

## ►► DHARMA WISDOM ◀◀

### “Self-Reflections”

When people first encounter Buddhism, they often appreciate the simplicity and clarity of the fundamental teachings on impermanence, suffering, mindfulness and compassion. These teachings make sense. In reflecting on our own life and experience, it is easy to understand these basic truths: that there is suffering in human life; that things change; and that how we engage life is key to our happiness.

The teaching of ‘anatta,’ commonly translated as selflessness or no-self, is more difficult to understand or relate to. What does selflessness or no-self mean? What does it look like? I seem to have a self. Is Buddhism really suggesting that I don’t? In order to understand this teaching, it is helpful to investigate the Buddha’s own words. When the Buddha was asked directly whether or not there is a self, he refused to answer. Instead, his teachings emphasize letting go and encourage us to inquire actively into self and not-self.

*“...How do you construe this, monks: If a person were to gather or burn or do as he likes with the grass, twigs, branches and leaves here in Jeta’s Grove, would the thought occur to you, ‘It is us that this person is gathering, burning, or doing with as he likes’?”*

*“No, sir.”*

*“Why is that? Because those things are not our self and do not pertain to our self. Even so, monks, whatever is not yours: Let go of it. Your letting go of it will be for your long-term happiness and benefit. And what is not yours? Form (body) is not yours... Feeling is not yours... Perception... Mental processes... Consciousness is not yours. Let go of it. Your letting go of it will be for your long-term happiness and benefit.” (Majhima Nikaya 22)*

In this teaching, the Buddha points to the question of identification and identity, encouraging us to investigate and explore how our felt sense of “I-me-mine” shows up in our life. What do I identify with? What roles, positions or opinions do I consider me or mine? How does identification happen? Is it mental, emotional, physical, or some combination of all three? What happens when I let go of an idea or belief? Or when I dis-identify with my self-image or personal history? Is there a time and place when it is important to identify? Are both identification and dis-identification valuable?

The teaching of the Two Truths — that reality includes two dimensions, the Relative or Personal and the Ultimate or Universal — helps illuminate and inform this exploration. When understood through the lens of the Two Truths, we see that the self exists in the relative, personal world, providing an organizing identity that allows for coherence of family, community, culture, etc. At the same time, this relative truth coexists with the ultimate, universal aspect of reality in which no separate, substantial, personal self exists. While

this may seem abstract, as we practice mindfulness and discover the freedom of not identifying with thoughts, feelings, sensations, sounds, tastes, smells and sights, we begin to directly experience and realize their impermanent, not-self nature.

Even as we touch this universal dimension, it is important to remember that both truths are equally true. It is true that, ultimately, no distinct, unchanging self exists. But it is also true that we live within the constraints of the relative; we need to eat when hungry, sleep when tired, and to stop when the light turns red.

Exploring this paradox, of self and not self, personal and universal, is fundamental to the teaching of Buddhism and, through reflection and investigation, provides entry to realization and freedom.

— Eugene Cash

**To study the Buddha way is to study the self; to study the self is to forget the self... To forget the self is to be awakened [Intimate] with all things. To awaken with the myriad things is to drop off body and mind and the body and minds of others. No trace of enlightenment remains and this no trace continues endlessly.”**

— Zen master Dogen

## ►► NEW MEDITATION GROUP ◀◀ in San Francisco

**Meditation in the Buddhist Tradition**  
**Beginning July 8th, every Monday from 5:30-6:30 pm**  
**At the LGBT Community Center**  
**1748 Market Street, room Q33**  
**Led by Hilda Gutiérrez Baldoquín & Larry Yang**

This new group will explore mindfulness, meditation and spiritual practice in one’s day-to-day life, and will focus on cultivating an open awareness spacious enough to include whatever arises moment to moment.

Hilda Gutiérrez Baldoquín, MS.Ed., is senior consultant and trainer with VISIONS, Inc., an international firm providing multicultural organizational change services. She is preparing for priest ordination in the Soto Zen lineage of Shunryu Suzuki Roshi.

Larry Yang, LCSW, is clinical supervisor and coordinator of diversity and multicultural services at SFGH’s outpatient psychotherapy clinic. He is on the Diversity Council of Spirit Rock Meditation Center and is part of its Community Dharma Leaders and Dedicated Practitioners Programs.

For more information, please call 415.206.6313 or email [MahaSangha@aol.com](mailto:MahaSangha@aol.com). ♦

☞ **The INSIGHT MEDITATION COMMUNITY OF SAN FRANCISCO (IMCSF)** is dedicated to offering the teachings of the Buddha as they develop in the West. Our specific orientation is toward intensive lay (householder) practice. We offer a weekly meditation and Dharma talk, classes, meditation retreats and other events as a community of spirit devoted to the embodiment of awakening in our lives.

#### ☞ ABOUT THE TEACHER

Eugene Cash is the founding teacher of the Insight Meditation Community of San Francisco. He is a teacher at Spirit Rock Meditation Center and he leads intensive meditation retreats internationally. His teaching is influenced by both Burmese and Thai streams of the Theravada tradition as well as Zen and Tibetan Buddhist practice. He is also a teacher of the “Diamond Approach” with A. H. Almaas.

#### ☞ DANA PRACTICE

Dana means generosity. The Buddha’s teachings are considered priceless but are given freely in a spirit of generosity. Offering dana (a donation) gives students an opportunity to express their gratitude for the teachings and to cultivate the joy of sharing. Generally, a basket or bowl is provided in which to place dana offerings for the teacher.

#### ☞ SERVICE

Service is a form of dana essential to keeping our community running smoothly. We welcome your assistance in the many tasks involved in functioning as a community. At this time, people are needed on Sunday evenings to greet newcomers and to set up and later put away cushions, carpets, flyers and other items. Call Volunteer Coordinator Tim Wicks at 415.821.2569.

### SISTER SANGHA in SOUTH AFRICA

Did you know that our Sunday night Sangha has a Sister Sangha, Dharmagiri, in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa? Here’s an update on three ongoing projects from Kittisaro and Thanissara, Dharmagiri’s two guiding teachers.

1) **Woza Moya Outreach** — South Africa has the highest rate of HIV/AIDS infection in the world. Woza Moya (which means “Come Spirit”) undertakes numerous activities to alleviate suffering in this realm. It has trained 16 volunteers who work in the local community to care for those who are ill, impoverished and dying. “Compassionate and informed response” is the key concept in this endeavor, which will soon encompass an adopt-a-child program to provide for the increasing number of children who are being orphaned as a result of AIDS. Woza Moya also supports two local schools and a local creche.

2) **Karuna Core Process Psychotherapy** — a training program that addresses the field of relationships and combines Western and Buddhist psychological insights and practices. More than 50 people completed the foundation courses this year.

3) **Dharmagiri Hermitage** — the building of hermitage-type retreat facilities for up to 12 people.

In addition, Thanissara has compiled a book of poetry, *Garden of the Midnight Rosary*, which explores the inner journey of transformation. The book was released for publication in April, 2002, and should soon be available to our Sangha for dana. Proceeds will go to support the work of Woza Moya.



Cover art from *Our Sangha Cookbook*

#### *Meanwhile, back in San Francisco...*

*Our Sangha Cookbook* is now in print, and hopefully you’re enjoying the recipes, blessings and poems in your copy now. The proceeds from this project went to provide partial scholarships for Sangha members attending the June 10-15 residential retreat led by Eugene, Thanissara and Kittisaro.

We all need support and nourishment as well as the opportunity to extend our own heart’s generosity. Giving dana for the cookbook and/or Thanissara’s book of poetry are ways to nourish yourself and extend generosity at the same time. Another way is to join the Sister Sangha Committee and help us develop new and on-going ways to support our Sister Sangha. If you are interested in the cookbook, the *Garden of the Midnight Rosary*, or the Sister Sangha Committee, or have questions, please call Gayle at 415.585.9029.

— Gayle Markow

***The true value of a human being is the degree to which he has attained liberation from the self.***

— Albert Einstein

# SCHEDULE OF UPCOMING EVENTS

## AT THE FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

### ON-GOING ACTIVITIES

#### Sunday Evening Meditation and Dharma Talk

##### Every Sunday

7:00-7:45 pm - Silent Meditation

7:45 pm - Short Break and

Announcements

8:00 pm - Dharma Talk, often including discussion and dialogue

Teacher: Eugene Cash (unless otherwise announced)

#### Potluck

##### 1st Sunday of each month, 5:30 pm

A time to socialize informally with your dharma brothers and sisters. Vegetarian dishes, please.

#### Beginning Orientation

##### 2nd Sunday of each month, 6:00 pm

A brief introduction for people who are new to Vipassana meditation practice and/or new to our Sangha, led by a senior student.

### DAY-LONG RETREATS

Suitable for beginning and experienced practitioners, the day will include: meditation instructions; sitting, walking and standing meditation; loving-kindness practice; and Dharma talk.

**Saturday, August 17**

**Saturday, October 12**

**Saturday, December 7**

**All day-longs 9:30 am-5:00 pm**

Teaching by dana (donation).

The August day-long will be taught by Eugene Cash and Greg Kramer, author of *Meditating Together*, *Speaking from Silence: Experiencing the Dharma in Dialogue*.

The October and December day-longs will be taught by Eugene Cash.

To register for any day-long, send a \$10 check made out to Eugene Cash at IMCSF, PO Box 475536, San Francisco, CA 94147-5536.

**For more information about IMCSF's activities at the Unitarian Church call Roxanne Worthington 415.661.3036**

## AT OTHER LOCATIONS

### SPIRIT ROCK MEDITATION CENTER

For more information on the Spirit Rock events below, call 415.488.0164 or visit the website <http://www.spiritrock.org>

#### "The Body of Awakening"

##### Vipassana Day-long

July 27, 9:30 am-5:00 pm

Teacher: Eugene Cash

#### Vipassana Residential Retreat

November 1-8

Teachers: Jack Kornfield, Debra Chamberlin-Taylor, Tara Brach, Eugene Cash and Rodney Smith

#### Vipassana Holiday Day-long

December 14, 9:30 am-5:00 pm

Teacher: Eugene Cash

### SEBASTOPOL

#### Vipassana Day-long

September 14, 9:00 am-5:00 pm

Teacher: Eugene Cash

To register: Call 707.823.0756 or email [starboy@sonic.net](mailto:starboy@sonic.net).

Because of space limitations and parking arrangements, pre-registration is necessary.

### SAN FRANCISCO

#### Vipassana Meditation and Dharma Talk

**Every Tuesday, 7:30-9:15 pm**

601 Dolores Street (at 19th

Street). Teacher: Howard Cohn

Information: 415.447.7761

## WHAT IS A KALYANA MITTA GROUP?

Kalyana Mitta is a Pali term for "spiritual friend." A Kalyana Mitta group is generally comprised of six to twelve members of a sangha who study and share their practice experience in a friendly, supportive environment. K.M. groups have an intimacy and focus not always available in larger sitting groups. A group may have a particular theme, such as Right Speech or classical study, or may more generally address how to keep one's practice alive in daily life.

Any members of a sangha may form their own Kalyana Mitta group. Currently, IMCSF has two K.M. groups, one facilitated by Jessica Herbold, the other facilitated by Greg Smith and Sally Northcutt. Jessica started a K.M. group in order to "find a way to achieve balance between finding [her] own voice as a woman and following a spiritual discipline." Sally "welcomed the opportunity to talk about practice with other practitioners in order to deepen [her] own understanding" of Dharma. Greg wanted to be able to "study Buddhism within a peer group." Although both our K.M. groups are currently closed to new members, they do keep waiting lists. Rather than wait, consider starting your own new group.

For more information on Kalyana Mitta groups, please call **Marla Cass** at Spirit Rock 415.488.9164 Ext. 325, or speak with **Eugene Cash**. ♦



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PO Box 475536  
San Francisco, CA 94147-5536  
<http://www.sfinight.org>

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**Quarterly Newsletter of the  
Insight Meditation Community  
of San Francisco**

July, August and September  
2002

meeting at the First Unitarian Universalist  
Church of San Francisco  
1187 Franklin Street at Geary Boulevard

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