



Newsletter July 1998

# Gay Buddhist Fellowship

**The Gay Buddhist Fellowship supports Buddhist practice in the gay men's community. It is a forum that brings together the diverse Buddhist traditions to address the spiritual concerns of gay men in the Bay Area, the United States, and the world. GBF's mission includes cultivating a social environment that is inclusive and caring.**

**This being, that arises. This not being, that does not arise.**

*Excerpts from GBF's Foundations of Buddhism class on Saturday, May 2, 1998, facilitated by David Sunseri, David Holmes, and Alan Oliver.*

**Sunseri:** Buddhism is not an absolute religion. Buddhism is completely relativistic. Nothing is higher or more profound than anything else. There's no guiding principal. And, there is no Atman, God, etc.

Our biggest problem is that we think we're separate. That's the biggest cause of suffering. Also, Buddhism has minimal rituals. You don't find your way to the teachings through magic. Unlike Hinduism, there is no caste system. You don't have to work your way up in the caste via reincarnations.

**Oliver:** When the Buddha was asked: "What's your interpretation of the meaning of life?", the Buddha would say, "I'm not here to talk about that." When asked what miracles the Buddha could do, he said, "When I'm thirsty I drink, and when I'm hungry I eat." He presented a simple, grounded message. This was revolutionary. He was a reformer, going against the grain. In that sense, he runs parallel to Jesus. Over time, however, Buddhism picked up the accoutrements that he was fighting against in his life. It became institutionalized. He said, don't make images. It became more elaborate; more ritualized. The important thing, however, is to get back to the person. To directly experience Buddhism for yourself.

**Sunseri:** The Buddha said that anyone can obtain enlightenment. Buddhism has a particular quality and if you get it, if you intuit it, if you get a feeling for it, and it feels comfortable to you, then it's yours, right? You make it yours. The Buddha doesn't make it yours.

**Holmes:** The story of the Buddha's life is the story of every person's journey. That you start off as a child and you are in paradise, and protected. You come into a world where you are king. Then, you encounter some limitation on that right away. As you're growing up, you're confronted with these irreducible causes of suffering. And you have to find an answer. And you have to leave home, find an answer, and search it out.

The Buddha is tempted by Mara. At every juncture in your life you are presented with temptation and a possible fall. The fall from this grace that's arising in you. The awakening that's happening has the possibility of falling asleep at every moment. And, Mara keeps presenting more and more of these things and, what do you do? You go back to your practice;

