



# The Gay Buddhist Fellowship Newsletter

A Monthly Publication of the Gay Buddhist Fellowship, San Francisco

December, 1994

## Queer Cookin



*John Krowka*

Since July GBF has been making a contribution to our community by preparing one dinner every month for the residents of the Hamilton Family Center (HFC). The first part of each dinner begins weeks before the actual event with a meeting to plan the menu and divide the work among the volunteers. Our primary goal is to provide a nutritious meal that the HFC residents will eat and enjoy. We are often tempted by culinary extravagance and reminders of the virtues of simplicity are often helpful. We are not, after all, trying to compete with Chez Panisse. An entree, vegetable, salad, side-dish, dessert, and beverages are chosen. Recipes are selected and the amounts of ingredients to feed about 70 people are calculated.

The Saturday of the dinner is busy for everyone involved. In the morning volunteers shop for groceries, usually at discount supermarkets to get the best prices. It really is amazing that a nutritious and tasty meal can be prepared for about \$2.00 per person. Early on Saturday afternoon one of the volunteers drives to the "Bakers of Paris" in South San Francisco to pick up their donation of bread for our meal.

At about 3:30 pm the cooking crew, which consists of 6 guys, assembles at the HFC. We walk through the communal sleeping/living rooms to get to the dining room and kitchen. Huge pots, pans, colanders, and the like are taken out from the supply shelves and the work begins. It is great to see everyone in the kitchen working together to make the dinner. Sometimes there is disagreement ("Blanche, dear, I really think the salad needs more tomatoes"), but it is always resolved amicably, and mindfully. The convivial banter in the kitchen leaves no doubt that this is a

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## What GBF Means To Me

*Daishin David Sunseri*

I've been practicing with people in the Gay Buddhist Fellowship for over two years, and I feel very strongly that we function as a true sangha for our community in the most vital way.

In Buddhist organizations I've been associated with in the past, hierarchical power politics and manipulation for position, control and money have been common practices. Although GBF has had some problems with regard to differences of opinion and personal issues, there remains at its core an honest, compassionate, and sincere commitment by its members to provide a unique environment for gay men to experience the truth of the Buddha's teaching, and to share

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- BDSC Berkeley Dharmadhatu /Shambhala Center: 2288 Fulton Street, Berkeley 510/841.6475 or 510/549.1481
- GGF Green Gulch Farm (SF Zen Center) 1601 Shoreline Highway, Sausalito 415/383.3134
- HBC Healing Buddha Center/Medicine Buddha Healing Clinic [Two locations: (1) Unitarian Universalist Church, corner of Cedar & Bonita in North Berkeley - 2nd floor, Fireside Room - entrance through garden on Bonita; (2) 702 Solano Ave., Albany] 510/525.7835
- KDK Kagyu Drogen Kunchab: PO Box 170370, SF, CA 94117 415/752.5454
- LMB Land of Medicine Buddha: 5800 Prescott Road, Soquel 408/462.8383
- NI Nyingma Institute: 1815 Highland Place, Berkeley 510/843.6812
- ODD Orgyen Dorje Den / Bay Area Yeshe Nyingpo: 410 Townsend #406 SF 415/826.7181
- POL PÖL Pema Ösel Ling 2013 Eureka Canyon Road, Corralitos 408/761.6266
- RF Rigpa Fellowship: 816 Bancroft Way, Berkeley, CA 510/644.1858
- SFDSC San Francisco Dharmadhatu/Shambhala Center: 1630 Taraval St., SF 415/731.4426.
- SFZC SF Zen Center: 300 Page Street 415/863.3136.
- SR Spirit Rock/Insight Meditation West: 5000 Sir Frances Drake Blvd., Woodacre 415/488.0170 and 488.0164
- TCL Tse Chen Ling Center: 4469-23rd St., SF 415/641.0671.

Do you want a Dharma center's events listed here? Send a note with information on special events, or better yet, arrange for their mailings to be sent regularly, to:

Mark Picciano  
Local Dharma Calendar

## LOCAL DHARMA December, 1994

**Sundays Introductory Open House** Dharmadhatu is dedicated to promoting an uplifting environment for students to practice meditation and to study Dharma as taught by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche. The Sunday morning Open House is intended for new students and visitors, featuring various local speakers. Meditation instruction available. 9-noon. Free of charge. BDSC

**Berkeley Schedule**  
4 Dec Jonathon Ransahoff  
11 Dec Robert Horton  
18 Dec Sheila Sabine  
25 Dec Chris Keyser

**Sundays Community Practice Day** This includes open house, sitting practice session, and Shambhala Practice Session. Meditation instruction is available during any of these practice sessions. Talks are given at Open House and on Shambhala Practice Days. SFDSC

**San Francisco Schedule:**  
4 Dec Open House. 9:30 am-12:00 noon  
11 Dec Shambhala Practice. 9:00 am- 12:00 noon/1:30 pm-4:30 pm  
25 Dec Sitting Practice. 9:30 am-12:00 noon

**Tuesdays Guided Meditation on the Lam.rim** Lam.rim, the Graduated Path to Enlightenment, is one of the most profound teachings of the Gelugpa Tradition. The Lam.rim presents a concise view of the entire Buddhist path, and is a timeless source of inspiration, appropriate for experienced students, as well as new students of Buddhist philosophy. 7 pm TCL

**Sundays Sunday Morning Kum Nye** Each session of this drop-in class introduces several practices for exploring a specific experiential theme, using the gentle movement exercises of Kum Nye. Both experienced and beginning students are welcome. 10 am-1 pm. \$25 per session. NI

**Sundays Sunday Evening Practice and Dharma Talk** Nyingma Institute welcomes visitors, students, and friends to join in a public meditation and talk every Sunday. Meditation and chanting at 5 pm and Dharma talk at 6 pm. No charge. NI

**Sundays Weekly Vipassana Sitting** with Eugene Cash. 45 minute silent meditation followed by discussion.  
7 pm-9 pm

**Tuesdays Weekly Vipassana Sitting** with Howard Cohn.  
7:30 pm-9:30 pm

**Thursdays Weekly Vipassana Sitting** with James Baraz. Albany United Methodist Church, 980 Stannage (at Marin), 2 blocks up from San Pablo, Berkeley. 7:30 pm-9:30 pm

**Zen Center Classes** The Zen Center organizes the study of Buddhism into a Five Root curriculum:

- I: Life of the Buddha and Early Texts
- II: Buddhist Psychology
- III: Buddhist Wisdom
- IV: Ethics and Compassion
- V: Zen

New students should begin with

the introductory class, The Life of the Buddha. Class fees are \$30 members/\$40 non-members. '94 Study Session V begins 23 Dec. Call for details. GGF

**7 Dec Medicine Buddha/Healing Meditation** 7pm TCL

**10 Dec Monastic Day Retreat** with Ajahn Amaro. By donation, no registration required. SR

**10-11 December The Practice of Tranquillity Meditation (Shinay)** Lama Lodu Rinpoche will give instructions and lead the meditations. Shinay meditation is the mind resting one-pointedly on an object so that not so many thoughts arise and the mind becomes very stable and calm. 10am-12, 3pm-5pm, 7:30pm-9pm Members 6+ months: \$35 weekend, \$10 per teaching; General public: \$70 weekend, \$20 per teaching. KDK

**12 Dec Lama Chopa/Tsog** 7pm TCL

**14 Dec Praises to 21 Taras** 7pm TCL

**15-18 December Nyung Nes Retreat** Members 6+ months: \$50; General public: \$100 KDK

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## One Day Sitting for Gays and Lesbians

Green Gulch Farm  
Saturday, December 17  
9:00 am - 5:00 pm

\$15 for members of SF Zen Center  
\$20 for non-members  
Fee includes a delicious vegetarian lunch

Green Gulch Farm  
1601 Shoreline Dr.  
Muir Beach  
Sausalito, CA 94965  
Call to register: 415.383.3134

Meet at 273 Page Street (Zen Hospice) at 8:00 am if you need a ride or can drive

**17 December In The Beginning: The Book Of Genesis & The Dharma** with Jack Kornfield, Stephen Mitchell, Rachel Naomi Remen, Brother David Steindl-Rast, John Tarrant. Bill Moyers invited Stephen Mitchell to participate in a new PBS series on Genesis, and the day will include discussions of Genesis from the perspective of the Dharma. Please bring a pen and paper as we will spend a short time writing midrash, a creative re-imagination of one of the great stories discussed during the day. 10am - 5pm \$80 call for details. SR

**30 December -1 January Mahakala Practice Retreat: Clearing Away the Obstacles** In

Tibet, every monastery does Mahakala practice at the end of the year for nine days continuously to dispel all obstacles of the old year and create auspicious conditions for the new year. 6am-6pm No fee KDK

**31 December New Year's Eve Sitting** Sitting and walking meditation, ending with the traditional 108 bells on the O-Bonsho, the great bell. Afterward, a bonfire and hot drink. On New Year's morning there will be ceremony and special breakfast. 8pm-midnight \$35 includes overnight accommodation and breakfast. \$15 for New Year's Eve only. GGF

# The Gay Buddhist Fellowship Meditation Instructions

These instructions are intended only for those who do not yet have a practice or for those who want to learn a new one. If you already have a silent meditation practice, Buddhist or non-Buddhist, and if you plan to continue it, please feel free to practice it at any meeting or retreat of the Gay Buddhist Fellowship.

The Gay Buddhist Fellowship is an ecumenical organization composed of people from several different Buddhist traditions and lineages. Although the following instructions come from one of the Vipassana lineages, the practice of mindfulness or awareness is central to all of our traditions, so cultivating awareness should not interfere with either the spirit or the practice of your own tradition, whatever it may be.

## Sitting Meditation

**Posture.** Sit or kneel in a position that feels stable, using a cushion, a meditation bench, a chair, or the plain floor. Try to keep your spine straight in order to help keep your mind more alert. Don't force your body into a posture it isn't used to; rather, let it stretch gradually over time into the new posture. Don't hold your body in a position where it might be injured. In order to calm the mind, it's better to remain unmoving in sitting meditation, but to avoid hurting your body, shift positions if you feel much pain.

**Mindfulness of Breathing.** "Mindfulness," the Buddha said, "is the pathway to the Deathless." Close your eyes and turn your attention inward. Find that place in your body where breathing feels most obvious. For most people, that's at the abdomen or the nostrils, but it can be anywhere. Bring your attention to that place and try to keep it there without a sense of forcing. Simply know the bare sensations of breathing with as much directness and subtlety as possible. Let awareness of other things go. Your mind will wander in

thought. As soon as you notice that wandering, without judgment let the thoughts go and bring your awareness back to breathing with a kind of gentle, gliding motion in your mind. Don't try to stop thinking, a common error, because that effort will surely fail. Just let go of thought once you recognize it and return to mindfulness of the breath. Be patient and gentle with yourself. Training our minds to be aware is very difficult, but success is certain if we patiently persist.

**Extending Mindfulness.** Once you find that your attention has begun to wander less and can stay on the sensations of breathing with some stability, then try extending mindfulness to other sensations in your body. Use awareness of breathing as your anchor: start there, then extend your awareness to some other sensation, like tightness in the shoulders, and then return "home" to awareness of breathing. Notice clearly which sensations are pleasant, which are unpleasant, and which are neutral. Can you learn to be with them all equally, without reaction?

After you find that you can track events throughout your body without a lot of wandering off into thought, try extending mindfulness further to include mental events too: knowing thoughts as thoughts, emotions as emotions, mental images as mental images, and consciousness (the function of knowing) as consciousness. Notice here, too, what events are pleasant, what unpleasant, and what neutral. Can you begin to learn to be with all emotions equally? After you extend awareness further to include seeing, hearing, smelling, and tasting, you will have opened your field of mindfulness to encompass all that we can experience.

## Walking Meditation

Walking meditation is identical to sitting meditation, except that you are training your mind to pay attention to a moving body instead of a sitting one. Try to maintain awareness of the sensations of walking, bringing attention back when you see that the

mind has wandered off into thought. In some traditions, formal walking meditation is done in a group: in others it's done alone. If you do it alone, it's useful to move more slowly than usual and to walk without a destination. Walk back and forth on some straight track about fifteen to twenty paces long.

## Mindfulness in Daily Life

In every moment, during any activity at all, we have a chance to wake up by being present, and being present comes from being aware. Pay attention to sensations in all the body's postures: sitting, walking, standing, lying down. Watch what your mind is doing in all its moods. Ask yourself, "What's happening?" in order to stimulate mindfulness in the moment. Then ask, "How am I relating to this?" in order to see whether you're caught of free. Is there reaction in your mind? Is there a way to let go? The Buddha said that freedom through mindfulness comes like slowly filling a bucket, drop by patient drop. Each moment of seeing clearly what is here and then letting it be, thought it may seem inconsequential, is significant. One day the bucket overflows.

## Mental Noting

A word about the practice of noting what is happening by labeling it with a silent thought. Some of our Buddhist traditions practice noting; others avoid it. You might experiment with it to see if it's helpful to you or not. If you decide to try it, just identify whatever is happening in your body or mind by labeling it with one word spoken silently: "in, out" or "rising, falling" for breathing; "thinking," "seeing," "joy," "tingling," "anger," "burning," and so forth. When you are moving slowly in walking meditation, try noting each part of each step: "lifting, moving, placing." The value of noting is to help direct mindfulness to whatever's happening, and also to antidote thought without thought.

- Eric Kolvig

