



UU Sangha

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Summer 2001

Plant Nature

by Catherine Holmes Clark

“Beings are numberless,” says the Bodhisattva. “I vow to save them all.” The Bodhisattva precepts enjoin practitioners to “in no case take the life of a living being.” But what, exactly, are “beings”?

As I become rooted more and more strongly in my garden as practice, I feel that plants are beings worthy of this respect. When I pay mindful attention to them, they communicate personalities and moods and needs to me. They feel like friends, and are often teachers.

William LaFleur describes in “Sattva: Enlightenment for Plants and Trees” (In *Dharma Gaia*, edited by Allan Hunt Badiner) how Buddhists have been wrestling with this question for some time. “Chi-t’sang, a master of the Madhyamika in China, seems to have been the first to use the phrase ‘Buddhahood attained by plants and trees.’ ... Then in the eighth century, Chan-jan, a thinker of the T’ien-t’ai school, ...wrote:

In the great Assembly of the Lotus all are present—without divisions. Grass, trees, the soil on which these grow—all have the same kinds of atoms. Some are barely in motion while others make haste along the Path, but they will all in time reach the precious land of Nirvana...” (p.137).

LaFleur goes on,

Later Zen masters were to pick up the point, writing cryptically of mountains moving through many kalpas of time and even of giving birth.

Was it just hyperbole? The pathetic fallacy pushed to pathetic conclusions? Or was it something else, a perspective by the eye of the mind coursing through many kalpas, guessing by intuition or observation that the mountains have, in fact, already “walked” here and there... in interaction with seas and glaciers? Useless distinctions were reduced to absurdity so that there might be an affirmation of the wholeness and complex interdependence of the world. Now even stone and dirt had to be included in buddhahood. In Japan, Saicho wrote of the enlightenment of rocks and Dogen composed *The Mountains and Rivers Sutra* (p. 138).

LaFleur ends by contrasting this line of thinking in the East with the prevalence of an androcentric attitude in the West: “A kind of nadir was reached by Descartes and Malebranche who thought it impossible... to be cruel to animals, since animals are incapable of feeling” (p. 143).

Feeling / Sentience

Sometimes Buddhist language refers to “sentient beings.” The word “sentient” means, basically, “having senses.” There is no question that plants have sense perception, and that they suffer when conditions are bad for them. Their modes of sensation differ from those of animals, but it seems to me arrogant to assume that therefore they somehow are less important than animal life.

Similarly, about the senses of mountains and rivers, who are we to deny them? What constitutes a sense? At what point can we afford to draw the line and say “We have no interbeing with them, they are not part

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Editorial Insights

Welcome to the Summer 2001 issue of *UU Sangha*. This is the season when life's forces are at their strongest and we take time to vacation and reflect at the beaches, forests, and other places of natural beauty. Thus this issue is devoted to examining the intersection of Buddhism with the seventh UU principle: Respect for the interdependent web of existence of which we are all a part.

Interdependent co-arising is a bedrock insight of Buddhism; some traditional commentators go so far as to equate complete understanding of this process with enlightenment itself. It is beautifully described in the *Avatamsaka Sutra* in the metaphor of Indra's Net, a vast web of jewels—in each jewel all the other jewels are reflected, as well as the reflections of those jewels, and the reflections of the reflections of those jewels, and so on ad infinitum. Thus each jewel is simultaneously in all jewels, and all jewels exist completely in each individual jewel. Nothing can be separated from other things in the universe—we all exist in a complex, interpenetrating matrix of constant change and essential unity.

Within UUism the seventh principle is especially equated with respect for our environment and living things. Advances in ecological thinking and understanding have deepened our appreciation of the natural world and forced us to realize the urgency of preserving its resources. I hope this issue provides some food for thought and inspiration to see how Nature can inform our Dharma practice, and how our practice can in turn lend support to our struggle to honor and conserve our threatened biosphere.

For those who are unaware of it, I have taken over the editorial position from Sam Trumbore. Sam will still remain involved in *UU Sangha* and his valuable insights and experience are much appreciated. By way of introduction, I am a lifelong UU raised in Connecticut, a former editorial staff-member of *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review* (which I currently write for as a web columnist and contributor to the magazine), and am the author of *The Buddhist Guide to New York*. I'm a member of the New York Buddhist Church and the American Buddhist Study Center, and currently live in North Carolina.

The next issue is due to come out in October. Therefore the theme is going to be dealing with evil and the dark side of the ego, as well as UU understandings of traditional Buddhist boogymen such as Mara, Yama, hungry ghosts, and all things supernatural. If you have any prose, poetry, or artwork on these subjects that you'd like to contribute, please send it to me by the end of September. Best wishes for a pleasant summer to all!

—Jeff Wilson, Editor

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of our community"? The best teaching I have received on this subject is in a work of fiction. Like poetry, fiction can reach beneath our rational thinking, and speak to something more fundamental in us. Ursula LeGuin wrote a piece called "The Author of the Acacia Seeds' and Other Extracts from the Journal of the Association of Therolinguistics" (in both *The Compass Rose* and *Buffalo Gals and Other Animal Presences*). LeGuin talks about how to understand the ways non-human forms of being express their perceptions. As the piece progresses, she builds the reader's empathy with beings that are stranger and stranger to a human being's point of view. In her final paragraph she speculates that one day we will learn "the wholly atemporal, cold, volcanic poetry of the rocks: each one a word spoken, how long ago, by the earth itself, in the immense solitude, the immenser community, of space" (*The Compass Rose*, p. 11).

Paradigm Shift

Jim Nollman, in his essay "The Sentient Garden," mentions several accomplished gardeners who push at the cultural boundaries of our definition of beings. "Luther Burbank, the great turn-of-the-century plant breeder," he says, "often wrote about his plants as if they were his peers collaborating together to attain new forms and useful traits" (read more at the webpage <http://www.interspecies.com/pages/sentient.html>). Nollman talks about a paradigm shift from an androcentric view of the cosmos to a biocentric one.

"Bio"-centric? Well, okay: if you include the very earth: rock, mountain, river.... This shift is one of the most encouraging developments I see in our culture. When the UUA added "Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part" to our statement of principles, we were recognizing the importance of it, and committing ourselves to work for it. Some Buddhists have participated in this work for a while, as LaFleur (and others in Badiner) mention; others have not. On an email list I belong to one woman mentioned that in her tradition, they were specifically taught that plants are not sentient beings. However this movement is growing in Buddhism, as in Western culture. In Thailand for several years, Theravadin monks have been using the ancient practice of tree ordination for a new purpose: to save forests. In April, 2000, this practice was extended to a small mountain beside the village of Wang Pa Dun, in order to prevent a quarry company from blasting for limestone and ruining the village's water and food supply. Ordination is entering into a relationship with the community that requires sensitivity to others: this

certainly seems to presume sentience.

Joanna Macy's contribution to *Dharma Gaia*, "The Greening of the Self," is also a chapter in her own book *World as Lover, World as Self*. Macy says:

The conventional notion of the self with which we have been raised and to which we have been conditioned by mainstream culture is being undermined. What Alan Watts called "the skin-encapsulated ego" and Gregory Bateson referred to as "the epistemological error of Occidental civilization" is being unhinged, peeled off. It is being replaced by wider constructs of identity and self-interest; by what you might call the ecological self or the eco-self, co-extensive with other beings and the life of our planet. It is what I will call "the greening of the self" (Macy, p. 183).

Not coincidentally, Macy's book is also an eloquent explanation of paticca samuppada, dependent co-arising. This principle, fundamental to Buddha's insight into reality, leads inevitably to honoring all beings.

On the email list I mentioned, Zen teacher Kuya Minogue commented (on 12 June 2001):

The essential mistake is to see the plant as separate ... as if there is the plant out there along with rocks and mountains and water and dirt and lichen and oxygen and so on ... and then, somehow apart from all that, there is me and my dog. Once the illusion of separation is dissolved, the question of whether a plant has buddha nature "leads not to edification." Every atom that sits in Indra's net, contains every other atom in as many universes as there would be if, each grain of sand in Ganges river contained a million more universes. The plant is you is me is my dog is the air I breathe. Does a Buddha have plant nature?

Catherine Holmes Clark, who co-manages the UUBF email list, is an avid gardener and a feminist Buddhist. She maintains a website on each of those subjects, at <http://www.loudzen.com/garden> and <http://www.loudzen.com/skydancer>.



"Veneration of the Buddha as a Bo Tree" left, center, and right panels, by Tom Matsuda

This Land is My Land, This Land is Pure Land

by Jeff Wilson

Sometimes, in a summer morning, having taken my accustomed bath, I sat in my sunny doorway from sunrise till noon, rapt in a reverie, amidst the pines and hickories and sumacs, in undisturbed solitude and stillness, while the birds sang around or flitted noiseless through the house, until by the sun falling in at my west window, or the noise of some traveler's wagon on the distant highway, I was reminded of the lapse of time. I grew in those seasons like corn in the night, and they were far better than any work of the hands would have been. They were not time subtracted from my life, but so much over and above my usual allowance. I realized what the Orientals mean by contemplation. . .

Our Transcendentalist-Unitarian ancestor Henry David Thoreau wrote these words more than 150 years ago, when he had taken to the woods on a spiritual journey. Thoreau, Emerson, and their friends were exploring new religious territory in America, leaving behind the Bible to seek wisdom in newly available Asian scriptures and in the mysteries of Nature. Under Thoreau's editorship the first Buddhist scripture was published in English; a century and a half later the connections between Nature, Buddhism, and Unitarian-Universalism still prove fertile ground for discovery and enlightenment.

As Thoreau describes, contemplation on Nature has the ability to take us out of ourselves, to dissolve the bonds of time and produce a union with our environment. It is an experience of no-self, of insight

into emptiness, of interconnection with all things in the web of existence. Two millennia before the birth of Thoreau, this power had been recognized and harnessed by the Pure Land Buddhists of ancient India. Today Pure Land is the most popular form of Mahayana Buddhism, and the insights it contains into the natural purity of our world and sacredness of wild things are lessons we would do well to heed in an age of increasing alienation, consumption, and pollution.

The fundamental teaching of Pure Land Buddhism is that all beings, and indeed all things, share the essence of natural enlightenment. This is the Buddhist concept of suchness, of things just as they are, not laid over by discriminating thoughts and concepts. Seeing all creatures as sharing equally in the vast interconnectedness of all things brings about a sense of holy kinship, as when we perceive that all things arise from conditions and depend upon the support of the rest of the universe for their existence. Vietnamese Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh makes this point in his book *The Sun My Heart*.

Life is one. We do not need to slice it into pieces and call this or that piece a "self." What we call a self is made only of nonself elements. When we look at a flower, for example, we may think that it is different from "nonflower" things. But when we look more deeply, we see that everything in the cosmos is in that flower. Without all of the nonflower elements—sunshine, clouds, earth, minerals, heat, rivers, and consciousness—a flower cannot be. That is why the Buddha teaches that the self does not exist. We have to discard all distinctions between self and non-self. How can anyone work to protect the environment without this insight?

Producing this insight is the goal of the Pure Land Sutra known as *Contemplation on the Buddha of Infinite Life*. It teaches step-by-step to develop a vision of the Pure Land of Amida Buddha, the Buddha of Infinite

Life (compassion) and Light (wisdom), who in the Pure Land tradition is the Buddha of universal reality, the Buddha of the truth of things-as-they-are. The culmination of this process results in entering the realm of reality:

Visualize yourself as born in the Western Land of Utmost Bliss sitting cross-legged upon a lotus flower. Visualize this lotus flower as closed around you; as it opens, five hundred rays of colored light illuminate your body. Then your eyes are opened and you see Buddhas and bodhisattvas filling the whole sky and hear the sounds of the murmuring streams and wind in the trees, the notes of birdsongs, and Buddhas' voices all expounding the wonderful Dharma. When you rise from meditation, keep these things in your mind and never forget them. Seeing things thus is called the visualization of the Land of Utmost Bliss of the Buddha Infinite Life.

Although Pure Land is the oldest form of Mahayana Buddhism, the most widespread, and the first form of organized Dharma to come to North America, it isn't well understood in UU circles. There has been a tendency to just look at the surface, and perceiving some apparent similarities to Christianity (which disappear with anything more than the most cursory exposure to Pure Land Buddhism), to dismiss it as some sort of misguided theism masquerading as Buddhism. But the heart of Pure Land practice is not worship or prayer or rituals or superstitions of any sort, but gratitude toward all the things that support our life and awakening. Pure Land Buddhists are admonished to always retain mindfulness of the infinite compassion of all things—the Earth, the Sun, the Moon, the stars, our parents and ancestors, the animals and plants who share our planet and provide our food, our teachers and guides, and all else—everything which forms the vast web of interdependent existence in which we live and learn.

With this view our relationship to the natural environment is transformed. Though the Pure Land is described as being millions of miles away from us when we are in the state of endarkenment, it is always right here, around us, and we are living in the Pure Land without realizing it. Thus Shakyamuni Buddha says, "Do you know that the Buddha of Infinite Life is not far away? Concentrate upon and contemplate that Buddha-land, and you will accomplish the pure acts." The Buddha of Infinite Life is our own Buddha-nature, and this Earth we inhabit is the Pure Land. Rather than

seeing the environment as something to be exploited, we can see it as the sacred manifestation of true reality. Natural resources can refer not to resources for powering our machines and building our houses, but to natural resources for awakening to the Dharma.

The visualization method of the *Contemplation Sutra* is full of images of the wonder of Nature and living things. The trees, flowers, fruits, ponds, streams, and human and animal inhabitants of the Pure Land are all compared to precious jewels. Just to look upon them is wonderful, but their value goes far beyond mere aesthetics. Nature is proclaimed as a supreme vehicle for discovering the Dharma:

On every flower there is an image of a Buddha or bodhisattva, thus the enlightened ones can be found everywhere. When this perception has been gained, the meditator perceives the excellent Dharma in the sounds of streams, the play of light, the rustlings of trees, and the songs of ducks, geese, and swans.

Thoreau's experience immediately springs to mind. As he sat in his sunny cottage doorway, contemplating the sights and sounds of the natural world around him, his ego-self fell away and he was one with the birds and trees and ponds around him. Nature has an unusually strong ability to wake us up to this interconnection and produce such a spiritual insight into emptiness.

To perceive the Dharma in the sound of rushing water, in sunlight, and in birdsongs, means to listen deeply to the teachings that our environment is always unfolding before us. In Nature interconnectness is easily perceived, as the sunlight and soil and rain and fertilizing insects and seasons all come together to produce a new plant. No-self is clear as the seed becomes a young plant, the young plant a tall tree, and the tall tree a rotten home for myriads of little creatures on the forest floor, returning to the Earth that first nurtured it. Birth, old age, sickness, and death are all to be found in the forest. If we examine the natural world closely, we can find that all things express the truths that the Buddha pointed out to us. This is why the Buddha says in the *Contemplation Sutra* to maintain our understanding after meditation is completed—when we are mindful that all creatures are nourished by the Dharma and every rock and twig manifests its reality, we will naturally be moved to honor and protect our fragile environment.

The Pure Land Sutra *Buddha Speaks of the Infinite* describes how Nature displays the inherently liberated state of all things:

In the Land of Utmost Bliss there are jeweled ponds filled with water that is pure, cool, sweet, smooth, moistening, comforting, thirst-quenching, and nourishing. The lakebeds are strewn with golden sand, and from the sides of each pond rise stairs of gold, silver, beryl, and crystal . . . In the ponds are lotuses as large as chariot-wheels—the blue ones radiating a blue light, the yellow a yellow light, the red a red light, and the white a white light. They are marvelous and beautiful, fragrant and pure. Shariputra, the Land of Utmost Bliss is filled with such excellence and splendor.

In the Pure Land tradition, it is understood that blue lotuses radiating blue light and yellow lotuses radiating yellow light means that just as things are, they are naturally perfect. A blue lotus doesn't need to radiate a yellow light—for it blue light is just right. Likewise, animals, plants, mountains, rivers, stars, and people all abide in natural perfection, arising and passing away without obstruction.

Jeff Wilson is the Editor of UU Sangha and a columnist for Tricycle: The Buddhist Review. He lives in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

Quick Eyes

by Maria Shine Stewart

The flowers are alive today.
And butterflies. If you are hurt,
don't forget the meadow.

Go tired, bring your heart.
Those who watch there
are quiet and constant.



in the instant of your
turn,

They know we are connected
cell to cell
and, if you are lucky,

you may see a swallowtail—
point it out quickly
to a friend and find,

that it has vanished.

But it saw you.
Don't despair.
The small things do return.

Yesterday, a swallowtail
came back and settled
near my dress,

the faded one
with pink flowers
worn past its time.

It was a garden
to a butterfly—
dizzy, ecstatic,

loving color
and oblivious to the stories
of my life.

It stayed until
I found my heart;
then, spread its wings,

flew home.
If I laid flat
in this very wild place,



I would be nursed
by a whole community
of curious insects

with quick eyes
and ministering wings.
There is something

that sees before sight,
and sometimes the
small ones see it best.

There is something
that loves before love,
before even the heart knows.

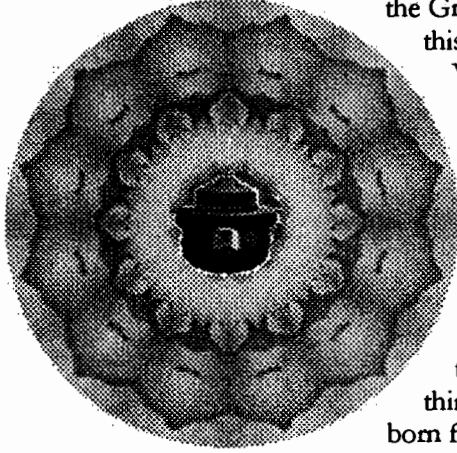
Maria (Shine Stewart) is a member of the Church of the Larger Fellowship and a co-manager of the CLF-L electronic list. Her interest in Buddhism began in her teens. She teaches writing at several colleges and formerly worked as a freelance journalist and a full-time writer/editor. Maria lives in South Euclid, Ohio.



Smokey the Bear Sutra

by Gary Snyder

Once in the Jurassic about 150 million years ago, the Great Sun Buddha in this corner of the Infinite Void gave a Discourse to all the assembled elements and energies: to the standing beings, the walking beings, the flying beings, and the sitting beings—even grasses, to the number of thirteen billion, each one born from a seed, assembled



there: a Discourse concerning Enlightenment on the planet Earth.

“In some future time, there will be a continent called America. It will have great centers of power called such as Pyramid Lake, Walden Pond, Mt. Rainier, Big Sur, Everglades, and so forth; and powerful nerves and channels such as Columbia River, Mississippi River, and Grand Canyon. The human race in that era will get into troubles all over its head, and practically wreck everything in spite of its own strong intelligent Buddha-nature.

“The twisting strata of the great mountains and the pulsings of volcanoes are my love burning deep in the earth. My obstinate compassion is schist and basalt and granite, to be mountains, to bring down the rain. In that future American Era I shall enter a new form; to cure the world of loveless knowledge that seeks with blind hunger: and mindless rage eating food that will not fill it.”

And he showed himself in his true form of

SMOKEY THE BEAR

- A handsome smokey-colored brown bear standing on his hind legs, showing that he is aroused and watchful.
- Bearing in his right paw the Shovel that digs to the truth beneath appearances; cuts the roots of useless attachments, and flings damp sand on the fires of greed and war;

- His left paw in the Mudra of Comradely Display — indicating that all creatures have the full right to live to their limits and that deer, rabbits, chipmunks, snakes, dandelions, and lizards all grow in the realm of the Dharma;
- Wearing the blue work overalls symbolic of slaves and laborers, the countless men oppressed by a civilization that claims to save but often destroys;
- Wearing the broad-brimmed hat of the West, symbolic of the forces that guard the Wilderness, which is the Natural State of the Dharma and the True Path of man on earth: all true paths lead through mountains—
- With a halo of smoke and flame behind, the forest fires of the kali-yuga, fires caused by the stupidity of those who think things can be gained and lost whereas in truth all is contained vast and free in the Blue Sky and Green Earth of One Mind;
- Round-bellied to show his kind nature and that the great earth has food enough for everyone who loves her and trusts her;
- Trampling underfoot wasteful freeways and needless suburbs; smashing the worms of capitalism and totalitarianism;
- Indicating the Task: his followers, becoming free of cars, houses, canned foods, universities, and shoes; master the Three Mysteries of their own Body, Speech, and Mind; and fearlessly chop down the rotten trees and prune out the sick limbs of this country America and then burn the leftover trash.

Wrathful but Calm. Austere but Comic. Smokey the Bear will illuminate those who would help him; but for those who would hinder or slander him,

HE WILL PUT THEM OUT.

Thus his great Mantra:

Namah samanta vajranam chanda
maharoshana
Sphataya hum traks ham nam

“I DEDICATE MYSELF TO THE
UNIVERSAL DIAMOND
BE THIS RAGING FURY
DESTROYED”

And he will protect those who love woods and rivers,
Gods and animals, hobos and madmen, prisoners and
sick people, musicians, playful women, and hopeful
children:

And if anyone is threatened by advertising, air pollution,
television, or the police, they should chant SMOKEY
THE BEAR'S WAR SPELL:

DROWN THEIR BUTTS
CRUSH THEIR BUTTS
DROWN THEIR BUTTS
CRUSH THEIR BUTTS

And SMOKEY THE BEAR will surely appear to put
the enemy out with his vajra-shovel.

- Now those who recite this Sutra and then try to
put it in practice will accumulate merit as
countless as the sands of Arizona and Nevada.
- Will help save the planet Earth from total oil
slick.
- Will enter the age of harmony of man and
nature.
- Will win the tender love and caresses of men,
women, and beasts.
- Will always have ripe blackberries to eat and a
sunny spot under a pine tree to sit at.
- AND IN THE END WILL WIN HIGHEST
PERFECT ENLIGHTENMENT.

thus have we heard.

(may be reproduced free forever)

*Gary Snyder received the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1975.
Smokey the Bear Sutra was written in 1969.*

A Sampling of Buddhist Words on Natural Things

Kashyapa, if a forest-dwelling monk is given much food,
he should gladly put a handful of it on a clean rock,
thinking, "I give this to the birds and beasts."

—Buddha, *Maharatnakuta Sutra*

When he is about to eat, he should think, "In my body
there are eighty thousand worms which will be secure

and happy when they obtain the food I eat. Now I
attract these worms to my following with food; but when
I attain supreme enlightenment, I shall attract them to
my following with the Dharma."

—Buddha, *Maharatnakuta Sutra*

Creatures without feet have my love,
And likewise those that have two feet,
And those that have four feet I love,
And those, too, that have many feet.

—Buddha, *Cullavagga (Vinaya)*

Let creatures all, all things that live,
All beings of whatever kind,
See nothing that will bode them ill
May no evil come to them!

—Buddha, *Cullavagga (Vinaya)*

Even as a mother protects with her life
Her child, her only child,
So with a boundless heart
Should one cherish all living beings,
Radiating kindness over the entire world,
Spreading upward to the skies,
And downward to the depths,
Outward and unbounded.

—Buddha, *Metta Sutta*

So it is with the great Tree-of-Awakening. . . all sentient
creatures are its roots, and all the bodhisattvas and
buddhas are its flowers and fruits. If a bodhisattva
applies the water of compassion to help sentient
creatures, the Awakening-tree will bear the fruit of
Buddha's wisdom. Why is this so? Because if a
bodhisattva can benefit many with the water of
compassion, he will most assuredly attain the supreme
enlightenment. Therefore, awakening belongs to sentient
creatures; without them no bodhisattva can attain
supreme Buddhahood.

—Buddha, *Avatamsaka Sutra*

All the merits I have acquired from the commencement
of paying homage to the serving of sentient creatures, I
will turn over to each and every living being throughout
the entire Dharma world in the infinite realm of space.

—Buddha, *Avatamsaka Sutra*

Just like space
And all the great elements such as earth,
May I always support the life
Of all the innumerable creatures.

And until their suffering is ended,
May I also be the source of life
For all the realms of varied beings

That reach unto the ends of space.
—Shantideva, *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

I rain down the Dharma rain,
Filling the whole world,
And this single-flavored Dharma
Is practiced by each according to the individual's power.
It is like thickets and groves,
Medicinal herbs and trees
Which, according to whether they are large or small,
Bit by bit grow lush and beautiful.
—Buddha, *Lotus Sutra*

Since the nature of physical form is identical to wisdom,
there is nothing that is not enlightened.
—Myoe, *Letter to the Island*

Even in a drop of water innumerable Buddha lands
appear.
—Dogen, *Mountains and Waters Sutra*

You should know it as a fact that mountains are fond of
wise people and sages.
—Dogen, *Mountains and Waters Sutra*

It is not only that there is water in the world, but there is
a world in water. It is not just in water. There is also a
world of sentient beings in clouds. There is a world of
sentient beings in the air. There is a world of sentient
beings in fire. There is a world of sentient beings on
earth. There is a world of sentient beings in the
phenomenal world. There is a world of sentient beings
in a blade of grass. There is a world of sentient beings in
a staff. Wherever there is a world of sentient beings,
there is a world of Buddha ancestors. You should
thoroughly examine the meaning of this.
—Dogen, *Mountains and Waters Sutra*

Mountains and waters at this moment are the
manifestation of the ancient Buddha way. Each, resting
in its phenomenal expression, realizes wholeness.
Because mountains and waters have been active since
before the beginning, they are alive at this moment.
Because they have been the self since before form arose
they are liberation-enlightenment.
—Dogen, *Mountains and Waters Sutra*

In our former lives, we were rocks, clouds, and trees.
We have also been an oak tree. This is not just
Buddhist; it is scientific. We humans are a young
species. We were plants, we were trees, and now we've
become humans. We have to remember our past
existences and be humble.
—Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Sun My Heart*

General Assembly Report

by Dorris Senghas

Our Fellowship had a good GA in June with several activities. For the first time we set up time for meditation each morning at 7:30. Attendance was small, but we'll grow next year. For the second year we had a table in the exhibit area. Our handsome banner announced our presence. We sold many *UU Sanghas* and sold books; those by James Ford and Bob Senghas were the best sellers. Twenty-seven people signed as new UUBF members! Thanks to James, Gail Henrie, Ellen Forbes, and Sam Trumbore, who all helped at the table. We had lots of questions from people and good discussions. One thing that came out of it for me was that we need a brochure explaining our group and our aims. One outstanding contribution was the UUBF stickers designed and produced by Gail Henrie. They are beautiful, and we gave many away. If you would like some for your group, please let me know, and I'll mail some to you.

Our speaker this year was Douglas Phillips, psychotherapist and meditation teacher. Doug spoke on taking spiritual practice off the cushion into the world outside. The room was full; I'd estimate more than a hundred people. Doug answered questions from the audience after his talk. Following the program a group moved to another room for a period of meditation with Doug.

Our first order of business was to elect James Ford our president. James then talked about Sam's report and presented a brief history of UUBF. We then discussed three major issues: the future governance of the UUBF, General Assembly planning, and UUBF publications. People at the meeting signed up to serve on committees for all three of these. There was agreement that we need to find ways of involving more members in our activities, and setting up these three groups should help stimulate more involvement. There was also discussion of the need for a good curriculum on Buddhism for both children and adults. I have discovered two UU curricula on Buddhism for children. One is published by the UUA. It is *Neighboring Faiths: Exploring Religions with Junior High Youth* by Christine F. Reed & Patricia Hoertdoerfer. Judith Frediani is UUA RE Development Director. On p.181 it even gives a reference to the UU Buddhist Fellowship! It calls us "an excellent resource. Contact Robert Senghas, Pres." with his address and phone number. This should be changed to "Contact James Ford, President." This book also mentions a video, *Buddhism: the Middle Way of Compassion*, which it says is available from the UUA Video Loan Library. The other title I located is *Buddhism: Activity*

Based Lessons for Upper Elementary Students. It is by Rachel Brown of the First Unitarian Society of Minneapolis. It is available from her for \$15 plus \$2 shipping and handling (3230 24th St. East, Minneapolis, MN 55406).

We closed with a strong sense of moving ahead and look forward to enlarging our programs next June in Quebec.

Dorris Senghas is the former President of the UUBF.

UU Buddhist Practice Groups

To be listed, a group must have both a Buddhist and a UU connection. If you'd like to have yours included here please contact the editor, Jeff Wilson (see page 2 for email and postal address). Due to limitations on space, we can only list the group's name, address, website, and a contact person's information.

United States

Alabama

Huntsville UU Meditation Group
UU Church of Huntsville
2222 East Governor's Drive, Huntsville, AL 35801
Virginia Burroughs: 256-776-9329

Arizona

Desert Lotus Zen Group
Valley Unitarian Universalist Church
1700 W. Warner Road, Chandler, AZ 85224
<http://www.vuu.org/zen/>
Laurie Herring: herring@primenet.com

California

Acorn Family Sangha
PO Box 190, Soulsbyville, CA 95372
<http://www.acornfamilysangha.org/>
Ken Renwick: ken@acornfamilysangha.org

Davis UU Buddhist Meditation and Study Group
Unitarian Church of Davis
27074 Patwin Road, Davis, CA 95626
Dick Warg: 530-662-1669, rjwarg@ucdavis.edu

Monterey Peninsula Mindfulness Practice Group
UU Church of the Monterey Peninsula
490 Aguajito Road, Carmel, CA 93923
Nancy Melton: 831-647-9155,
blossoming.nancy@mindspring.com

San Mateo UU Meditation Group
Unitarian Universalists of San Mateo

300 E. Santa Inez, San Mateo, CA 94401
Lance and Ann Miller: 650-340-9698, lanmill@earthlink.com
<http://homestead.com/meditationgroup/uubf.html>

UU Meditation Circle
First UU Church of San Diego
4190 Front Street San Diego, CA 92103
Erene Rallis: 619-295-5622

Colorado

UU Pueblo Church Buddhist Group
Unitarian Universalist Church of Pueblo
110 Calla Ave. Pueblo, CO 81005
David Cockrell: 719-546-3409

Connecticut

UU Buddhist Wellspring
The Universalist Church of West Hartford
433 Fern Street, West Hartford, CT 06107
Bert Mayo: 860-346-6240

Florida

The Buddhist Fellowship of the UU Church of Fort Lauderdale
UU Church of Fort Lauderdale
3970 NW 21st Ave., Oakland Park, FL 33309
<http://www.uucfl.org/buddhist/index.htm>
Mary Teslow: maryteslow@aol.com or
Joe DeAngelis: 954-973-1337

Maryland

Mindfulness Practice Group
UU Church of Annapolis
333 Dubois Road, Annapolis, MD 21401
Rev. Fred Muir: 410-266-8044, minister@toadmail.toad.net

Massachusetts

Henry David Thoreau Sangha
First Unitarian Society
1326 Washington Street, West Newton, MA 02465
Rev. James Ford Sensei: 617-627-3203;
janandjames@mediaone.net

Martha's Vineyard Vipassana Meditation
Unitarian-Universalist Church
238 Main St., Vineyard Haven, MA 02568
Jo Rice: 508-693-2827, jscotrice@capecod.net

New Hampshire

Second Congregational Society Buddhist Study Group of Concord
Second Congregational Society UU Church
274 Pleasant St., Concord, NH 03301
<http://www.buddhistgroup.homestead.com>
Gene Taylor: 877-682-4535, buddhism@ureach.com

New York

Buddhist Explorers Group
The Community Church of New York
40 East 35 St., New York, NY 10016
Gary Jacinto: 212-267-2694

Unitarian Universalist Buddhist Fellowship of Westchester
25 Old Jackson Avenue, Hastings-on-Hudson, NY 10706
Peter Schmitz and Bice Wilson: 914-912-6363,
uubfwestchester@mail.com

North Carolina

Community of Mindfulness—UUF
UU Fellowship of Raleigh
3313 Wade Avenue, Raleigh, NC 27607
Joyce Gad: UUF@aol.com

Eno River Buddhist Community
Eno River UU Fellowship
4907 Garrett Road Durham, NC 27707
Steve Seiberling: 919-968-4445, sseiber@email.unc.edu

Ohio

First Church Sangha
First Unitarian Church, 536 Linton St., Cincinnati, OH 45219
David Mohler: 812-537-4741, dmohler@seidata.com

Meditation Group
UU Church of Kent, Kent, OH 44240
Liz Erickson : 330-673-2152

Pennsylvania

Central Pennsylvania Buddhist Fellowship
c/o Dan Cozort, Dept of Religion, P.O. Box 1773
Dickinson College, Cadishe, PA 17013
Dan Cozort: 717-245-1385

Mindfulness Meditation Group
Unitarian Church of Harrisburg
1280 Clover Lane Harrisburg, PA 17113
George Hellmann: 717-236-6749,
jghellmann@mindspring.com

Zazen & a Mindful Meal
UU Church of Lancaster
538 W. Chestnut St., Lancaster, PA 17603
Phil & Paula Gable: 717-295-3041, pgable@redrose.net

Texas

Northwoods Sangha
Northwoods UU Church
1370 North Millbend Dr, The Woodlands, TX 77380
<http://www.optmlator.com/hzc/northwoods.htm>
Dwight Hatfield: 281-298-8419, hatfid@slash.net

Vermont

Black River Sangha
Unitarian-Universalist Meetinghouse
21 Fairground Road, Springfield, VT 05156
Richard Ryoha Dunworth M.R.O.: 802-228-2476,
dunworth@ludl.tds.net

Zen Meditation Group
c/o The Rev. Robert Senghas
54 Rivermount Terrace, Burlington, VT 05401
Rev. Robert Senghas: 802-658-6466,
rsenghas@worldnet.att.net

Virginia

The Buddhist Fellowship
UU Church of Arlington
4444 Arlington Blvd, Arlington, VA 22204
Michael I. Roehm: 202-332-7236, mroehm@earthlink.net

The UCN Buddhist Connection
Unitarian Church of Norfolk (UU)
739 Yarmouth Street, Norfolk, VA 23510
Ellen Francis: 757-497-4047, eafrancis@home.com

UU Reston Church Buddhist Group
Unitarian Universalist Church in Reston
1625 Wiehle Avenue, Reston, VA 20190
Contact: Mel Harkrader-Pine (703) 707-9332,
melhpine@aol.com

Vipassana Meditation Group
Mt. Vernon Unitarian Church
1909 Windmill Lane, Alexandria, VA 22307
Forrest Tobey: 703-660-0028, forrest@offchance.com

Washington

Michael Servetus UU Buddhist Fellowship
Michael Servetus UU Fellowship
4505 E 18th Street, Vancouver, WA 98661
Marvin Benson: 360-695-1858, bensonjmlaw@juno.com

Wisconsin

Buddhist Unitarian Universalist Group
First Unitarian Church
1342 N. Aster St., Milwaukee WI 53202
Andy Agacki: 414-771-2490, agacki@execpc.com

Madison Insight Meditation Group
First Unitarian Society
900 University Bay Drive, Madison, WI 53202
<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/2140/>

Canada

British Columbia

Karuna Meditation Society
North Shore Unitarian Church of Vancouver,
2050 West 12th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C., V7S 1H3
Michelle Mills: 604-874-4093

Ontario

Buddhist Practice Group
First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto
175 St. Clair Avenue West, Toronto, Ontario M4V 1P7
Timothy Law: 416-485-8976 or
Melanie Noviss: 416-769-3046

UU Sangha

c/o First Unitarian Universalist Society of Albany
405 Washington Avenue
Albany, New York 12206-2604

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