



Gay Buddhist Fellowship

Newsletter

A Monthly Publication of the Gay Buddhist Fellowship, San Francisco

January, 1995

What GBF Means To Me

by Mark Picciano

[The following article is the second in an ongoing series. We encourage others to share their perspectives about GBF. —GBF Newsletter Committee]

There are at least as many opinions about the purpose of GBF as there are participants. I'd like to share some thoughts about GBF, and the name of our group is a convenient structure. I hope these observations stimulate more reflection and discussion about this unique group.

GAY. Why do we need a group with the specific designation of sexual orientation? As a member of a minority group, I feel a special comfort and connection with gay men, and that affinity is strengthened when spirituality is the focus of the organization. Could I pursue my path with a group of people from both sexes, representing the full spectrum of sexual orientation? Sure, but the added dimension of shared sexuality increases the odds of finding people who can appreciate me, and with whom I can develop relationships.

BUDDHIST. I have been meditating for four years, and only recently have begun to apply the label "Buddhist" to myself, and I'm willing to admit I have not completely figured out what it means! Having experienced a very structured religious environment throughout childhood and adolescence, I am leery of organized spirituality. Buddhism appeals to me as a non-theistic path whose hierarchies are concerned with helping people to end suffer-

ing rather than promoting political careers.

The loose structure of GBF offers me the opportunity to explore the different Buddhist traditions and meet men who are following those paths. I have not chosen a specific tradition, and may never do so. Maybe that means I am not a true Buddhist, but the message of compassion and wisdom strikes me as profoundly true, and GBF is an access to the world of people following that path. The men I meet through GBF show me how the Buddha's teachings can be integrated into everyday life, and they support my efforts to do the same.

FELLOWSHIP. There is a special camaraderie in GBF, but only if you get involved. I overcame my natural fear of commitment, after attending GBF events for 2 years, and began to volunteer. And after taking that major step, a new level of fellowship/sangha is unfolding.

Thich Nhat Hanh led a day of mindfulness at Spirit Rock last year and he addressed the concern about appropriate community/sangha. He warned against looking for "the perfect sangha" and urged us to work where we are. I intend to stick with GBF, and help it grow to meet the changing needs of our Gay Buddhist Fellowship. ♡

February 18 Workshop to Focus on Gay Buddhism

Once each year the Gay Buddhist Fellowship has sponsored a retreat on Buddhist practice. Our regular meetings each month focus briefly on Buddhism and related topics. What we have not done thus far is to spend a whole day looking at gay Buddhism and the Gay Buddhist Fellowship.

On February 18 we plan to do just that. We have arranged with Sangha House, located near UC-Berkeley, to use their space for a one-day workshop where we will explore issues dealing with our practice, our community, our experiences in everyday life, and developing a vision for the GBF.

Sangha House was, until recently, a Korean Zen Center but is now a group residence. There is a tremendous feeling of peace and tranquility in the

large space on the first floor of Sangha House that lends itself to a creative discussion of who we are and where we are going. This program is being planned by a committee of GBF and will be described in greater detail in next month's newsletter. Enrollment will be limited since the space accommodates approximately 35-40 people. The cost for the workshop, including lunch, is \$10.00.

To those of you who live outside the Bay Area and who have been unable to attend the Sunday morning meetings, we urge you to consider attending this special workshop and making a weekend of it in the Bay Area. For a successful workshop, we

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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; (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 Ösei 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, SF. 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

January, 1995

ONGOING EVENTS

Sundays Dharmadhatu 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. Intended for new students and visitors. Features various local speakers. Meditation instruction available. 9-noon. Free-of-charge. BDSC

Sundays Shambala Community Practice Day. Includes open house, sitting practice session, and Shambala practice session. Meditation instruction is available during all practice sessions. SFDSC

San Francisco Schedule:

Open House. 9:30-12 noon.
Shambala Practice, 9-12 noon;
1:30-4:30 pm.
Sitting Practice, 9:30-12 noon.

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. Experienced and beginning students welcome. 10 am-1 pm. \$10 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; Dharma talk at 6 pm. Free. NI

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

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 and new students of Buddhist philosophy. 7 pm. TCL

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

Fridays Healing Circle Berkeley. Berkeley Fellowship of Unitarian Universalists, corner of Cedar & Bonita, Fireside Room, 2nd floor, Berkeley. 7:30 pm. By donation. HBC

Thursdays Weekly Vipassana Sitting with James Baraz. Albany United Methodist Church, 980 Stannage (at Marin), 2 blocks up from San Pablo, Berkeley. 7:30-9:30 pm. Call 510/525-7546.

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:
Jan 8 - Feb 12 (Sun. mornings)
- V: Zen: Jan 8 - Feb 12 (Sun. am)
Jan 9-Feb 13 (Mon. eves)
Jan 10-Feb 14 (Tues. evs)

New students should begin with the introductory class, "The Life of the Buddha." Class fees are \$30 members/\$40 non-members. Study Session V begins 23 Dec. 1994. Call for details. GGF

SPECIAL EVENTS

4 Jan. Medicine Buddha Healing Meditation. 7pm. TCL

7 Jan. Meditation and Inquiry. One-day vipassana sitting with Howard Cohn. 9am-5pm. \$20. Contact Code HC1. SR

11 Jan. Praises to 21 Taras with Lama Chopal/Tsog. 7pm. TCL

14 Jan. One-Day Sesshins. 5am-6pm. \$30 non-members; \$25 members. GGF

15 Jan. Day of Metta Practice with Sylvia Boorstein. 10am-5pm. \$20. Contact Code SB1. SR

20-23 Jan. Nature of Mind. Ven. Robina Courtin, a fully ordained nun in the Tibetan tradition, leads these sessions. Suggested donation: \$10 per session; \$25 for all sessions. Friday, 7-9pm; Sat., Sun., 10am-1pm. TCL

26 Jan. Vajrayogini Self Initiation. 7pm. Call for information. TCL

29 Jan. Vipassana Day-Long with Jack Kornfield. 9am-5pm. \$30. Contact Code JK3. SR

Feb. 2-4. An Exploration into Emptiness with the Ven. Thubten Pende. Feb 2-3, 7-9pm; Feb 4, 10am-1pm. \$10 per session; \$25 entire program. TCL



GBF Calendar

8 Jan., Sunday Meeting
"Reducing Stress: Working and Living Mindfully" with David Weinberg.

22 Jan., Sunday Meeting
"Bodhisattva—Joining Heaven & Earth" with Bruce Dalsanto from the San Francisco Shambala Center. **Note:** Due to a conflict at Zen Hospice, this meeting will be held at the home of John Krowka,

Following the meeting will be a potluck brunch. Please bring something for the potluck. Also, there will not be zafus available, so you may want to bring your own.

12 Feb., Sunday Meeting
"GBF: What Is It? What Do You Want It To Be?" Preliminary discussion in preparation for GBF's Feb. 18 workshop, where we will explore issues about our practice, our experiences in everyday life, and the GBF sangha.

18 Feb. (Sat.), GBF Workshop
8:30am-4:30pm. At Sangha House on Arch Street in Berkeley. Open to all who are interested. To register, call the info. line: 415/974-9878.

26 Feb., Sunday Meeting
"Enlightened Decision Making, or What to Do When You Don't Know What to Do," with Carl Grunberg.

Workshop

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need both veteran and new practitioners.

To reserve a place on February 18, please send in a check for \$10.00 payable to GBF to: GFB, 2261 Market Street #422, San Francisco, CA 94114. Be sure to write on the check that it is for the February 18 workshop. If you have any questions, call the GBF information line at 415/974-9878 and leave a message. This will be a wonderful opportunity to get to know each other better. ♡

Maintaining a Balance in One's Life

by Bob Hass

The last step of the Eightfold Path is right meditation. Meditation rests at the heart of Buddhism, but it is not simply what we do when we are sitting on a zafu.

In a wonderfully concise publication titled *American Buddhism* (Chicago: Dharma House, 1976), Gyomay M. Kubose describes meditation as a serenity that enables us to see clearly the truth about life and all things. It reminds me of Thich Nhat Hanh's talks on mindfulness. Mindfulness, he explains, enables us to understand the people and circumstances we encounter daily by calming our minds and viewing others with loving kindness.

Since Buddhism teaches us that quietude is essential to our lives, meditation and mindfulness become powerful practices that help keep us centered. They slow us down in a society where technological "advances" speed up our lives and bombard us with information. They help us to set priorities and regain perspective on our lives. And they remind us to stop and smell the flowers.

Wes Nisker, co-editor of *Inquiring Mind* magazine, recently addressed the issue of technology from a Buddhist perspective in his column, "The Dharma and The Drama" (Fall 1994, p. 42). (Nisker is also the author of a new book published by Ten Speed Press titled, *If You Don't Like the News, Go Out and Make Some of Your Own.*) He wrote, in part:

"One story making a lot of news lately is the new information superhighway. And although many people are talking about it, nobody seems to be asking the essential questions: Do we really need another highway? And, do we really need more information? One piece of information I read claims we will soon be able to receive 30,000 times more information just over our

telephone. But who in the world could absorb 30,000 times more information?

"I defy anyone to absorb even 100 times more. There just isn't enough room in the "in." ...Do we really want to do our shopping by TV? Do we need to have access to every fact ever known? Too much "info-tainment" crowds common sense out of the mind, and wisdom out of the soul. Too much imagery makes us jumpy and nervous and basically dissatisfied.

"Instead of an information superhighway, maybe we should build more rest stops on the information highway we're already on. Let people pull over and check out a reality that is not virtual. See *trees* in their natural habitat."

As someone who works in the field of education, I am well aware of the positive contributions that an information superhighway such as the Internet is having on teaching and learning. But it is also true that as Americans, we are becoming a nation addicted to technology. I would venture to go even further, and claim that technology is robbing us of our soulfulness, our spontaneity, our ability to communicate and to experience beauty—in short, our humanity.

Look at everything we have to distract us. There are computers and computer bulletin boards, a seemingly endless stream of computer software, CD-Roms and video games, VCRs, laser disks, CD players, tape decks, stereo systems, cable TV, cellular phones, boom boxes, voice mail, faxes, e-mail, and answering machines. Gasp. Have I forgotten anything?

While some of these devices are convenient, and others entertaining, it is easy for them to occupy a large

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