. Countless times I thought it was useless, disgusting, that I went on writing and writing without results, without abandoning the behavior. But it isn't useless. All the efforts are valuable, although you may not be able to see the value.

After a binge don't collapse. Try not to go to sleep. Try to have one conscious moment at the end of a day that you feel you have otherwise obliterated. It doesn't matter that this effort will not bring you success in your larger goals. Just make the effort. Again and again. Each effort is like a grain of sand. Your enemy is like a mountain. But after a long time you will find that the balance has shifted. It has shifted by one grain of sand. There is something under your feet. The grains of sand have become something under your feet, you can see what you are doing, and you stand up inside. That's how it happens. ❖

[Excerpted by permission from the anthology *Being Bodies*, edited by Lenore Friedman and Susan Moon (Shambhala, 1987).]

*Linda Hess teaches in the Department of Religious Studies at Stanford University. She has translated and written about the great Indian poet Kabir, and most recently she has been working with the music and living oral traditions of Kabir. She is a longtime Zen practitioner.*



# On Fasting, Slowly

by Vulnerable Tofu Roshi

**Y**ou don't hear much about fasting in Zen practice, but actually we *do* fast in Zen. We fast *between* meals and snacks. In fact, almost all of the time that we are not eating, with just a few exceptions, we are fasting!

One reason fasting is called fasting is because people want to get it over with quickly and get on to the next meal, whether it's breakfast, elevenses, lunch, afternoon tea and cookies, dinner, or bed-time snack. But it's important not to fast too quickly. Fast slowly, at least at first. Later, when you are more experienced, you can fast faster. You have heard of the Slow Food Movement? At my practice place, the No Way Zen Center, we are part of the Slow *Fast* Movement. Just as the Slow Food Movement emphasizes organically grown food prepared at home and eaten together in community, similarly, we in the Slow Fast Movement take care to ensure that all the food we don't eat together is organic.

One of the great advantages of fasting is the time you save. You don't have to shop, cook, or wash dishes. You don't really even have to floss. In the time you

*For five minutes every morning sit on your cushion and take this vow: "I will not think about food."*

save, you can develop other interests besides food. In the time it takes to look for a parking place at the supermarket, you can be learning chords on the ukelele. In the time you now spend alphabetizing the spice rack, you can take a course in night photography.

There is some confusion about the difference between a fast and a diet. If we limit our food intake for the *purpose* of losing weight, that's a diet. But if we limit it for no reason, that's a fast. My dharma ancestor, Old Master Bush Wak of Lazy Man Mountain, went on a fast twice a year and ate nothing but French toast for a week. He didn't want his fast to be tainted by the desire to lose weight, and in fact he usually gained weight while fasting. As soon as he finished his fast, he always had to go on a diet, and for another week he had nothing but celery juice.

My students sometimes complain to me that they obsess about food while fasting. This is a common

problem. If you cease all eating with your mouth and yet you continue eating with your mind, you are not fasting. So here is what I suggest: For five minutes every morning sit on your cushion and take this vow: "I will *not* think about food." Start with your least favorite foods, and work your way into a more challenging practice. In my own case, for example, I began the practice by not thinking about tripe. Whenever

thoughts of tripe crept into my mind, as they inevitably did, I returned to my breath and started all over again. In this way I became more disciplined, and when I had spent a whole month deeply not thinking about tripe for five minutes every morning, I added other foods, and

gradually I worked my way up to not thinking about tastee-creme donuts for five full minutes at a stretch.

If you continue to have difficulties thinking about food all the time, you may find it helpful to put all your cookbooks away and drape a plain white sheet over the refrigerator.

I would like to say more about the practice of fasting *together*. At No Way, we use our traditional oryoki eating style for this. Everyone spreads out their three bowls on the mealboard in the zendo. The servers come around with empty serving bowls, and each person indicates how much air they want as they are being served. If you don't like what is not being served in any of the three bowls, you are encouraged not to take at least a little bit of it all the same. If the aversion that comes up is very strong, you can repeat a mantra to yourself such as, "It's better than tripe. It's better than tripe." In this way, we support each other's practice.

Dogen says: "How do we not think? Non-thinking." So if you ask: "How do we not eat?" I reply, *á la* Dogen, further clarifying the butter of his wisdom, "Non-eating." But perhaps you are asking: "How do we not think about not eating?" I bet you have already guessed it: Non-thinking about non-eating.

And remember, food is doof backwards. ❖

*Tofu Roshi is the founding teacher of the No Way Zen Center, in Berkeley, California. For his day job he manages the Next-to-Godliness Laundromat. To find out more about his teachings, please refer to The Life and Letters of Tofu Roshi, by Susan Ichi Su Moon (Shambhala).*





# Eating the Precepts: A Perspective

by Trena Cleland

One aspect of Buddhism I find very challenging is the teaching that no point of view can be declared absolutely right or wrong, good or bad, true or false. The dharma warns that attachment to what we “know” leads to suffering, and encourages us to honor life’s gray areas rather than hold fast to judgments and opinions.

In keeping with that open-minded approach, even Buddhist principles such as the precepts are to be understood as helpful guidelines, not absolutes.

That’s a beautiful foundation to our understanding, but I worry that it encourages a sort of squishy moral relativism in myself and others. Life *is* complex, but taking refuge in “don’t-know mind” sometimes feels like a convenient way to avoid making difficult ethical choices.

Consider, if you will, The Maddeningly Complex Case of the Men’s Shelter Meal.

In April of 1999, I was in BPF’s BASE program, a six-month support/practice/action group that helps us integrate our spirituality with our efforts to change the world. To take our practice into the community, our small BASE group volunteered to make dinner one night at a Berkeley shelter for homeless men.

One of our members, Dave, checked in with Maylie Scott, a Buddhist priest, BPF Board member, and BASE mentor, who was a regular volunteer at the shelter and knew the ropes. She reviewed the logistics with him and mentioned that the ingredients for the meal could be bought at Smart & Final, a big-box warehouse store. Dave e-mailed her suggestions to the rest of us and added a tip from Maylie: “The men love meat...the men love iceberg lettuce...the men love ice cream.”

Meat? Iceberg lettuce? Ice cream? I respected Maylie as our elder stateswoman, but her menu seemed retrograde, a flashback to the dinners of my midwestern childhood. What troubled me the most was Maylie’s blessing for our BASE group to serve meat.

Meat, in my opinion, has little redeeming social value. (I will forego the arguments against iceberg lettuce.) Beans, whole grains, and vegetables are a much better food value for the dollar, and nutritionally, a fine substitute. Environmentally, the factory-farming of animals is a resource disaster. But my biggest beef with beef is that innocent creatures are raised in barbaric conditions and then slaughtered. It seems an obvious and cruel violation of their fundamental rights as living beings.

Now I know that many people—including the

Dalai Lama—have strongly held reasons for sometimes consuming meat. For some, it’s what’s offered to them in their begging bowl. Others feel it’s necessary for health reasons, or argue that we evolved to be carnivores. Still others, like Eskimos, have few options because of their climate.

But we BASE members were dedicated to saving sentient beings. How could we justify serving meat as part of our collective service-in-action, especially since we live in Northern California, with organic foods stores and farmers’ markets around every corner? It seemed not only wholly unnecessary but in violation of life-affirming spiritual principles. We had a wonderful opportunity to walk (chew?) our Buddhist talk in the food we served.

*When I described the Tennessee Corn Pone, a couple of the shelter guests said, “No meat?” and turned away, disappointed.*

I sent an e-mail to the members of our BASE group, suggesting that instead of making a meat entrée, we make Tennessee Corn Pone, a great recipe from a classic vegetarian cookbook, *Laurel’s Kitchen*. It’s a casserole of sautéed vegetables, tomatoes, and beans, covered with a cornbread topping. No one wrote back to speak for or against the Tennessee Corn Pone, so I talked to Dave, the coordinator, and pushed it through.

On the appointed day, Dave and I did the shopping together—not at corporately owned Smart & Final, but at the Berkeley Bowl, a community grocery store with a friendly grassroots vibe. We then rendezvoused with our BASE compatriots in the shelter kitchen, unpacked the boxes of groceries, and started to prep the meal.

Some of the shelter guests who were milling around queried us about the dinner menu. When I described the Tennessee Corn Pone, a couple of them said, “No meat?” and turned away, disappointed. My BASE peers started looking uncomfortable. One, who hadn’t seen the e-mails, said, “This is a veggie meal?” She sounded surprised. “Will it be hearty enough?”

I began to feel a little defensive. Would the men’s disappointment be seen as my fault? Did our BASE group, in fact, stand behind the meal as delicious and well-balanced, nutritionally and spiritually? And...*would* it be hearty enough?



While the casserole baked, I stewed. This recipe suddenly seemed risky, not the crowd-pleasing slam-dunk I had anticipated.

"Dinner's ready!" The men left their card games and sofas and ambled toward the buffet line. We lined steaming pans of casserole, tossed salad (romaine, not iceberg), sliced bread, and juice along the serving table and served the meal to the men as they passed through the line. Most of the guests took it gratefully, but several squinted and sniffed suspiciously at the Tennessee Corn Pone, and their eyes didn't exactly light up with excitement.

"They should keep an open mind," I told myself. "It's good for people to try new things."

But I was starting to see the folly of having so blithely rejected Maylie's suggestion about serving meat. She was a regular volunteer here. She knew what the guests would want. I whispered a prayer of thanks that at least we had taken her advice and bought ice cream—Neopolitan—for the men's dessert.

Most of the guests cleared out after dinner. A couple of them made a point of thanking us. But at one of the tables, a brilliant, angry guest named Gregory held forth about the injustice of not having received what he expected: a *real* dinner, with meat. He compared our group to missionaries, saying, "You don't give us what we want—you give us what you think we should have."

When word of this accusation floated back to the kitchen, where some of us were washing dishes, I felt a stab of remorse. Was it true? Were my noble ideals about protecting innocent animals and the environment accompanied by a holier-than-thou attitude? Ram Dass has cautioned that the helper often "helps" at the psychological expense of the one who is helped. This reinforces roles: the helper is empowered and the helped is not.



Donald Rothberg, Trena Cleland, Belinda Griswold, with Tennessee Corn Pone

Fortunately, some of the shelter guests didn't cotton to Gregory's fault-finding. One man took me aside and said, "Some of these guys think they always have to have meat, but I think it's great to have vegetables. I really appreciate the meal you cooked." And Vern, a shelter staff member, told us that the staff is grateful when volunteers prepare any hot meals, because otherwise the men have only peanut butter sandwiches for supper.

But the episode rattled me. What had seemed like such a clear-cut, simple act of service to others—animals *and* humans—had been a mixed success. What had seemed so righteous to me was seen as self-righteous by some others.

Standing at the shelter sink washing dishes, I had a memory of another meal, one served during an anti-nuclear peace walk in which I participated, that crossed the United States in 1981. At a church-basement social given in our honor in Sioux City, Iowa, generous farm women prepared a pot of spaghetti loaded with meatballs. Many people on the peace walk were vegetarians and politely turned down the spaghetti, leading to hurt feelings and grumbling among our hosts.

This apparent rejection of the church's hospitality caused dissension within our group of walkers. Some, including me, felt that those who had turned down the proffered food had left bad feelings in their wake and diminished the effectiveness of our message. We were on a peace walk, after all. Would it not have been more peaceful to accept what was offered by our hosts, as Thai monks do on their alms rounds, than to spurn it?

The vegetarian walkers didn't see things that way. They were walking to protest war in all forms, including war against animals. For them, eating meat would have been a violation of their personal ethics. Practicing peace included practicing vegetarianism, even if it might offend others.

Standing in the men's shelter, cleaning up from the Tennessee Corn Pone, I felt a new tenderness for the Iowa church women. Like them, we'd prepared a meal from our hearts, one we thought our guests would enjoy. It was painful to learn that some people disapproved of our choice. And I found that I didn't appreciate hearing complaints after having spent hours organizing, shopping, paying for, cooking, and cleaning up from the meal. *Beggars can't be choosers*, I thought grimly as I scrubbed a crusty pan.

Or can they?

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Back at home, I pored over readings I had collected on the integration of spirituality with activism. My BASE notes reminded me, "A BASE-centered action imbues social change work with specific Buddhist principles." That looked good on paper, but in the clutch, the question arose, *which* Buddhist principles?

I had assumed that at a minimum, we'd want to



honor the “no killing” injunction, which is the *First Precept* (not the second or third). In the traditional Buddhist canon, it’s stated simply: “I undertake the Precept to abstain from the taking of life.” Thich Nhat Hanh describes it thus:

Aware of the suffering caused by the destruction of life, I vow to cultivate compassion and learn ways to protect the lives of people, animals, plants, and minerals. I am determined not to kill, not to let others kill, and not to condone any act of killing in the world, in my thinking, and in my way of life.

The precept was clear and unambiguous. By serving a vegetarian meal we had practiced generosity, Right Action, mindfulness, and—*ta-dah!*—the First Precept, all in one humble casserole.

Yet, another precept from Thich Nhat Hanh says:

Do not be idolatrous about or bound to any doctrine, theory, or ideology, even Buddhist ones. All systems of thought are guiding means; they are not absolute truths.

The dharma giveth instruction, and the dharma taketh it away.

Deflated, I turned back to my readings. They reiterated the warning that one shouldn’t become too attached to the precepts. As dharma teacher Ed Brown likes to say, to follow the precepts too strictly is to break them. Observance of the precepts should not get in the way of acting with skillful means.

The dharma was starting to feel like the Bible—you could find a passage to defend whatever point of view you have.

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A few days later, our BASE group got together to “untangle the tangle” of our shelter experience. The menu wasn’t the only controversy left over from the evening. We were miffed at a couple of members who hadn’t shown up. And some of us women were frustrated that we had done most of the cleanup work while the men in the group chatted with shelter guests.

But we spent most of our time debating our decision to make a meatless meal. It became clear that the dilemma centered less on the merits of plant food than on what it means to be of service to others, though we weren’t able to agree on which “others” we were supposed to be of service to. The guests at the shelter? Animals? All sentient beings?

A couple of people reflected on Gregory’s comparison of us with missionaries, and suggested that it is not helpful to try to make a “statement” in the course of doing service. One said, “People get reminded of how powerless they are. These people don’t have a choice about hardly anything, so if they prefer meat, I’d like to give them that prerogative.”

Donald, our BASE mentor, responded, “Well, some of the men at the shelter have some money, they just don’t have a place to live. They could have walked over to McDonald’s and gotten a 99-cent burger.”

Belinda spoke up. “For me, it was good practice to see that what we offered wasn’t necessarily what was wanted, and to not take it personally. It’s just an expression of their preferences, which we all have.”

Someone chimed in, “We should look at our own attachments. That makes more sense than laying a trip on people who are already struggling.”

I had to break in. “Look, serving Tennessee Corn Pone was not laying a trip on people. I make that dish for friends, and they love it. Yes, it does happen to be better for you than meat in almost every way, but that wasn’t particularly a ‘message’ we were trying to promote. It wasn’t missionary work. We didn’t ask them to have a moment of silence before eating, or to mindfully chew their food. But we’re trying to practice socially engaged Buddhism, and the First Precept is to affirm life. I can’t believe you guys think it would have been OK to cook meat for them!”

The person next to me piped up to say, “I just thought we were going to make a bunch of food for some people. I didn’t know that we would be bringing Buddhism into it.”

*Not bring Buddhism into it?* I burst out, “What’s the point of being in a Buddhist support group if we don’t bring Buddhism into our action in the world?”

TENNESSEE CORN PONE

adapted from *Laurel’s Kitchen: A Handbook for Vegetarian Cooking & Nutrition* (Nilgiri Press, 1976)

Preheat oven to 450°.

In a pot, heat 4 cups very juicy, cooked beans (pinto or kidney). Season the beans with cumin, salt, pepper, and other spices you like.

Sauté a pan full of chopped onions, garlic, celery, carrots, green peppers, corn, and/or other veggies. Stir in some tomato or pasta sauce to make it saucy.

Add the veggie sauté to the beans and stir; season to taste.

Mix in a large bowl:

- 2 cups cornmeal
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt

Mix in another bowl:

- 1 quart buttermilk (or 2 cups plain yogurt and 2 cups milk or soymilk)
- 2 eggs, slightly beaten
- 1/4 cup cooking oil

Heat beans and veggies together until quite hot. Pour into a lightly greased 9”x13” baking dish.

Stir the wet and dry ingredients together until smooth and pour them over the hot beans.

Bake on the top rack of oven until cornbread is a rich golden color and the sides of the corn bread pull away from the sides of the pan. This takes about 30 minutes.

Serves 8 to 10.



“Hold on,” someone else said. “What about practicing lovingkindness toward the men? It sounds like they experience meat as comfort food, so it would have been a wonderful gift for them. It might have provided them, even fleetingly, with a sense of ‘all’s right with the world.’ You have to nourish people’s souls, not just their bodies.”

Dave said, “I keep being reminded of a remark of Chögyam Trungpa’s that if you really want to help people, you have to just do your best without ever really knowing if it’s the right choice. The closest you get is maybe feeling 50 percent right.”

The dialogue went round and round. I felt tired and longed for a neat conclusion—preferably one that validated me for linking our menu to the First Precept’s reverence for life.

I turned to Donald for help. “Donald, isn’t the whole point of Buddhist practice to follow the precepts?”

Donald’s response hung in the air between us. “Actually, I believe the most important goal is to wake up.”

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The Maddeningly Complex Case of the Men’s Shelter Meal was a teaching for me. It taught me how little I actually know. And, as great teachings often do, it left me with questions instead of answers.

When and how should I temper my idealism, my own confidence about “what’s right,” with openness to where others are coming from?

If I hold firmly to my truth on an issue, how can I know whether I’m standing on noble, righteous ground, or clinging to fixed views?

I know it’s good to have my tightly held convictions tested once in a while, but there’s an unfortunate down side. When it’s pointed out that what is right for me is not necessarily right for others, a sort of self-paralysis, or perhaps resignation, overtakes me. My stride slows, my passion dims, and what before seemed like creative solutions to the world’s problems now appear to be illusions. It’s painful to admit, but fundamentalists and fanatics, who are sure they *do* know what’s right for others, seem to accomplish more on their agendas than I do on mine.

I won’t give up on the dharma, but time is running out to transform society in positive ways. What is my role? What can I do to help? ❖

*Trena Cleland is an HIV test counselor for the city of Berkeley, California, the assistant to author Fritjof Capra, and a member of BPF’s Board of Directors.*

## GOOD GRUEL

*The following is excerpted from a booklet called “Environmental Practice at Tassajara,” about policies at Tassajara Zen Mountain Monastery in California.*

### Food

Following the precept of not taking life, Tassajara does not serve any meat or fish. This practice is beneficial in many ways, as the environmental costs of raising animals for food has been destructive to many ecosystems.

Whenever possible, Tassajara buys organic foods and produce. Organically grown food benefits the people who grow and pick it, as well as the surrounding ecology. Tassajara has developed relationships with two local organic farms, and is able to get a large percentage of our produce from them. While providing students and guests with fresh organic produce, this also reduces the impact of food transportation.

Tassajara’s food is mostly purchased in bulk, reducing packaging waste, and, again, reducing the use of fossil fuels in transportation. Tassajara’s town trips effectively do the grocery shopping for 60–150 people at once.

In the summer months, students regularly dine on the leftover guest food from the night before. In the winter, leftover food is used in almost every evening meal, which consists of a mixed dish, traditionally called “gruel” or “medicine bowl.” This practice helps Tassajara’s kitchen to reduce food waste.

### Composting

Any food products that cannot be eaten, along with most of the paper towels used at Tassajara, are incorporated into Tassajara’s large composting effort. The compost produced is used on our gardens, efficiently returning food waste to the earth.

### Oryoki

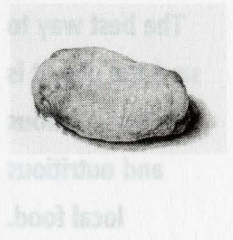
Tassajara’s winter practice of eating formally in the meditation hall follows a tradition of mindful consumption. The ceremony of each meal acknowledges the efforts and labor that brought the food to the community, and fortifies the intention to eat with care and gratitude. The formal meals are taken in three bowls, and all the food received is eaten, reducing waste. The meals also include bowl washing: each person’s bowls are cleaned with less than a cup of water. Much of the water used to clean the bowls is then drunk. ❖



# Diet for a Mindful Society

## Resisting Globalization and Building Localization

by Sarah Laeng-Gilliatt



*Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful consumption, I vow to cultivate good health, both physical and mental, for myself, my family, and my society by practicing mindful eating, drinking, and consuming. I vow to ingest only items that preserve peace, well-being, and joy in my body, in my consciousness, and in the collective body and consciousness of my family and society. I am determined not to use alcohol or any other intoxicant or to ingest foods or other items that contain toxins, such as certain TV programs, magazines, books, films, and conversations. I am aware that to damage my body or my consciousness with these poisons is to betray my ancestors, my parents, my society, and future generations. I will work to transform violence, fear, anger, and confusion in myself and in society by practicing a mindful diet for myself and for society. I understand that a proper diet is crucial for self-transformation and for the transformation of society.*

—Thich Nhat Hanh's version of the Fifth Precept

To live with the Fifth Precept as expressed by Thich Nhat Hanh, we need to be aware of how agriculture takes us beyond our separate selves and connects us with the world. The production of food is inextricably woven into community, and affects the health of the earth, global equity, and cultural and biological diversity. These issues ultimately lead us to consider political and economic forces—questions central to free trade treaties and economic globalization. As Buddhists holding the precepts as ideals for our lives, it is essential that we understand the systemic ramifications of two radically different systems of agriculture—the globalization of agriculture on the one hand, and the localization of food systems on the other.

### The Globalization of Agriculture

The profound decision to include agriculture in what constitutes “trade” was made during the eighth round of the Global Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) negotiations between 1986 and 1994 in Uruguay. There, the Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) began to implement policies that eliminated governments’ abilities to control imports and exports through quotas and tariffs, as well as their capacities to support domestic farmers through subsidies. The AoA liberalizes the agricultural sector, opening up countries to imports and exports. In effect, the trend is to larger and

larger scale monocultural food production for export.

It is argued that removal of tariffs helps so-called developing countries by allowing them to import cheap food that the poor can afford. However, cheap imports also undermine rural livelihoods; farmers can no longer compete and are thereby pulled off the land into burgeoning megalopolises where they face high levels of unemployment. Furthermore, as imports increase, many countries are unable to increase exports to the same degree, so they face a balance-of-trade crisis. In terms of exports, the AoA forces countries to export food even when their own populations are in desperate need of the food.

It is also argued that when a country specializes for export, it can benefit from “comparative advantages,” i.e., that it is in everyone’s interest to specialize in producing the one (or few) product(s) they produce best, to do so on a large scale, and then to export it. The more a country produces of a particular item, the cheaper it becomes per item to produce. Given the diversity of ecosystems, resource bases, traditions, and so forth, each region has its particular strengths and weaknesses. Thus, the strengths could be exploited and the weaknesses overcome. Practiced to a certain degree, this doctrine makes a lot of sense, and certainly antiglobalization activists are not against trade per se; however, in our current system we are practicing trade to the exclusion of strong local economies and strong local agriculture for local consumption.

Ultimately, the Agreement on Agriculture means that food security is no longer first and foremost a domestic concern; rather, it is vulnerable to the volatilities of the global market. With more than 1.3 billion people worldwide living on a dollar or less per day, such a volatile food market and rapidly changing costs for grain and other staples could easily give rise to massive starvation and political, social, and economic instability in the not-too-distant future.

### Environmental Activist Agenda

The basic premise of the global justice movement regarding agriculture, articulated from Seattle’s WTO meeting right through the recent round in Cancún, Mexico, is that food is a basic human right, and that agriculture should be largely exempted from international trade rules. This was the message in Seattle: “No New Round—Turn Around!” That is, no further negotiations; scale back already existing ones. The



**The best way to  
save the planet is  
to eat delicious  
and nutritious  
local food.**

document "Shrink or Sink" (return the WTO to the original postwar GATT mandate or abolish it altogether), which was developed and signed by hundreds of nongovernmental organizations from many countries, shares this perspective.

Similarly, the document published by the International Forum on Globalization, "Beyond the WTO: Alternatives to Economic Globalization," explores how globalized agriculture, with its monopolistic control of food and seeds by a handful of corporations, threatens the food security of both farmers and communities.

Global rules of trade now strongly favor the industrial agriculture model. [This is] driving small farmers off their lands and replacing them with pesticide- and machine-intensive monocultures producing luxury items for export, at great environmental and social cost. . . . Any new rules of trade must recognize that food production for local communities should be at the top of a hierarchy of values in agriculture. Local self-reliance in food production, and the assurance of healthful, safe foods should be considered basic human rights. Shorter distances and reduced reliance on expensive inputs which must be shipped over long distances are key objectives of a new food system paradigm.

Clearly, proponents of this agenda favor the reversal of industrialization and trade liberalization of agriculture—not a mere tinkering with the system.

Many discussions during both the Qatar Round in November 2001 and the recent Cancún Round in September 2003 have revolved around market access and subsidy issues. Even proponents of globalization acknowledge that asymmetries exist between rich and poor countries in terms of market access, especially in the areas of agriculture and textiles. They dubbed the Qatar meeting "The Development Round" ahead of time, because it was supposed to address these inequities. In the end, however, the meeting paid no more than lip service to the needs of poor countries. And in any case, many leading activists from the Third World claim that undoing the asymmetries, while crucially important, doesn't require a new round of negotiations.

Furthermore, free trade market access, as opposed to fair trade market access, benefits corporations rather than farmers or consumers. Vandana Shiva writes, "Farmers sell to local and domestic markets. Corporations buy and sell in global markets. Market access is therefore not farmer- but corporation-based." Most importantly, perhaps, emphasizing market access rather than fundamentally changing the trading system encourages more unsustainable transport of food over vast distances. The average item on U.S. supermarket shelves has traveled 1,500 miles,

involving large quantities of carbon dioxide emissions that contribute to climatic instability.

The challenge now, after the recent and hugely inspiring breakdown of the meeting in Cancún, will be to continue these discussions and work for fundamental change. In Cancún, the poor countries were strong enough to say no to a new set of free trade agreements. This was in contrast to the Qatar meeting, where, despite the poor countries' unity and extensive organizing ahead of time, extremely powerful and manipulative forces pressured them to sign onto new agreements. Martin Khor of the Third World Network said this was the result of "tremendous bullying." Such forces did not win out in Cancún—and this is evidence of a major global geopolitical power shift that began in Seattle.

So, on the international stage, the opportunities are exciting, challenging, and promising. On the other hand, the costs of industrial agriculture are hard to deny. Besides incurring environmental and nutritional expenses by transporting food over long distances, the revolution in the agricultural system in the northern industrialized countries has contributed to numerous crises. These include the erosion of Third World economies through the development of unfair trading systems; extensive rural depopulation and loss of farmers from the land; production-related contamination of food with agrochemicals and bacteria; and an increase in the routine abuse of farm animals. As the Institute for Local Self-Reliance states, "The system is broken, virtually all observers agree. Yet perhaps because the situation is so bad, we are witnessing a surge of organizing and ingenuity among farmers and rural advocates."

#### **Localization of Food Systems**

In contrast to large-scale, export-oriented, monocultural production, small-scale, diversified local production for local consumption is burgeoning in many places. In the "developed" world, farmers' markets and community-supported agriculture projects are springing up all over. More and more people across the world are working to establish new rules and regulations in support of small-farm agriculture. For example, in the U.S., at least nine states have placed some restrictions on corporate-owned farms. Environmental and social-justice advocacy groups are pursuing policies that limit subsidies to the largest farms. As agribusiness grows, allowing middlemen to buy low from farmers and sell high to consumers, there are more and more calls for increased antitrust enforcement and for moratoriums on mergers. Furthermore, some states, including Mississippi, North Carolina, and Oklahoma, have placed various restrictions on large-scale feedlots. A new generation of diverse cooperatives is on the rise.



In 1996, the six states of New England were authorized by Congress to form the Northeast Dairy Compact with the purpose of setting a minimum price that farmers can receive for beverage milk sold within New England. Lastly, some states are initiating country- and state-of-origin labeling laws so that consumers can choose food that originates within their own region. (To learn more about these initiatives and others, visit the Institute for Local Self-Reliance Web site at [www.newrules.org/agri/index.html](http://www.newrules.org/agri/index.html).)

### Small-Scale Localized Agriculture Is Productive

It is often claimed that small farms are less productive than large farms, that modern agriculture is extremely efficient, and that only two percent of our population actually farms. However, as Jose Lutzenburger, previous environment minister of Brazil, notes, it is misleading to compare “farmers” of today with farmers of yesterday. Today’s agriculture depends on a “techno-bureaucratic infrastructure,” vast transportation and communication networks, processing and packaging plants, and so on, that involve far more than two percent of our population. In this light, claims of efficiency need to be reconsidered. Furthermore, many of the costs of industrial food production—environmental deterioration, community breakdown, and ill-health from less nutritious foods—are “externalized.” That is, they are not counted as part of the cost of the food production. Our globalized food appears to be cheaper than it really is. Indeed, the future is subsidizing the present, and our children will have to bear the cost. Taxpayers, too, are unwittingly subsidizing modern industrial agriculture by paying for much of the requisite infrastructure such as highways. As Helena Norberg-Hodge writes:

A local shop in a village that buys most of its goods locally does not need satellites, mainframe computers, large-scale transport infrastructures, container ships, heavily subsidized airplane fuel, and so on. In contrast, a large ‘hypermarket’ could not exist without them. . . . Any appearance of efficiency is maintained only because our taxes cover many of the costs at the expense of small, local producers who, left to their own resources, are thereby made to seem comparatively inefficient.

Nor does the way we measure productivity take into account the full range of benefits of diversified production. Monocultural production involves high-yielding varieties of one crop. Diversity-based production yields many different crops and uses many different parts of each plant. As Vandana Shiva writes, “Traditional farming systems are based on mixed and rotational cropping systems...while the Green Revolution package [a “development” program

designed to increase yields through highly industrial agriculture] is based on genetically uniform monocultures. No realistic assessments are ever made of the yield of the diverse crop outputs in the mixed and rotational systems.” A 1994 *Scientific American* article also pointed out that traditional polycultures have one-sixtieth the need for external input that industrial agriculture has. The latter requires purchased hybrid seeds, irrigation fees, chemical fertilizers, herbicides, and fossil fuels, while traditional farming methods provide for the small farm’s needs internally, with closed loops. For example, with diversified farms, animals provide fertilizer, and crops provide fodder. Seeds can be saved year to year, and simple



*Fruit Juice in the Supermarket.*  
Photo by Meredith Stout

equipment does not require large capital outlays. Though labor input is high, external input is low. With our huge global population, this need for labor may be an advantage, as it provides employment.

### Conclusion

As we have seen, the costs of globalization of agriculture are significant and systemic, while the benefits of localizing food production are wide-ranging and life-affirming. Some, like Helena Norberg-Hodge, director of The International Society for Ecology and Culture, even go so far as to claim that the best way to save the planet is to eat delicious and nutritious local food.

Another point Norberg-Hodge makes goes to the heart of our practice as Buddhists. She says that in order to cultivate wisdom and compassion, we need the small-scale structures of local agriculture. When we do business locally rather than on the other side of the planet we can more easily understand the effects of our actions. By seeing directly the consequences of our consumption, we can make wise and compassionate choices. So, beloved Buddhists, go to the farmers’ market, invest your money in local farmers, and cook sumptuous meals with dear friends! ♦

*Sarah Laeng-Gilliatt is director of the Institute for Nonviolent Economics, based in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Visit the Web site at [www.nonviolenteconomics.org](http://www.nonviolenteconomics.org).*



# From the Roots Up

## Tasting the Way in Every Bite

by Sara Fishkin

*Seventy-two labors brought us this food; we should know how it comes to us. —traditional meal gatha*

A few years ago, I was harvesting beets from a small urban garden in the San Francisco Bay Area. A woman in her mid-40s was helping me and having what she described as a religious experience. She had never seen beets anywhere other than in a can, ready to eat. She was amazed by the way they grow: how they root themselves so decisively in the soil, one part delving into the earth in search of nutrients, another part reaching up to the sky for light and heat. She looked suspicious when I told her she could also eat the leafy parts, just as she eats chard or spinach; she had never heard such a thing.

In *The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching*, Thich Nhat Hanh says to a novice monk, "Dear one, do you see the cow on the hillside? She is eating grass in order to make my yogurt, and I am now eating the yogurt to make a dharma talk. Somehow, the cow will offer today's dharma talk." There are no separations that we can point to in the physical world; everything exists because of the existence of something else, and these relationships continue infinitely.

In February 2002, I began an apprenticeship with Ecology Action, an organization in Willits, California, that aims to educate people about the intrinsic connections between people, food, and soil. On the surface, the message of Ecology Action is primarily a practical one, and is reflected in the title of one of their publications: *How to Grow More Vegetables than You Ever Thought Possible, on Less Land than You Can Imagine*.

Many years ago, the founder and director of Ecology Action, John Jeavons, asked himself what was the smallest area in which he could cultivate all of his own food while at the same time building up the soil in which his nourishment would grow. He knew that at the rate we were going, in a few centuries, humans would destroy soils that had taken Mother Earth thousands of years to create. He wondered if each pound of food produced had to mean the sacrifice of six pounds or more of precious soil and the spread of deserts into some of the most fertile areas of the world. As he looked even closer, Jeavons saw many other unnecessary negative consequences of our food systems, ranging from health problems to social inequities. When we shop at the supermarket, however,

this is not what we see. We see countless ways to satisfy our desires.

Alan Chadwick, master horticulturist and mentor to John Jeavons, once said, "Give back to the Earth more than you take, and She will provide for you abundantly." Jeavons's way of doing this was to develop a method of farming that he now calls Grow Biointensive. Practicing this method, people all over the world could grow enough food to nourish themselves, while using 12 to 33 percent of the water, zero to 50 percent of the purchased fertilizer, and one percent of the energy consumed by commercial agriculture per pound of vegetables grown. In addition, Grow Biointensive can build up soil 60 times faster than the earth can do when left to its own means.

Over the past three decades, Ecology Action has inspired and supported projects around the globe, enabling people to reclaim their right to healthy food and land. Beneath the surface, the method includes a more subtle teaching, which gradually becomes apparent to those who practice it. We begin to see for ourselves what the Buddha meant when he said, "Dear friends, I have seen deeply that nothing can be by itself alone, that everything has to inter-be with everything else." This teaching is revealed when we take a kernel of corn, plant it in the soil, nurture it with compost and water, cultivate the soil upon which it grows, watch how it interacts with the wind, sun, and insects, harvest its ears, compost its remains, dry its kernels to grind into flour, and save some to plant again next spring. When we shovel the compost onto the growing bed the next season, we remember the mature cornstalks we put into the pile the previous fall. Last year's plants are feeding this year's garden. Not only that, they are feeding us. Jeavons often says that the way in which we relate to our soils is like milking a cow without feeding it. How long would that cow live? How long will our soils live? How long will we live?

During my time with Ecology Action, one of the most difficult lessons I learned was this: In order to allow for everyone on this planet to have enough to eat, while simultaneously protecting the soils for generations to come, we can't eat whatever we want whenever we want it. As a Buddhist, I have come to understand that we need to reshape our relationship with desire.

The Buddha taught that craving causes suffering. Not only do we as humans suffer from our craving

**The way in which we relate to our soils is like milking a cow without feeding it.**



but the earth suffers as well. In our relentless pursuit of satisfaction, we are actually biting the hand that feeds us. Walk into almost any grocery store in America, at any time of the year, and there will be foods from all over the world. In Pennsylvania, in midwinter, it is possible to buy peaches and strawberries, even though neither of those foods grows in Pennsylvania at that time. We have become accustomed to having everything we want available to us all of the time. This wide range of choices has become synonymous with freedom. If the grocery stores were actually to reflect the seasonal availability of local foods, many people would be shocked to find only a handful of options, especially during the winter.

It's difficult to understand the consequences of the global food system when we are so distanced from them in the grocery store. The implications of globalization are not advertised on the packages. At Zen Mountain Monastery, before meals we chant, "Seventy-two labors brought us this food." This refers to the traditional 72 laborers of the monastery, whose work was to bring food to the monks' bowls in centuries past. Today, who are the 72 whose labor brings us our food? They are the migrant workers, the truck drivers, the processors and packers, the forklift drivers. They are the Third World laborers who grow food for export and eat very little. They are the scientists in the labs who play with genes. They are the bakers and the fryers. And they are the bees, the wind, the water, the sun, and the earth itself.

As an apprentice with Ecology Action, one of my assignments was to design a diet for myself that would allow me to grow all of my essential calories and nutrients, as well as my own compost, in 4,000 square feet or less. Many people are often surprised when I tell them what I came up with. They expect a mouthwatering list of summer favorites like tomatoes, cucumbers, and basil. Instead, my diet consisted primarily of rye, corn, potatoes, burdock, collards, winter squash, garlic, fava beans, and filberts. It turns out that many of my favorite veggies require a lot of space while giving little energy. For the backyard gardener who wants a few tomatoes to add to the dinner salad, there's no problem. But when you keep in mind soil health and world hunger, a different plan comes into play.

At Ecology Action, I learned that if I devoted 60 percent of my growing area to plants that produce a large amount of carbon for the compost pile, 30 percent to crops that provide lots of calories in a relatively small area, and 10 percent to vegetables that will add vitamins, minerals, and excitement to my diet, then I would likely be able to feed myself and the soil. An example of a crop that falls into the first category is millet. In our garden at Ecology Action, we grew a few varieties of millet, which we let ripen and turn

golden into late summer. After harvesting the grain (sometimes the birds got to it first!), we saved every stalk for the compost pile. The more carbonaceous material the compost pile has, the more it has to give back to the garden. This is due primarily to the relationship between carbon and nitrogen in the compost pile. From a simplified perspective, nitrogen is the fiery fuel for the digestion of the pile; it literally "cooks" the compost ingredients. Carbon is the primary substance that gets transformed into humus; if there is less of it than nitrogen, very little compost will result from a very large pile.

An example from the second category is potatoes. It would be possible to grow all the calories I would need in a year in less than 800 square feet of potatoes. To eat



only potatoes could lead to many problems down the road, of course, but one wouldn't starve to death.

The crops that fall into the 10 percent category are most of the typical garden vegetables, such as lettuce, tomatoes, and green beans. And because this was the smallest part of my garden, I needed to be choosy, as many of those vegetables don't give enough nutrition to merit the space they occupy.

What does all of this really mean? Many of the foods we currently eat are depleting the soils at home and elsewhere, and rapidly. We need to find a balance between what we consume and what we give back to the earth, regardless of what we think we would rather

*Poirier Street  
Artichokes. Photo by  
Schuyler Fishman*



eat for dinner. In the United States alone, it is estimated that conventional agricultural methods are depleting the soil up to 18 times faster than it is being built up in nature. Our lives depend on a delicate six-inch layer of topsoil, and, as we eat our meals, that soil is disappearing. If we continue to listen only to our desires, soon there won't be any soil left to grow even the simplest of meals.

It is the end of the first day of sesshin at Zen Mountain Monastery, and I am eating supper. After two oryoki meals, I'm having a light meal of bread, salad, and soup at the table, in silence, alone. All day I have looked forward to this meal, though I tried to let go of the craving for it over and over again. After so many hours of zazen, surely I will eat this meal with refined mindfulness. As I begin to eat, I am aware of the texture and taste of the food on my tongue. I don't remember salad ever tasting this good. I chew, and chew, and chew. This salad is so good I'll want more when I finish this bowl. And it could use a little more dressing on my next helping. I bite into my bread and notice its warmth and soft body. I think of how much love goes into baking bread. Maybe I'll have another piece for dessert, with jam.

By the time I finish and head for meal crew in the kitchen, I have spent more of my supper with desire than with the food in front of me. What is it that I am trying to satisfy? I realize that it is uneasiness that is fueling my dissatisfaction, a form of restlessness.

The Buddha identified restlessness as one of the five hindrances. It is restlessness that makes people fill their shopping carts with an excess of items they don't really need. Restlessness propels us away from the present moment and causes us to think we need something more, something different. As I eat my meals, drive my car, drink my water, I am aware, on some level, that all is not right in the world. It is difficult for me to sit still with that level of uneasiness, and I often act from that place, without even knowing it. When I let the restlessness rule me, I feel like I need something, and often it is food. Practice enables me to shine the light of awareness onto the restlessness, so that I can sit with it instead of always reaching for something outside of myself to soothe it.

And when I do eat, Buddhism reminds me of my infinite connection to all of creation. Every time I receive food, I'm receiving an offering of life. The teaching of interbeing is in every bite. ❖

*Sara Fishkin has apprenticed on two farms in Mendocino County, California (Live Power Community Farm and Ecology Action), and has co-managed a small Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm near Oakland. She is actively exploring the connections between healing the human body and the earth body, primarily through gardening, herbalism, homeopathy, meditation, and artwork. She composts everywhere she goes.*

## RESOURCES ON FOOD

### Organizations and Web Sites

**Oxfam America** is "committed to creating lasting solutions to poverty, hunger, and social injustice." [www.oxfamamerica.org](http://www.oxfamamerica.org)

**The Center for Ecoliteracy** supports school gardens. [www.ecoliteracy.org](http://www.ecoliteracy.org)

**Community Food Security Coalition** is "dedicated to building strong, sustainable, local, and regional food systems, and partners local farmers with nearby schools." [www.foodsecurity.org](http://www.foodsecurity.org)

**America's Second Harvest** works to minimize food waste and to support food banks and food kitchens. [www.secondharvest.org](http://www.secondharvest.org)

**Local Harvest** can help you find family farms, farmers' markets, CSA farms, and other sources of sustainably grown food in your area. [www.localharvest.org](http://www.localharvest.org)

**Organic Consumers Association** represents the interests of organic consumers, and deals with such issues as food safety, industrial agriculture, genetic engineering, corporate accountability, and environmental sustainability. [www.organicconsumers.org](http://www.organicconsumers.org)

**Ecology Action's** work is "all about growing fertile soil, healthy food, and beautiful gardens." 5798 Ridgewood Rd., Willits, CA 95490, (707)459-0150, [www.growbiointensive.org](http://www.growbiointensive.org)

### Books

Miguel Altieri and Norman Uphoff, *Report of Bellagio Conference on Sustainable Agriculture*, Cornell International Institute for Food, Agriculture and Development, 1999

John Jeavons, *How to Grow More Vegetables than You Ever Thought Possible on Less Land than You Can Imagine*, Ten Speed Press, 2000

Andrew Kimbrell, editor, *Fatal Harvest: The Tragedy of Industrial Agriculture*, Island Press, 1996. Web site connected to the book: [www.organicandbeyond.org](http://www.organicandbeyond.org)

Corby Kummer, *The Pleasures of Slow Food: Celebrating Authentic Traditions, Flavors, and Recipes*, Chronicle Books, 2002

Frances Moore Lappé, *Diet for a Small Planet*, Ballantine, 1971

Frances Moore Lappé and Anna Lappé, *Hope's Edge*, Penguin Putnam, 2002

Frances Moore Lappé, Joseph Collins, and Peter Rosset, *World Hunger: Twelve Myths*, Grove Press, 1998

Marion Nestle, *Safe Food: Bacteria, Biotechnology, and Bioterrorism*, University of California Press, 2003



Marion Nestle, *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health*, University of California Press, 2002

Helena Norberg-Hodge, Todd Merrifield, and Steven Gorelick, *Bringing the Food Economy Home* (see review on page 37)

Carlo Petrini, *Slow Food: The Case for Taste*, Columbia University Press, 2003

John Robbins, *Diet for a New America: How Your Food Choices Affect Health*, Stillpoint, 1987

John Robbins, *The Food Revolution: How Your Diet Can Help Save Your Life and Our World*, Conari Press, 2001

Peter Rosset and Medea Benjamin, editors, *The Greening of the Revolution: Cuba's Experiment with Organic Agriculture*, Global Exchange, 1995

Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation*, HarperCollins, 2001 (See review on page 38)

Vandana Shiva, *Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply*, South End Press, 1999

## WHAT WE CAN DO TO SUPPORT FAIR TRADE

by **Melissa Schweisguth**

**W**e can buy Fair Trade Certified products. Fair Trade Certification guarantees farmers an adequate price for their crop, prohibits abusive child labor, encourages sustainable production, and supports self-sufficient community development. The Fair Trade system involves over 900,000 farming families in 40 countries. In America, Fair Trade Certified products include coffee, tea, chocolate, and cocoa, with new products coming soon. (Europe and the UK also have fresh fruits, sugar, rice, and honey.) Consumer support is essential to ensure that the Fair Trade market and its benefits to farmers keep growing.

✦ We can buy our produce at local farmers' markets. Farmers get the best returns on their hard work because they do not have to sell through wholesalers, who often take big cuts of the retail price. We can also express our appreciation directly to the farmers, which does much to help them keep going in a tough market.

✦ We can join Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farms or get produce delivered from local farms. In CSAs, consumers buy shares in local farms or farming cooperatives in exchange for seasonal produce, thus sharing both the risks and rewards of farming. Farmers are guaranteed fair prices and have a wide base of support. Participating farmers also grow a range of crops and typically use sustainable methods, helping to

maintain a balanced and healthy environment.

✦ We can shop at cooperative grocery stores, where workers have a say in labor and wage policies, ensuring fair conditions. In some co-ops, consumers become members and can volunteer and vote on store policies. Other co-ops are worker-owned. These stores usually sell mostly organic, Fair Trade, local, and sustainable items, making it easy for us to support these values.

✦ We can shop at stores where workers are unionized, and buy union-label produce. Many larger farms are becoming unionized and are placing union labels on their products. Many large grocery stores are also unionized. A union label and union representation assure us that workers receive a decent income and work in safe conditions.

✦ We can buy organic. Though organic standards do not include minimum wage or labor guidelines, buying organic helps us protect the health of farm workers and our shared environment.

✦ We can support the options that exist in our communities and work for the development of any that aren't yet available. Equally as important, we can invite our families and communities to become involved in these positive alternatives. We can take a friend out for Fair Trade coffee or tea; organize a neighborhood carpool to the local co-op or farmers' market; recruit neighbors to join a CSA or sign up for produce delivery; have our kids make a game out of finding the union label on produce; ask our sanghas to convert their purchases to Fair Trade, local, organic, and union labeled; and ask local stores and large companies to offer more of these products.

All of these actions may seem small, but they have powerful results when done together. Fair Trade coffee is now available from nearly 200 companies at over 10,000 retail locations. Organic products can be found in almost any supermarket. Farmers' markets, CSAs, and local delivery services are taking root across the country. All of this is happening because consumers are taking a stand for social and environmental justice in growing numbers. This is truly the manifestation of practice—living out our values and providing a gentle example that helps others live in ways that confer the greatest benefits and the least harm. *Bon appétit!* ❖

For more information, see these Web sites:

Food Routes: [www.foodroutes.org](http://www.foodroutes.org)

Global Exchange: [www.globalexchange.org](http://www.globalexchange.org)

United Farm Workers: [www.ufw.org](http://www.ufw.org)

United Food and Commercial workers: [www.ufcw.org](http://www.ufcw.org)

*Melissa Schweisguth is the fair trade coordinator at Global Exchange, a San Francisco-based human rights organization. She is also a member of the San Francisco Zen Center and a former member of the Zen Center of San Diego.*







## Book Reviews

### Local Food Toolkit

Produced by the International Society for Ecology and Culture

Available for rent or loan from [www.isec.org.uk/ustoolkit.html](http://www.isec.org.uk/ustoolkit.html). Includes the book *Bringing the Food Economy Home: Local Alternatives to Global Agribusiness*, by Helena Norberg-Hodge, Todd Merrifield, and Steven Gorelick.

#### Reviewed by Margaret Howe

With September's World Trade Organization talks in Cancún, Mexico, breaking down over agricultural issues, food has become one of the most explosive concerns of our time. Long-contested issues of who controls the food supply, who decides what we eat, and how and where food is grown and distributed are moving to the forefront of the world stage. The stakes can be summed up with the words of a Monsanto executive: "What you are seeing is not just a consolidation of seed companies, it's really a consolidation of the entire food chain."

How has this most basic of human needs become such a complex political issue? Do our food choices make a difference? What is happening to the family farm? How can "going local" make a difference?

The International Society for Ecology and Culture has done us a favor by creating a "toolkit" that helps us understand the global and local ramifications of this issue and also gives us ways to take action on both fronts. ISEC, with offices in England and the U.S., offers a range of educational programs on sustainability. Its work grows out of Helena Norberg-Hodge's many years of living and working in Ladakh, India, where she studied the devastating effects of modern "development" on the traditional culture. (See her book, *Ancient Futures: Lessons from Ladakh*.)

ISEC's tool kit makes a compelling case for the importance of developing local alternatives to the global food economy. I was grateful for this explanation, for example, of one of the reasons why family farms are failing: "In 1990, only nine cents of every dollar spent on domestically produced food in the U.S. went to the farmer, while middlemen, marketers, and input suppliers took the rest."

Easily accessible, the kit contains a 150-page book, a slide show with written narration, fact sheets, and reproducible posters—in short, everything you need to become informed and make a presentation on this issue. It was created as a tool for popular education, and can be used with your friends, BPF chapter, community, or church group. Many of the underlying issues are political, but the authors do a good job of steering clear of blatant political statements, thus making the kit palatable to more audiences.

The wealth of detailed information in the book is summed up and illustrated in the 66 slides, and provides a

basis for public discussion. The photographs in the slide show include images of colorful farmers' markets, and contrasting images of factory farms and sultry billboards advertising products in the developing world. Both book and slide show illuminate, in plain English, the key role that food production plays in the globalization (or Americanization) of the world's economies, and outlines the multiple effects of the huge expansion that has occurred over the last two decades. What a benefit to have this guide available to help us understand the economic, political, and spiritual dimensions of our food production and consumption!

The book tackles many of the basic issues connected with genetically modified foods, the patenting of seed stock, the effects of transportation of our food on global warming, the health issues of locally grown versus agribusiness foods, and how local economies are being affected by dependence on multinational corporations. I was chilled to the bone to read such quotes as this from a Campbell Soup company annual report: "Most of the soup in Asia is still homemade, so our growth potential in this region brims with promise."

Luckily this kit also inspires us with many stories of how people are taking back control of their food supply, with examples from Japan to Cuba. We can get many ideas for local and global actions that really make a difference, and we learn how even small changes in the way food is produced and marketed can offer immense benefits.

The toolkit contains suggestions for actions in resistance to the present system and constructive alternatives to explore in your local area, as well as a great list of references. I highly recommend it. Use it with your community to take actions that make a difference. Let's reclaim control of this most basic of human needs. ♦

*Margaret Howe is a longtime BPF member and activist who lives in Northern California.*

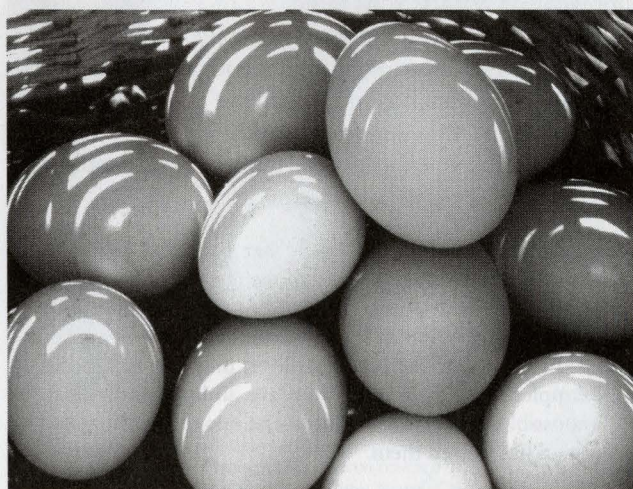


Photo by Meredith Stout



## Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal

by Eric Schlosser

HarperCollins, 2001, 364 pp., \$13.95 (paper)

### Reviewed by Sasha Ryerson

This book shows that when it comes to the food we eat, “ignorance is bliss” does not apply. In an honest, sincere voice, Eric Schlosser uncovers some horrifying truths about what the fast food industry is really doing. The parts about the disgusting conditions of food processing plants and the inhuman way in which the workers are treated especially moved me. This book tastes like the truth! It was first published in 2001 but it continues to cause a stir. Although *Fast Food Nation* is Schlosser’s first book, he has also earned recognition for his writing in *The Atlantic Monthly*.

In 10 dynamic chapters, Schlosser thoroughly discusses the fast food industry’s political, social, and human consequences, by documenting the places he went and the people he talked to. In the epilogue he expresses more of his own opinions.

I was raised eating broccoli, brown rice, and tofu, so the book’s perspective is familiar to me, but the facts are newly shocking. As a teenager, I’ve also eaten my share of junk food. After reading this book I have been influenced to return to more of the kinds of foods I grew up with. And I find it really difficult to eat a hamburger unless I know where the meat comes from.

If you ever wondered what really goes on behind those well-designed one-dollar burgers, this book will tell you, from feed lots, to meatpacking factories, to the effects of franchising, to what it’s like to work behind the counter, along with interviews from such characters as one of the industry’s largest potato growers. This book revolts your stomach and attracts your mind.

*Fast Food Nation* shows how all people are oppressed by the corporate food industry. Even if you don’t eat fast food, this book still applies to you. We all live on this planet, and fast food is affecting the whole world.

In this book you finally hear the stories of people who have been silenced and trampled:

A young woman who’d injured her back and her right hand at the Greeley plant said to me, ‘I want to get on top of a rooftop and scream my lungs out so that somebody will hear.’... Although I cannot tell all of their stories, a few need to be mentioned. Like all lives, they can be used as examples, but ultimately they are unique, individual, impossible to define or replace—the opposite of how this system has treated them.

Reading this book and hearing these stories you are taking the first steps to change. The unreal reality that

Schlosser reveals will change the way you think. The factual accounts will make you want to cry, and at the same time they will emancipate you from ignorance and encourage your own activism. It’s not just about food—it’s about people and animals, too. Schlosser writes with simple delicacy about gore and horror—things corporations and the government have kept hidden for years. For example, a lot of the illegal conditions in slaughterhouses have actually been covered up by the government. Schlosser says he is “determined to see the whole process, the world that’s been deliberately hidden.” He is referring to a meatpacking factory, but this intention is embodied throughout the book. Whether you are wondering about the fast food industry or have never questioned it before, you should read this book. Un-blind yourself. ❖

*Sasha Ryerson is a writer and artist who attends Berkeley High School’s independent study program in Berkeley, California. She is currently discovering her religious and life practices through experimentation and living.*

## Awake in the Heartland: The Ecstasy of What Is

by Joan Tollifson

Trafford Publishing, 2003, 256 pp., \$19 (paper)

Order from [www.trafford.com/robots/02-1346.html](http://www.trafford.com/robots/02-1346.html) or call 888/232-4444.

### Reviewed by Barbara Hirshkowitz

Here’s something wondrously strange—a whole book that tells you over and over in pithy vignettes and eloquent prose that you don’t need this book, or any book, or any thing; you just need to stay present in the moment. All else is illusion. This is a familiar message to students of meditation, one we probably cannot hear too often.

Even though Tollifson claims there is only one message, readers are likely to find the book engaging rather than tedious. There are many autobiographical anecdotes, some of which are from earlier parts of her life. She also writes about returning to her childhood home in Chicago to be near her ailing and elderly mother—a time during which Tollifson also began making a transition to teaching the dharma. This book is in fact about living the dharma by noticing what you are doing, letting go of noticing, letting go of it all, and relaxing into the moment, which is all there is. The rest, as she says, is history. ❖

*Barbara Hirshkowitz works with Books Through Bars to send reading material to people in prison and to collect artwork by artists in prison for public outreach and education.*



## I Have Arrived, I Am Home: Celebrating Twenty Years of Plum Village Life

by Thich Nhat Hanh

Parallax Press, 2003, 253 pp., \$25 (paper)

Reviewed by **giovanni singleton**

This beautifully produced coffee-table offering appears at exactly the right moment. Through dharma talks, poems, drawings, stories, interviews, and photographs, we get an intimate look at life at Plum Village, a practice center for engaged Buddhism founded by Thich Nhat Hanh in southwest France. Since its founding 20 years ago, the center has hosted thousands of practitioners from around the world.

From delicious, hearty recipes to inspiring songs of mindfulness, each page builds upon the next not unlike the way houses are built into homes. Of particular interest are Thây's talks "Strike Against Terror" and "Healing Racism: The Answer Is Compassion," selections on family practice, and his conversations with children. Contributions by Sister Chân Không and Sister Annabel Laity and numerous personal accounts by practitioners about walking meditation, growing and healing, mindfulness, and joy are also featured, making the story of Plum Village a rich and lively one.

Plum Village is a community that has transcended physicality and overcome obstacles in order to reflect and to radiate out the beauty of inner peace that exists in each present moment. Its history is a constantly evolving story of life in the making, of life in and around the world.

I have arrived. I am home. While I am still making steps, I have already arrived. I am already home. I have stopped wandering. This is the teaching and the practice of Plum Village.

—Thich Nhat Hanh (from the preface)

Home, whether it is a physical place or a state of grace, is something for which we all long. And within the pages of this book of celebration, we glimpse the possibilities of its existence. As one closes the book, one senses only that the path continues and circles back again so that we too may discover that, "In my true home I have no fear, no anxiety. I have peace and liberation. I have found true happiness." The journey is worth taking. ❖



*giovanni singleton is a writer, teacher, collector of bookmarks, and Buddhist practitioner.*

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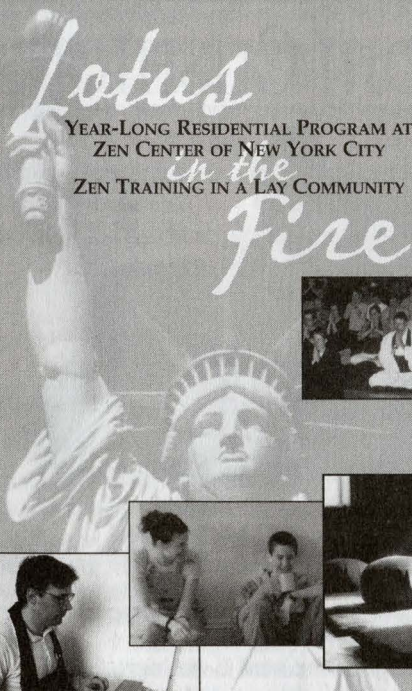









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## Zen War Stories

by Brian Daizen Victoria

RouteledgeCurzon, 2003, 272 pp., \$27.95, (hardcover)

### Reviewed by Alan Senauke

To paraphrase Samuel Johnson, “Religion is the last refuge of the scoundrel.” Buddhism is known as a religion of peace and harmony. History records few wars waged in the name of Buddha. And yet, as Victoria’s work underscores, where organized Buddhism (or any organized religion) and nationalism become intertwined, great wrong usually follows. *Zen War Stories* is a kind of sequel to Victoria’s acclaimed *Zen at War* (Weatherhill, 1997). Where the earlier volume provided a historical overview of Buddhist complicity with militarism, nationalism, and the morally bankrupt doctrine of “Imperial Way Buddhism” (as it developed from the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5, through the next decades of expansionism, and into World War II), *Zen War Stories* looks more closely at institutional Buddhism in the Second World War.

Victoria shares a chilling 1944 quote from an article by Soto Zen master Harada Daiun:

It is necessary for all one hundred million subjects [of the emperor] to be prepared to die with honor... If you see the enemy you must kill him; you must destroy the false and establish the true—these are the cardinal points of Zen. It is said that if you kill someone it is fitting that you see their blood. It is further said that if you are riding a powerful horse nothing is beyond your reach. Isn’t the purpose of the zazen we have done in the past to be of assistance in an emergency like this?

At the heart of this book Victoria points out the danger of a religious tradition where insight is idealized quite apart from morality, apart from the precepts. This is the pit that Japanese Zen fell into. If Zen is truly Buddhism, something went terribly wrong. And along with Victoria and others, I worry that it could happen again.

*Zen War Stories* is more haphazardly structured than *Zen at War*. At times it is difficult to discern who is speaking, whether one is reading primary sources, secondary sources, or the author’s comments. But we owe a great deal to Victoria for his pair of books. He always keeps vital questions in view: what is Dharma, what went wrong in Japan and why, and—implicitly—what is our own responsibility to peace and Dharma right now in our present age of war? ❖

*Alan Senauke is a Zen priest, bluegrass musician, and the former director of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship. He continues to serve BPF as a senior adviser.*

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## From the National Office

I've been contemplating impermanence again. I want to understand what exists beyond the fluctuations in our lives, beneath the surface of the mind. I've understood some of the colors and textures of impermanence and even experienced the state beyond the fluctuations, but I can't grasp or cling to it. That's part of the point.

In June, my 14-year-old nephew Ross sustained a head injury that required brain surgery. For one excruciatingly long week, we thought we might lose him, or lose him as he had been before the accident. And then he was awake, with a whopper of a headache but ultimately, miraculously, okay.

One month after Ross's accident, my beloved dog Shakti suddenly died and it was as though a part of my heart had been surgically removed, taking with it my ability to breathe properly.

The day after Shakti died, my brother was married, with my partner Terry and I standing next to him as his best persons. I don't know how we managed to stand up, but the shining happiness of the weekend's celebrations was vital to our hearts. And Ross was there, dancing at the wedding. Being with him helped me to breathe.

While all this and more has been happening in my life, BPF has been in perpetual transition too. In September, I moved from Membership Coordinator to Administrative Director and became a member of the Leadership Team, which continues to evolve as we collaborate to guide the organization.

Due to the complex circumstances of shaping BPF's leadership and administrative needs, including financial considerations, the Board of Directors has, with regret, laid off Bob Lyons from his role as National Program Coordinator. The staff and Board are deeply grateful to Bob for all that he's offered to BPF, with tremendous generosity and enthusiasm, as a Board member, volunteer, and staff member. Bob represented BPF at an international peace conference in Korea in November; we look forward to his report in *TW*. We're very happy that Bob will continue to work with BPF chapters on a volunteer basis. Thank you so much, Bob.

We also bid farewell and offer deep bows to two other departing staff members: Faith Fuller and Llewellyn Wishart. Faith offered her expertise in BPF's accounting and administrative areas, first as a volunteer, then a consultant, and finally a staff member, from early 2002 through August 2003. Faith also coordinated our Peace Program with inspiring dedication and continues to participate in the peace committee. Llewellyn has created, systematized, and coordinated our volunteer and internship program with clarity and wisdom. Like Faith, Llewellyn started as a volunteer and moved into a staff role. All of us at BPF are deeply grateful to all of you—Bob, Faith, and Llewellyn—for your dedicated service, and we wish you the very best in your new adventures.

The Buddhist Peace Fellowship continues to grow, evolve, and change. People come to our chapters, our vigils, our offices; they work with us, stay awhile, and sometimes move on. While we are together, we work hard to improve life for all beings. Maybe we catch an occasional glimpse of the realm beyond the fluctuations. I catch a glimpse of Shakti there sometimes. But this much I know: with this breath, in this moment, we get to offer our best to this work. I'm glad we're in it together. That helps me to breathe more easily. ❖  
—Melanie Phoenix

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### Internal Politics

Eye, ear, nose, tongue, skin and brain,  
One gang of six thieves stole the election  
With the kind of smiling confidence that can only mean  
one thing—  
They've fooled themselves completely.

Honored followers of the way,  
Let's stop electing a thief as our president  
And start a grassroots movement.

May I nominate Prajna Paramita, mother of all buddhas?  
With the three treasures as her senior advisors,  
The three pure precepts as her supreme court justices,  
And the other perfections as her cabinet ministers,  
She's sure to preside over an era of peace and prosperity.

Dharma sisters and brothers, don't mourn; organize!  
Convert to a dharma economy.  
Trim the bloated budget of I, me, mine.  
Sponsor nonviolent communication among all eight  
consciousnesses.  
Choose representatives who stand on the platform of  
emptiness.  
Promote total dynamic working of body, heart, and mind.

Honored followers of the way,  
Who will lead our country?

—Laurie Senauke

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# Prison Project

## The Dharma and the Death Penalty

by Diana Lion

The vast majority of state-sponsored executions worldwide are carried out in just a few countries. In 2002, 81 percent of all known executions took place in China, Iran, and the U.S. The U.S. came in third in executing people (71) after China (1,060 known) and Iran (113 known). This is an obvious case where being in the top three is nothing to boast about.

Currently 38 states in the U.S., plus the U.S. government and military, have the death penalty, and 12 states do not, along with Washington, D.C.

Since 1990, seven countries are known to have executed prisoners who were under 18 years old at the time of the crime: Congo (Democratic Republic), Iran, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the U.S., and Yemen. The country which carried out the greatest number of known executions of child offenders was the U.S. (17 since 1990).

Amnesty International recorded three executions of child offenders in 2002: all three of them were in Texas. This year a child offender was executed in the state of Oklahoma.

How do we respond to all this as dharma practitioners?

Each year, Amnesty International sponsors a weekend for religious and spiritual congregations throughout the U.S. to take action on ending the death penalty. This year the national Weekend of Faith in Action on the Death Penalty was Oct 10–12. This year I am inspired that dozens of dharma groups across this country participated in some way—hosting discussions and teach-ins, giving dharma talks, showing films, dedicating the merit of their practice.

I don't see any (good) reason for us to stop talking about the death penalty just because the Weekend of Faith in Action has come and gone. Ending the death penalty fits right in as applied First Precept practice.

So—would you consider pausing for a moment to remember those touched by the death penalty, before any dharma talk or discussion you might be involved in? Maybe by bringing something to read about capital punishment and asking folks to sit in silence for a minute or two, or dedicating the evening to all victims of state-sanctioned and other violence?

Would you and/or your sangha consider continuing to

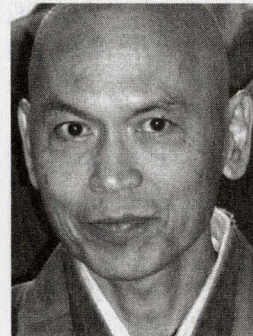
do this until the death penalty is ended?

As dharma practitioners, are we willing to bring the death penalty right onto the cushion with us? Are we willing to pledge to keep this issue alive, as long as there is a death penalty, as part of our commitment to waking up for the benefit of all beings?

At the bottom of this page is a card showing a short version of a pledge that we are proposing. It is similar to a pledge created by many other faith traditions. This pledge will state our wish that if we are murdered, the murderer not receive the death penalty. Feel free to sign this card and keep it in your wallet. Take the opportunity to bring up the topic with your family, neighbors, and friends. We will be posting the full text of the pledge on the BPF Web site in the Prison pages section soon. Please let us know what you do with it. ❖

## Remembering Eika Jakuko Butch Baluyut

(1948–2003)



Butch Baluyut, photographer and longtime Zen practitioner, was one of the stalwarts of the Bay Area's Prison Meditation Network. He used to visit the San Francisco jail several times a week to offer meditation classes. He corresponded with many of the prisoners he met there after their transfer to other facilities, and

was a co-founder of Sangha X (the postrelease group which met for a couple of years). He served as a loyal friend to its many addict and ex-prisoner members. This past summer, just a month before his ordination as a Zen priest, Butch was diagnosed with advanced liver cancer. On July 12, he was ordained as "Eika Jakuko" at the San Francisco Zen Center by Sojun Mel Weitsman. Everyone present at the ordination was moved as he, already very ill, graced us with his beautiful presence and dignity. On September 19 Butch died, with some of his family at his side.

One prisoner later told me that Butch had taught him more than any other teacher about the power of just sitting—*shikantaza*. Sweet Butch—we all miss you so much. May you be peaceful and know how much you are loved. ❖

*Diana Lion is the director of BPF's Prison Project.*

I, the undersigned, do hereby make this declaration about the preciousness of life. Should I die as a result of a violent crime, I request that any person found guilty of my murder not be subject to the death penalty under any circumstances, no matter how heinous their crime or how much I may have suffered.

(signature)

(date)

Buddhist Peace Fellowship Prison Project

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(See the BPF Web site for the full text of this pledge.)



## BPF Chapter & Activist News

Welcome to our five new chapters! Tampa Bay, Florida; Three Treasures (Boca Raton, South Florida); Charlottesville, Virginia; Nelson, BC, Canada; and Seoul, Korea, have all recently joined the BPF network.

The **Los Angeles Chapter** reorganized within the Zen Center of Los Angeles, and has met to discuss organizational issues and action plans. Members will contact the Buddhist Sangha Council of Southern California to reach out to the large local Asian immigrant and Asian American Buddhist community.

The **West Bay Chapter**, south of San Francisco, is participating in an interfaith project to provide meals and shelter to homeless people. Members are committed to working on a moratorium on the death penalty as well as interfaith peace actions. Recently a practitioner group was spawned to study nonviolent communication. Since beginning in September, with a teaching on Right View, chapter members have been examining how the Eightfold Path applies to the integration of Buddhist practice into life and social action.

The **East Bay Chapter** in California joined with many other peace groups in peace demonstrations held in San Francisco in September and October.

The **Connecticut Chapter** co-sponsored Hope Out Loud Day in Hartford, as a way of celebrating peace and hope and as an antidote to post-9/11 despair, fear, and anger. The chapter is turning its attention to its internal structure and identity. (Is it OK for Buddhist groups to have an identity?) Members hope to focus on peace and nonviolence issues, concentrating on public education, advocacy, and personal transformation.

The **Washington, D.C. Chapter** co-sponsored Thich Nhat Hanh's September public lecture "Peace is the Way"; as well as a Teach-In for Peace and a workshop on Nonviolent Communication with Ike Lassiter of BAYNVC. Andy Shallal gave a talk about his experiences with hosting Peace Cafes, which use the arts as a medium for establishing dialogue between communities in conflict with one another. Chapter members attended a talk by H.H. the Dalai Lama at the Washington National Cathedral entitled "Cultivating Peace as an Antidote to Violence," to observe the anniversary of September 11, 2001. WBPF is joining in the planning of the first Washington DC Change Your Mind Day to be held in June 2004.

The DC Chapter is participating in an interfaith home-building project with DC Habitat for Humanity. This will create relationships among faith communities in the DC area, and at the same time create much-needed housing. Volunteers can participate in the physical building or they can contribute financially.

The new **Three Treasures Chapter** in Boca Raton, Florida, has developed a meditation program for youthful offenders, and is working on various media-oriented projects on the issue of Right Speech. Chapter member John

Barber traveled to the West Bank in November to witness the suffering of Palestinians and Israelis firsthand.

Members of the new **Tampa Bay Chapter** have been active with Women in Black in St. Petersburg. In November, a group went to Miami to protest the Free Trade Area of the Americas' (FTAA) ministerial meeting, and to speak out for economic justice and against exploitative free trade plans that would lower labor standards and hurt the environment. Other chapter members attended the 13th annual Vigil and Protest at the School of the Americas at Fort Benning, Georgia. Three chapter members also sat a five-day silent retreat at a medium-security federal prison in Gainesville.

The **Atlanta Chapter** sponsors a monthly silent peace walk from the Carter Presidential Center along Freedom Parkway to within sight of the Martin Luther King Center. This project offers local Buddhists an alternative to attending angry demonstrations. The Atlanta Chapter also has a subcommittee that is organizing meditation classes at area colleges and universities.

In October the **Boston Chapter** received the 2003 Peacemaker Award, given annually by the Cambridge Peace Commission to a group that is "working for peace in a time of war." Congratulations, Boston BPF!

At the **Central Massachusetts Chapter**, members are preparing a Beginner's Guide to Meditation for Prisoners. Recent meetings were held with local American Friends Service Committee members and representatives from the Leverett Peace Pagoda to discuss possibilities for joint projects.

The **Pioneer Valley Chapter** co-sponsored a presentation by Zen priest Hilda Gutierrez Baldoquin entitled, "Sexism, Racism, Inequality and War—Connecting the Dots." Chapter members also met with Rev. Baldoquin to talk about how to make the chapter more accessible to people of diverse backgrounds. Members participated in a five-day action to save affordable housing for 200 Northampton families who may lose their homes due to rent increases. Maia Duerr spoke during the interfaith speakers' portion of this action, which received extensive local press coverage. Chapter members

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participated in the 18th anniversary celebration of the Nipponzan Myohoji Peace Pagoda in Leverett, Massachusetts, by helping to cook food for the community lunch. And others participated in the One World Fair in Cummington, a daylong celebration of working for a sustainable and generous world.

The **Twin Cities Chapter** was reactivated in early 2003. Many members participated in numerous peace rallies and actions, where Buddhists marched together under the BPF banner. Beginning in January 2004, a series of workshops will be held to explore the intersection of Buddhist practice and social justice activism. Topics include nonviolent communication, economic globalization, and mindfulness exercises for activists, among other things. (Contact Greta Gaard at [gaar0010@umn.edu](mailto:gaar0010@umn.edu) for more information.)

The new **Charlottesville, VA Chapter** held its first meeting in October. Members hail from many Buddhist traditions, and will be working with the Charlottesville Buddhist Association and the Charlottesville Center for Peace and Justice.

The **Seattle Chapter** co-sponsored the "Washington State Go to Rafah Campaign," to spur state congressional representatives to go to Rafah, Israel, to investigate the circumstances of the death of Rachel Corrie (see [www.gotorafah.org](http://www.gotorafah.org)). BPF-S co-sponsored a talk by David Loy at Seattle University entitled "Spirituality and Social Transformation." (David Loy went to Iraq last winter with Voices in the Wilderness as a rep-

resentative of BPF.) BPF-S participated in the Eastside Interfaith Diversity Fair, which brings together diverse local spiritual communities to celebrate one another's richness and individuality.

**Seattle Chapter** members also participated in a "Sufficiency Economics Workshop" to explore questions about sustainable economies; a public lecture by Walter Wink entitled "The Myth of Redemptive Violence" and a subsequent two-day workshop on nonviolence; and workshops by renowned Colombian trainer Jorge Rubio, on the applications of Nonviolent Communication. The Seattle Chapter has also begun a program of suggested monthly reading selections on topics of concern to engaged Buddhists (see <http://www.bpf-seattle.org/readings.html>).

The **Melbourne, Australia Chapter** facilitated a range of workshops on working with conflict and fear, and celebrating diversity and solidarity on issues of injustice. This has included learning about the needs of Aboriginal and other indigenous peoples.

The new **Nelson, British Columbia Chapter** will focus on issues of militarism and peace, as well as racism toward indigenous peoples of Canada.

The **Winnipeg, Manitoba Chapter** helped to establish a Peace Sunday, observed annually in September by the Buddhist Churches of Canada. BPF members have participated in an annual interfaith Peace Celebration in Winnipeg, and in a march to support a local food bank. Chapter members are studying a Buddhist approach to the controversial issue of gay marriage. Same-sex unions are legal in Canada but not considered marriage; the movement to have them legalized as marriage has caused a significant backlash.

Members of the **Mexico Chapter** at la Universidad de las Américas, Puebla, have been discussing the Dalai Lama's teachings about global ethics. Members are working to fund the construction of a campus meditation pavilion. Chapter members are talking with Jose Luis Reissig, Hilda Gutierrez Baldoquin, and Shambhala International to plan a Spanish-language meditation retreat to be held in the U.S., perhaps in New Mexico, in 2005.

Ken Jones of the **Network of Engaged Buddhists (NEB) in the U.K.** reports that the first meeting of "Buddhists for Peace" took place at the end of October and it was a significant development in the UK Buddhist Community. The coalition included participants from Friends of the Western Buddhist Order, Community of Interbeing, NEB, Amida, and Buddhafield, along with representatives from other peace groups. They met to plan a peace walk and other actions in conjunction with President George W. Bush's visit to London in November. A Buddhists for Peace (Newcastle) Web site can be viewed at [www.amidatrust.org.uk/buddhistsforpeace/html](http://www.amidatrust.org.uk/buddhistsforpeace/html). ❖

—Compiled by Robert Lyons

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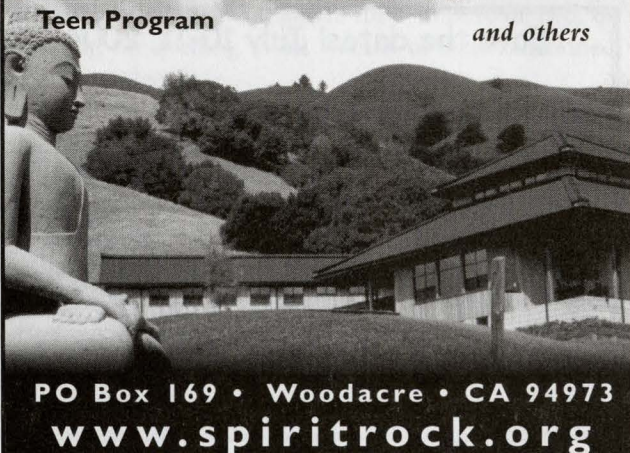
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**Texas Sangha Quarterly**, newsletter for and about Buddhist prisoners in Texas, is looking for work. Prisoners within the Texas system can send submissions (articles, sutra quotes, etc.) for publication to: TSQ, P.O. Box 38064, Dallas, TX 75238-0064.

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**Pema Chodron Tape: *Practicing Buddhism in Times of War***, a talk given in San Francisco in 2003. \$11 (includes postage), available from BPF, 510/655-6169; <bpf@bpf.org>

**BPF publications: *Making the Invisible Visible***, writings by people of color and their white allies about healing racism in our Buddhist communities. \$6 plus postage; order directly from Sheridan Adams, <metta108@sbcglobal.net>.

**Safe Harbor**, ethical guidelines, process, and resources for Buddhist communities. \$7 (includes postage), available from BPF, 510/655-6169; <bpf@bpf.org>.

## GROUPS

**Green Sangha: Spiritually Based Environmental Activism.** Groups in Oakland and Marin County. Form a group in your home town. Call 415/459-8610; [www.greensangha.org](http://www.greensangha.org).

**Sangha for Buddhists of Color** meets monthly in the San Francisco Bay Area for meditation, dharma talks, and mutual support. For information, call 415/789-8359; <boc\_caretakers@hotmail.com>.

**Mindfulness, Diversity, and Social Change Sangha**, blending mindfulness

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**Prison Dharma Network (PDN)** needs your donations of dollars and used dharma books to continue making the dharma available to prisoners. If you are interested in forming local or regional chapters to facilitate contemplative prison ministry, contact: PDN, P.O. Box 4623, Boulder, CO 80306-4623, 303/544-5923; <pdn@indra.com>.

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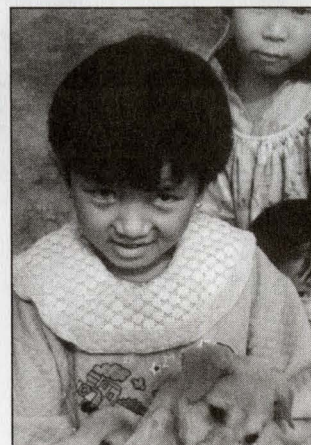
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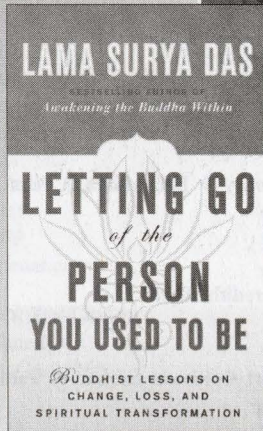


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