

## ►► DHARMA REFLECTIONS ◀◀

### “Reflection on Reflection”

It is natural to reflect at this time of the year. One of the benefits of a convention such as a “New Year” is that it allows us to momentarily step outside the flow of time and reflect on our lives, our practice, and our world.

In the Buddhist tradition, reflection is an important practice in and of itself. In the Buddhist *suttas*, one finds the Buddha asking us to reflect over and over again. He asks us to look at our beliefs, views and opinions, intention, actions, and commitment. He also asks us to reflect on how we embody our beliefs and actions, and to contemplate the results.

In the Buddha’s teaching, a few main themes emerge. We are asked to reflect on **impermanence**—the transient nature of reality. He suggests that, given the temporality of life, we ask the question, “How are we spending our days and nights?” Are we able to fulfill our intentions? Are we living in accord with our beliefs and values?

He also encourages us to look directly at the truth of **mortality**—the contemplation on our death and the death of others. This is not a morbid reflection. It simply asks us to look at “the way things are” and reflect on how we choose to live given this truth. The reflection on mortality complements the reflection on impermanence—supporting us to relinquish or let go of the deep attachment at the heart of our suffering.

A third important reflection is on **virtue**. The word *virtue* has the same root as *virility* and is understood as the basis of spiritual power. The Buddha recognized and valued virtue as the root or ground from which awakening emerges.

He asks us to reflect on our virtue (including our intentions, words, and deeds), not in order to judge ourselves harshly but so we can begin to see clearly. Where are we in alignment with our deepest aspirations and intentions? What areas of our lives need attention to bring us into harmony with our yearning for freedom and our love of the Dharma?

Contemplative reflection is not simply a cognitive activity. Like meditation, it is a practice that engages the mind, heart, and body. One mistake people make is letting reflection turn into judgment. To practice reflection, we need to be able to see clearly without judging or condemning what we see.

Begin with a period of sitting meditation centering on the breath or perhaps sensing the body. After gathering your attention, bring up an aspect of the teachings or of your practice that you wish to reflect on. As you sit with an open presence and contemplate the topic, allow and notice what comes to you naturally. It can be very helpful to maintain a light sense of the body or breath throughout the reflection. Pay attention to your state of Being as you reflect. How does the reflection impact your body and heart as well as your mind?

In the *Dasadhamma Sutta* (*The Discourse on the Ten Dhammas*), which offers reflections on impermanence, mortality, karma, and virtue, the Buddha emphasizes that “These things must be reflected on over and over again by one who is committed to the Path.” In the busyness of our modern world, reflection is a lost art. I encourage the cultivation of this aspect of practice—regularly contemplating the teachings, as well as our actions and commitment to the Dharma.

—Eugene Cash

## ►► TRAVELER ON THE PATH ◀◀

This is the second in a series of interviews with sangha members on how they came to practice the dharma. This interview with Mindy Zlotnick was conducted by Jurgen Möllers.

*J. You grew up in the Jewish tradition. Has that influenced your current spirituality?*

**M:** When I was a teenager, I had a strong Jewish identity; however, in my twenties I lived in Israel for a few years and after that, I had no spirituality whatsoever. My practice started many years later, on a trip through Asia. I went for a two-week retreat in a Thai monastery, and that was a transformational experience for me.

*J. What about it?*

**M:** Well, I come from a family where emotions weren’t really cultivated. Learning to live my emotions and to allow myself to be happy was a life-changing experience for me.

*J. That turned you towards Buddhism?*

**M:** While I don’t see myself as a Buddhist per se, I do follow the teachings. I am not into religion, rituals, sacred traditions, etc. I rather think of meditation as my practice.

*J. Have you kept up your meditation practice ever since that first encounter?*

**M:** I dropped formal practice for a few years, though I never stopped awareness practice. So many things in my life offered me the opportunity for mindful awareness—the foster care of children, for example, or my work as a massage therapist.

*J. But you did come back to meditation?*

**M:** Yes, and it is my daily sitting practice and especially intensive retreats that really inform me and help me understand the teachings.

*J. ...rather than books and talks and all that?*

**M:** Books and talks have their place too. When I don’t understand the books, that is my edge of formal practice. It is the meditation that comes first for me, as it helps me to live a more centered, openhearted life. I experienced a deep feeling of joy and contentment on my last long retreat which continues to stay with me through the chaos of daily life. ❖

## SISTER SANGHA in SOUTH AFRICA

*(Part Two of an article begun in our last newsletter.)*

### Woza Moya (Come Spirit!) Outreach Program

In May 2001, the Woza Moya Outreach project was jointly initiated by the Buddhist Retreat Centre and the Dharmagiri Hermitage to serve the BCR's neighboring Chibini Zulu community that has been ravaged by poverty, violence, and HIV/AIDS. On the advice of the AIDS Foundation, and under the leadership of project manager Sioux Heddon, Woza Moya has been training 15 volunteers who work in the local community, supporting those who are sick, impoverished, and dying, as well as orphaned children. A large part of this training is focused on a more compassionate and informed response to the AIDS crisis. The volunteer team has now visited about 450 households and has been well received by all the traditional leaders. Through support from larger



*L to R: Jabu Molefe, coordinator of the Siyaphila Support Group, and Sue Heddon, Woza Moya project coordinator*

organizations, Dharmagiri has taken responsibility for fundraising until the project is self-sufficient. The BRC offers board and lodging to Sioux, whose natural warmth, dedication, and love for the local people, as well as her ability to speak fluent Zulu, have given the project an admirable start.

Foundation of South Africa representatives] and three volunteers and I went to see the chief.... [S]he was in session with all the Indunas [headmen] from the ten areas and all the elders.... Many of the Indunas from the other areas wanted to know more about AIDS and spoke about all the young people dying in their areas. They all wanted to know if the Woza Moya project could come into their areas too."

Woza Moya has also been focusing on support for two local schools, Lusiba and Sinevuso, and a local childcare center, which are literally just down the road from the BRC. Woza Moya has provided a photocopier for Lusiba School, which nearby schools will also access, and has provided wheelchairs for disabled children, who, as a result, are now able to attend school.

In November 2002, the headmaster of the local high school called and asked if some of Woza Moya's people could spend some time in the school to do counseling. He said that most of his students have no parents, and a few have just one; most have died of AIDS. Thanissara writes, "The youth here are so unsupported, and mostly, until now, we've been looking at adults with HIV and young children. We've begun thinking about setting up some workshops for young people.



*Volunteer coordinators for Woza Moya.*

Also as there's so much violence, we've been thinking about something along the line of 'spiritual warriorship.'"

There is now a Woza Moya choir that is rehearsing for a CD of traditional Zulu songs. Kittisaro and Thanissara were asked to write the words for a Woza Moya theme song, and one person from the Buddhist community who is a musician will put it to music. Always looking for ways to support the community, Woza Moya is thinking about starting a traveling performance troupe. Talk about being resourceful!

The Insight Meditation Community of San Francisco began supporting Kittisaro and Thanissara and the Woza Moya program in 2000, first by raising money for Sioux's salary while she set up the training program, and later by selling CDs of Kittisaro and Thanissara performing Buddhist chants. Inspired that our contributions have made a difference in the lives and hearts of our sister sangha, we are now launching our next fundraising activity: a Spring Gala Benefit (see next page) that will raise our spirits as we all raise money for Dharmagiri and Woza Moya. ❖



*Food program at Lusiba School. This is sometimes the only real meal the children receive for the day.*

## SCHEDULE OF UPCOMING EVENTS

### AT THE FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

#### ☸ DAYLONG RETREATS

Suitable for beginning and experienced practitioners, the day includes: meditation instructions; sitting, walking, and standing meditation; loving-kindness practice; and a dharma talk.

**Saturday, February 1**

**Saturday, May 10**

**Saturday, July 19**

**All daylongs 9:30 am-5:00 pm**

Teaching by *dana* (donation).

To register for a daylong, send a \$10 check payable to IMCSF to IMCSF, PO Box 475536, San Francisco, CA 94147-5536. No one will be turned away for lack of funds.

#### ☸ ONGOING ACTIVITIES

##### Sunday Evening Meditation and

##### Dharma Talk

##### Every Sunday

6:30-7:00 pm Social Time

7:00-7:45 Silent Meditation

7:45 Break

7:55-8:55 Dharma Talk and discussion

8:55 Announcements

Teacher: Eugene Cash (unless otherwise announced)

#### Potluck

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

A time to socialize informally with your dharma friends. 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.

#### ☸ BEGINNING MINDFULNESS MEDITATION CLASS

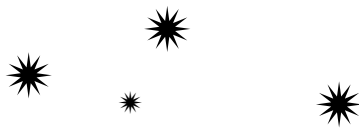
This class will offer basic Buddhist meditation instructions as well as Buddhist teachings and practical ways to apply these teachings to our daily lives. **Includes May 10 daylong retreat.**

**Tuesday evenings, April 22, 29,**

**May 6, 13, 20, 7:00-9:00 pm**

Teacher: Eugene Cash

To register, send a check for \$35 to the Unitarian Church (see address on first page)



### AT OTHER LOCATIONS

#### ☸ SPIRIT ROCK MEDITATION CENTER

For more information on the Spirit Rock event below, call 415.488.0164 or visit [www.spiritrock.org](http://www.spiritrock.org).

#### Vipassana Two-Month Residential Retreat

**Jan 31-March 28**

Eugene Cash will be teaching the second month, March 1-March 28, with Jack Kornfield, Anna Douglas, Robert Hall, and John Travis. In this extended retreat period, emphasis is on quieting the mind, opening the heart, and developing clarity and depth of practice. Traditional instruction in the Four Foundations of Mindfulness will be combined with a spirit of lovingkindness and a daily schedule of silent sitting, walking, dharma talks, and interviews. Can be attended in various two-week long configurations. Priority is given to 8-, 6-, and 4-week applications; registration for a two-week retreat is limited.

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

## SPRINGTIME GALA Benefit Fundraiser for Sister Sangha

Saturday, March 29

6:00-10:00 pm

at the Unitarian Church  
in San Francisco

- \* Silent auction
- \* Food
- \* Entertainment by your sangha friends
- \* Live music by Jeez Louise (rock 'n' roll classics and a bit of the Celtic)



**Admission** on a sliding scale \$1-\$100. Get your tickets in advance. For tickets, see **Mindy** at Sunday night sits or call her at 415-752-4920 \* We still need **volunteers** to take care of donations for the silent auction, food, and decorations. Call **Gayle** at 415-585-9029 to join in!

*"Need a helping hand?  
Look at the end of your arm."*

*— Tai-chi master*

## **VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR NEEDED**

Each Sunday evening, a group of volunteers transforms our meeting space into a Buddhist meditation hall, setting out cushions and carpets and a variety of other things that make our Sunday night sittings so special. Tim Wicks, our wonderful Volunteer Coordinator, has done an admirable job recruiting and coordinating a team of reliable volunteers. As of April 1, Tim will finish his period of service, and our sangha will need someone to continue the work for the following six months. Taking on the responsibility of Volunteer Coordinator is a way to do service, get acquainted with other sangha members, and reap the benefits of Right Effort. Please contact Tim at 415.821.2569 if you are interested in the job and/or have questions about it. ❖

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## **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 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.

Insight Meditation Community of San Francisco (IMCSF)  
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San Francisco, CA 94147-5536  
www.sfinstght.org

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

January, February and March  
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meeting at the First Unitarian Universalist  
Church of San Francisco  
187 Franklin Street at Geary Boulevard

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