Gay Buddhist Fellowship

Newsletter

A Monthly Publication of the Gay Buddhist Fellowship, San Francisco January 1996

GBF Calendar

Call 415/974-9878 for news about GBF and GBF-sponsored events. To skip the recording and leave a message, press 5.

4 Jan., Thursday Sitting, 8 pm, at the home of Alan Oliver.

10 Jan. (Wed.), News/Calendar/ Classifieds Deadline for *GBF Newsletter.*

11 Jan. Thursday Sitting, 8 pm, at the home of Lee Robbins.

14 Jan., Sunday Meeting, 10:30 a.m., 273 Page St., SF. Speaker: Larry Saxxon will discuss how Buddhist practice provides a unique model for addressing issues of race and sexual orientation.

18 Jan., Thursday Sitting, 8 pm, at the home of Mark Marion.

25 Jan., Thursday Sitting, 8pm, at the home of Edward Sans.

28 Jan., Sunday Meeting, 10:30 a.m., 273 Page St., SF. Followup discussion on issues raised in Alan Oliver's article about practice, boundaries, and Buddhism. ♡

Larry Saxxon to Speak at Sunday Meeting

GBF warmly welcomes Larry Saxxon as our guest speaker at the January 14, 1996, Sunday morning meeting. Larry is a student of Suhita Dharma, a teacher in the Vietnamese Zen tradition. He is also a member of the San Francisco Buddhist Center and of GBF.

Larry will share with us his experience of practice from the perspective of an African-American gay man, and will discuss how Buddhism presents us with a unique model for addressing issues of race and sexual orientation. Please join us for this special meeting. ♡

Day of Meditation Set for February 10

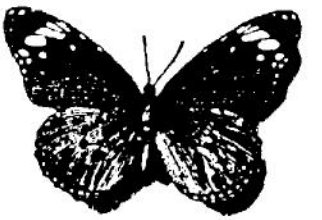
A silent, one-day sitting sponsored by GBF is planned for Saturday, February 10, 1996, at Sangha House, 1800 Arch Street, in Berkeley, from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. The schedule will include sitting and walking meditation, and some brief dharma readings. This presents a wonderful opportunity for GBF members to practice in a more structured way. Please bring a meditation cushion or bench, and a bag lunch. Tea will be provided. Space is limited.

To register, mail a check for $10 payable to GBF to: GBF Sitting, 2261 Market Street #422, San Francisco, CA 94114. Include your name, address, and telephone number. If you have any questions about the sitting, please call Daishin David Sunseri

GBF Planning Workshop on HIV and Buddhist Practice

GBF will sponsor a one-day workshop, tentatively scheduled for April 1996, focusing on HIV disease and Buddhist practice. This workshop will give us an opportunity to share our understanding of how practice and the issues of sickness and death are related. Participants will also have an opportunity to share stories about friends and partners who have been affected by HIV.

If you are interested in helping to plan this workshop, please leave your name and telephone number on the GBF information line (415/974-9878), and we will contact you. More information about this event will appear in future newsletters. ♡



Coming up...

In future issues of this newsletter we would like to engage members of the GBF sangha in a dialogue on the meaning of sangha. If you are interested in contributing something, or if you have come across an article you would like to share with others, please let us know.

The Local Dharma

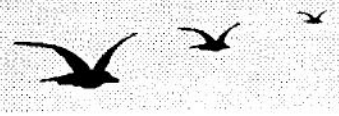
January-February 1996

[Note: Sometimes schedules change, so we recommend you call to confirm events.]

Dharma Centers

[Each center offers ongoing programs and activities. If interested, please call them directly.]

- **BPF:** Buddhist Peace Fellowship, P.O. Box 4650, Berkeley 94704. 510/525-8596.
- **BSC:** Berkeley Shambhala Center: 2288 Fulton Street, Berkeley. 510/841-6475 or 510/549-1481.
- **BZC:** Berkeley Zen Center, 1933 Russell Street, Berkeley 94703. 510/845-2403.
- **CML:** Community of Mindful Living, P.O. Box 7355, Albany 94707. 510/527-3751.
- **DI:** Dudjom International, P.O. Box 40155, Berkeley 94704. 510/849-9928.
- **EGZC:** Empty Gate Zen Center, 5707 Oakgrove Ave., Oakland 94618. 510/653-5991.
- **GGF:** Green Gulch Farm (SF Zen Center): 1601 Shoreline Highway, Sausalito. 415/383-3134.
- **HSZC:** Hartford Street Zen Center: 57 Hartford St., SF. 415/863-2507.
- **LMB:** Land of Medicine Buddha: 5800 Prescott Road, Soquel. 408/462-8383.
- **NI:** Nyingma Institute: 1815 Highland Place, Berkeley 94709. 510/843-6812.
- **ODD:** Orgyen Dorje Den/Bay Area Yeshe Nyingpo: 410 Townsend #406, SF. 415/826 7181.
- **POL:** POL Pema Osel Ling: 2013 Eureka Canyon Road, Corralitos. 408/761-6266.
- **RF:** Rigpa Fellowship: 816 Bancroft Way, Berkeley. 510/644-1858.
- **SBC:** Saraha Buddhist Center, 3145 Geary Blvd. #515, SF. 415/731-5973.
- **SCZC:** Santa Cruz Zen Center, 113 School Street, Santa Cruz. 408/457-0206.
- **SFBC:** San Francisco Buddhist Center: 37 Bartlett St., SF. 415/282-2018.
- **SFSC:** San Francisco Shambhala Center: 1630 Taraval St., SF. 415/731-4426.
- **SFZC:** San Francisco Zen Center: 300 Page Street, SF. 415/863-3136.
- **SMZC:** Sonoma Mountain Zen Center, 6367 Sonoma Mountain Road, Santa Rosa. 707/545-8105.
- **SR:** Spirit Rock Meditation Center: 5000 Sir Frances Drake Blvd., Woodacre. 415/488-0164.
- **TCL:** Tse Chen Ling Center: 4 Joost Ave, SF. 415/641-0671.
- **VI:** Vajrapani Institute, P.O. Box 2130, Boulder Creek 95006. 408/338-6654. ♡



Special Events

8 Jan. (Mon.) "Terma: The Secret Treasure Teachings of Tibetan Buddhism." Open Secret Bookstore, San Rafael. Contact Ron Garry for time and further information.

15, 22, 29 Jan., and 12 Feb. (Mon.) "Dynamic Breaking Through: Zen and Psychotherapy" led by Raul Moncayo. This series of classes is one of a variety offered by Berkeley Zen Center. 7:30 pm. BZC

27–28 Jan. (Sat.–Sun.) "The Paradox of Love & Loss: The Seamless Path of the Heart" with Eugene Cash, Nancy Sobonya, Patrick Thornton. A non-residential weekend of traditional Buddhist teachings and modern psychological perspectives on grief and loss. Meditation, group process, inquiry, loving-kindness and equanimity practice. $30 per day (includes lunch). Sat. 9 am–5 pm./Sun. 10 am–5 pm. Codes PT1 (1/27) & PT2 (1/28). SR

9-11 Feb. (Fri.-Sun.) "Meditation on Fear and Fearlessness" with senior dharma teacher Tenshin Reb Anderson. Through study of the five forms of fear described in the Scriptures and exploration of the dependent co-arising of anxiety, participants will have an opportunity to recognize, understand, and become free of fear and anxiety. Fri. 6 pm-Sun. 2pm. GGF

11 Feb. (Sun.) "Making Buddhist Images" with Rebecca Mayeno. This class will take place at Berkeley Zen Center. 10 am–3:30 pm. BZC

24 Feb. (Sat.) "Living the Mindful Life" with James Baratz and Charles Tart. Mindfulness in daily life activities. Includes experiential exercises, talk, and discussion. 9 am–5 pm. SR

25 Feb. (Sun.) "Translating Judaism, Translating Buddhism: A Jewish–Buddhist Retreat" with Rabbi Alan Lew and Abbot Zoketsu Fischer. A day of study and practice to magnify and freshen the understanding of both traditions. The day will focus on questions such as the relationship of mindfulness practice and prayer, and the concept of "God." 9 am–5 pm. SR

Beyond the Bay

19–21 Jan. (Fri.–Sun.) Weekend Sitting at Santa Cruz Zen Center, led by Katherine Thanas. Join the Santa Cruz Zen community for a weekend sitting. Katherine is the teacher at SCZC and has given a dharma talk at a GBF Sunday meeting. SCZC

22 Mar.–8 Apr. "Buddhism: A Study in Contrasts." Travel with two Buddhist practitioners to the Kathmandu Valley, Lumbini (Buddha's birthplace), across the Himalayas into Thailand, staying in monasteries, meditating with monks and visiting with villagers to learn how religion and daily life blend. For details, contact: Myths and Mountains, (800) 670–MYTH (6984).

Contributors

Thanks to the following people who helped with this issue of the *GBF Newsletter*: Al Chase, Alan Oliver, Bob Hass, Brian Shelley, Clint Seiter, Daishin David Sunseri, David Holmes, Greg Eichler, Jesse, John Krowka, Lee Robbins, Robin Levitt, Ron Ginsberg, and Snake.

♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡

Buddhist AIDS Project Planning Anthology, Support Groups

The Buddhist AIDS Project (BAP) is currently compiling and editing an anthology titled, *On Meditation and AIDS: Buddhist Practice and Living With HIV*. It is scheduled to be published by Parallax Press in late 1996 or early 1997. BAP is seeking articles that connect Buddhist practice with issues of life, death, grief, life-threatening illness, and AIDS in particular. Submissions will be accepted through March, 1996.

BAP is also exploring the possibility of offering two eight-week Buddhist support groups in 1996, one for people living with HIV, and another for caregivers.

BAP is a grassroots organization that provides free information and referral to Buddhist events, resources, and AIDS services for anyone living with HIV, their families, friends, caregivers, and others. The project regularly connects Buddhist sanghas with Buddhist AIDS resources, and serves as a liaison between the Buddhist community and AIDS service organizations.

For more information on individual resources, the anthology, or the support groups, please contact BAP at 415/522-7473, or write to BAP, 555 John Muir Drive #803, San Francisco, CA 94132. ♡

Stephen Levine Featured at February 3 Workshop

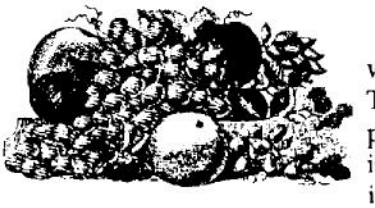
"Who Dies?" is the title of a workshop to be held on Saturday, February 3, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Scottish Rite Center, 1547 Lakeside Drive, in Oakland. The featured speaker is Stephen Levine, a teacher of Vipassana meditation and the author of several best-selling books. A colleague of Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, Levine has served people in the processes of healing and dying for over 25 years.

(continued on page 7)

Hamilton Family Center Project Needs Financial Backing From GBF Members

A small, dedicated group of GBFers have been serving the homeless for almost two years. In order to continue their engaged Buddhist practice, however, they urgently need monthly donations.

by Clint Seiter



A recent story in the *San Francisco Chronicle* talks about how homelessness has become the number one concern for a majority of San Francisco residents. This is not surprising. Nowadays the homeless are everywhere: sleeping in doorways, begging on street corners, camped out in parked cars. What is perhaps even more disturbing to see are the homeless families. It's hard to imagine what kind of a childhood some of these children must be living, or how their experiences on the streets will shape them as they grow older.

Almost two years ago, a small band of GBFers got together to explore what contribution we could make in helping the homeless in San Francisco. We soon learned about the Hamilton Family Center, a shelter that provides a place for homeless families to live until they can get back on their feet again. This shelter has proven to be a haven for many families, but its resources are stretched thin, and the services it can offer are limited. Typically, it can accommodate about a hundred residents, about half of whom are children.

We thought we could best help by taking on the responsibility of preparing one meal a month for the center's residents. So, every third Saturday of the month we plan a menu, buy the food, prepare the meal in the Hamilton Family Center kitchen, serve it to the residents, and clean up afterwards. As an example, our pre-Thanksgiving meal consisted of oven-baked chicken, Mexican rice (cooked in broth with vegetables and spices), mashed sweet potatoes, bread, and homemade pecan pie with vanilla ice cream. The work involved in preparing these meals is tremendously rewarding, and a strong spirit of sangha has developed among the team members who participate.

Of course, the bottom line to all of this is that the food for these meals costs money, typically about $120 per month. GBF has been very generous in making a monthly contribution to help defray expenses, but it can only afford to cover a small percentage of the food costs. The rest of the money comes out of the pockets of individuals involved in the project and outside donors. This has proven to be a financial strain for some of us, to the point that we may not be able to continue the project much longer. This would be a real loss, both to the members of this project, and to the residents at the shelter.

What we are looking for is a handful of individuals who would be willing to commit to a small monthly donation to help keep this project alive. Even $5 or $10 a month would be a tremendous help. All donations would go directly towards feeding homeless families—there are no overhead costs involved in this project.

All of us receive what often seems to be a never-ending series of appeals for money for worthwhile causes. I know this gets tiresome. If homelessness is an issue that particularly concerns you, however, then this is a concrete way you can make a difference. Please give our request your most serious consideration. For further information on how you can help, you can call me

Letters

Practicing Intimacy:

This is a familiar phrase to many of us. It depicts moments of a very personal experience, often of a sexual nature. Let's explore this concept through our practice of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. I propose we embrace the feeling of being intimate with our whole body, mind, and spirit. Have we discovered the true nature of being the Buddha Mind? Has it manifested its Self in our daily lives? If we are diligent in our practice, we come to experience first-hand that oneness of no separation. It may happen so subtly we may miss it.

I was sitting at my window watching ants moving bread crumbs I had thrown to the ground. How earnestly they trucked back and forth until all the crumbs had been carried off. I had thoughts of 108 prostrations. For those moments, I became the ants' hunger. I realized the importance of the Sangha, working together for the benefit of all, selflessly. Living in the moment-to-moment experiences of our daily lives affords us the ability to be intimate whatever the circumstances may be: happiness/sadness, wellness/illness, anger/compassion, greed/unselfishness. We just accept it for what it is, not discriminating. It is from this practice that we are able to free ourselves from the bondage of conditioned thinking.

Aren't each of us Buddhas manifesting the Dharma, sitting on a bench feeling the gentle breeze as it brushes our face? Isn't our Sangha the mountains, rivers, animals, plants, and us? As gay Buddhists, how can we manifest this wonderful practice amongst ourselves? How can it become the flame that ignites our passions and strengthens our community, thus enabling us to experience the liberation of the Buddha Way?

Time is short. Each of us should strive to awaken, take heed, and not squander our lives. Gassho,

Jack Taian Madden
Stormville, New York

A New Perspective:

I became interested in Buddhism about a year ago after I found out that my lover, who had become extremely ill, has AIDS. The shocking news changed everything. I was looking for answers to such questions as, "Why me?" and "Why him?" but nothing seemed to comfort me.

Then I came across the book titled, *The Power of Compassion,* by H. H. The Dalai Lama and, for the first time, I was able to get some understanding that life may have a completely different purpose. The "I," me," and "him" merged into the background, and compassion, true love, and awareness came forward.

Now I meditate every day and study Buddhist scriptures. I was looking for a Buddhist organization to join, when I came across your ad in *Tricycle Magazine.*

Would you please send me some information on your organization, and maybe a listing of gay Buddhist organizations in the New York Metropolitan Area?

Thank you in advance for your kind attention. I wish you all the best in your organization.

Peter
Elmhurst, New York

Another View on Nichiren Buddhism

I was initially delighted when I saw the announcement that a Gosho would be presented in the November newsletter. As a practicing Nichiren Buddhist, I feel that Nichiren is not well understood in the United States. Thus, I was distressed to see in the newsletter, instead of the writings of Nichiren, a piece written by the Soka Gakkai. While I do not wish to embroil this Fellowship in a controversy between other parties, I felt it important that certain facts about the Soka Gakkai be pointed out.

Soka Gakkai, from its founding in the 1930s in Japan up until around 1991, was a lay organization associated with the Nichiren Shoshu Buddhist Sect. After World War II, Soka Gakkai became a very powerful force in Japan, and spread out to other lands with no small amount of success. This growth has not been without controversy due to its highly aggressive efforts at converting people in Japan, its political ambitions in that country through its political party, the Komentei (since the 1970s nominally an independent organization), and the actions of its president, Daiseku Ikeda. Mr. Ikeda is the undisputed leader of the Soka Gakkai, and he brooks no challenges to his authority. This autocratic style has, according to Nichiren Shoshu, resulted in the excommunication of Mr. Ikeda and many of his followers from the Nichiren Shoshu Sect. Since then, there have been accusations and counter-accusations between the groups, as well as at least one court battle in the United States.

In addition to the above, there is some controversy as to the form of Buddhism practiced by Soka Gakkai. Within the Nichiren Buddhist tradition, Nichiren is viewed as a Bodhisattva who came to teach the Lotus Sutra to the people of the world. Since the 1950s, the Nichiren Shoshu sect has maintained that Sakyamuni Buddha is a provisional Buddha whose message has no validity in this time. They contend that Nichiren Shonin is the manifestation of the Original Buddha, chosen to propagate Buddhism in this age. Hence the claim that Nichiren is the "True" Buddha.

In a mimicry of the Lotus Sutra, chapters 2 and 16, they claim that Nichiren is the Original Buddha of the infinite past without beginning who appeared and propagated his teachings in this time. Hence all other Buddhist teachings based upon Sakyamuni Buddha are invalid, and only their practice—as defined now by Daiseku Ikeda—is proper for this time in history. A greater explanation of this position is found in their publication, "The Foundations of Buddhism," from about pages 100 to 121.

No other Nichiren sect agrees with this position. All the other Nichiren sects are based upon the Lotus Sutra as taught by Sakyamuni Buddha, and follow the Buddhist practice outlined by Nichiren Shonin in his many writings. I want to emphasize that I am not criticizing the sincerity of the ordinary members of the Soka Gakkai. Many are unaware of what distinguishes them from other Buddhists. Most are sincere, if somewhat uninformed. They have been taught little of the Lotus Sutra and given distorted views of Nichiren, while being encouraged to chant daimoku and study the writings of Mr. Ikeda.

A good book on the history of Nichiren and of the Nichiren Buddhist tradition is *Fire in the Lotus* by Daniel Montgomery. Another book on Nichiren's view of the Lotus Sutra is called *Buddhism for Today* by Niwano. More information can be obtained from the Nichiren Shu Temple in San Jose (408/246-0111), or through Kempon Hokke Shu via e-mail at whlotus@aol.com.

John J. Petry
San Francisco

Practicing No-Boundary Buddhism

by Alan Oliver

As I continue to practice, I find myself on a journey back to my true self and a universe that has no division or boundaries. Practice may take many forms, such as sitting meditation, chanting, running, experiencing nature, working with crafts, and compassionate service.

These practices, in themselves, do not automatically put us in touch with the unified field of universal energy where boundaries fall away, as in a river of multiple currents. In fact, it is possible to practice in an ego-referenced way, although we may not always be aware of this. But when we do so, our senses, emotions, and memories conspire together to reinforce our existing boundaries and create new ones.

Conditions That Promote Boundaries

We are born without an awareness of boundaries. Yet gradually, step by step, we are influenced by our cultural conditioning and the five aggregates—our senses, sensations, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness—to believe in the world of dualism and boundaries. Given this experience and reinforcement, it is difficult to displace the ego—and its expectations, attachments, and judgments—from being our central point of reference from which we view the world.

One thing that we experience as having a clear boundary is our body. This body, which seems so precise, has an energy field that extends outward as an aura, and is locked in an intimate exchange with the world around us. Air is transformed into tissue, and the moisture on our skin disappears into the air. We breathe in molecules that were just emitted from the person next to us, sensing their energy as we talk to them. The paradox is that this material or body existence has its rules and demands. But to exist only in that realm where the ego is central is to be lost in a world of boundaries, all made of mirrors endlessly reflecting back on its own delusions.

Language can be of some help in seeing the world of ego and boundaries differently. But language can also trap us in a world of noun-verb-object patterns. We are forced to think that something that is separate (a noun) acts (a verb) on something else (an object) that is also separate. Language forms communicate a kind of dominant world view (i.e. everything is separate).

A Practice Question

What are we to do as our ego orders us about, our senses confirm the boundaries on the material plane, and our language encourages us to fragment and separate everything we experience? How can we shift our perspective so that our internal reference point switches from the ego to the universe? A universal perspective also has its rules and operating principles, and we give up our birthright as spiritual beings when we are unaware of its potential to create wholeness, just as the ego creates separateness.

Opening to the Universe

If we follow the trail laid out long ago by Hindu-Buddhist teachings, by Native American insights, and in the true essence of what Jesus taught, we can experience this wholeness in a more continuous way. We have actually experienced such moments before, perhaps while relating to nature, working intensely on a project, making love, or during a heartfelt conversation with friends. By consciously reprogramming our internal focus and letting ourselves experience the energy of the universe in an open way, we can operate more successfully in the vivid, action-oriented material part of the universe.

One path to uncovering your awareness of the universe is through your inner world—everything we experience in our minds—for this is your interface with the universe. Most important of all is to be aware of one's internal reference point, the central point around which all else revolves. For some people, money is their internal reference point. For others, it may be service, motherhood, or a particular activity (such as diving for an Olympic athlete). If it is the ego, then you have blocked off the universe, and your focus will be primarily on the material part of the world and its boundaries. However, if you consciously adopt the universe as your internal reference point, then all separations and boundaries disappear. When you are able to do this, you become a sensing extension of the universal energy field, much like the hand acts as a sensory extension of the body. As the Heart Sutra says, "with no hindrance in the mind...no fear exists..."

To achieve this, we practice meditation or chant teachings like the Heart Sutra. Incorporating these practices into our lives helps us to use the universe as our internal reference point. The frequent use of affirmations can also help to shift our focus. (As an example, see the "Quantum Universe Affirmation" that follows this article.)

Intention is critical to this process, and it can help you balance your spiritual life with the material part of existence. Another way of viewing this is through mindfulness, by paying attention to what is happening. If we place our attention on the ego, our mind will tend to create more separations and boundaries. However, if we can include everything coherently and harmoniously in our view, then the mind will tend to move in a similar way. From this will flow actions that are not limited by the artificial boundaries our ego creates. As we do this, each person is a mirror reflecting the universe to others. In Sangha, we can act as a focal point of universal energy for others to relate to and use to discover their own connection to this universal energy field. To do this, we need to be clear what our internal reference point is, and to give it our full attention. Out of these practices can flow the universal energy that is without boundaries. ♡

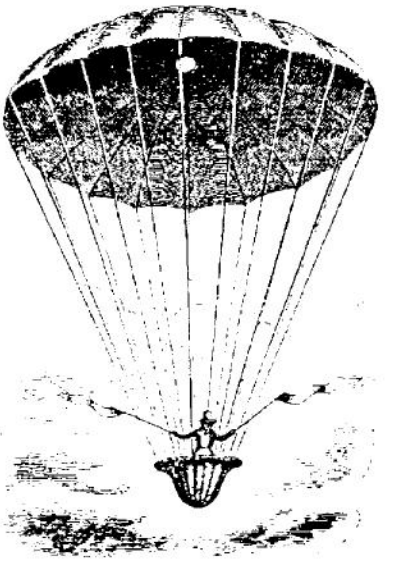
Quantum Universe Affirmation

My universe is an information and awareness system of circulating energy.
I participate in creating this universe.
I believe the essential nature of the universe is not material, but flowing energy.
My thoughts are quantum events creating the universe.
I experience the universe as whole even though I know dualism exists in my ego state.
I am a localized body of energy in a universe of energy.
I am a conscious being in a conscious universe.
I experience the parts of the universe, including my body and thoughts, as forming an unbroken, flowing whole.
Where I stop determines the size of my universe. ♡

The Law of Pure Potentiality

by Deepak Chopra

[Editor's Note: The following article is excerpted from Chapter One of ***The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success*** *by Deepak Chopra (San Rafael, CA: Amber-Allen Publishing and New World Library, 1994). It is reprinted here with permission from the publishers. All too often we create our own barriers to achieving fulfillment and inner peace (i.e. "success"), whether it be in our relationships, our vocations, or any aspect of our lives. Chopra's wholistic vision, which supports us in removing such barriers, will likely resonate with many Buddhist practitioners. His small, inspiring, highly instructive book is very readable.]*



The first spiritual law of success is the *Law of Pure Potentiality*. This law is based on the fact that we are, in our essential state, pure consciousness. Pure consciousness is pure potentiality; it is the field of all possibilities and infinite creativity. Pure consciousness is our spiritual essence. Being infinite and unbounded, it is also pure joy. Other attributes of consciousness are pure knowledge, infinite silence, perfect balance, invincibility, simplicity, and bliss. This is our essential nature. Our essential nature is one of pure potentiality.

When you discover your essential nature and know who you really are, in that *knowing itself* is the ability to fulfill any dream you have, because you are the eternal possibility, the immeasurable potential of all that was, is, and will be. The *Law of Pure Potentiality* could also be called the *Law of Unity*, because underlying the infinite diversity of life is the *unity* of one all-pervasive spirit. There is no separation between you and this field of energy. The field of pure potentiality is your own Self. And the more you experience your true nature, the closer you are to the field of pure potentiality.

The experience of the Self, or "self-referral," means that our internal reference point is our own spirit, and not the objects of our experience. The opposite of self-referral is object-referral. In object-referral we are always influenced by objects outside the Self, which include situations, circumstances, people, and things. In object-referral we are constantly seeking the approval of others. Our thinking and our behavior are always in anticipation of a response. It is therefore fear-based.

In object-referral we also feel an intense need to control things. We feel an intense need for external power. The need for approval, the need to control things, and the need for external power are needs that are based on fear. This kind of power is not the power of pure potentiality, or the power of the Self, or real power. When we experience the power of the Self, there is an absence of fear, there is no compulsion to control, and no struggle for approval or external power.

In object-referral, your internal reference point is your ego. The ego, however, is not who you really are. The ego is your self-image; it is your social mask; it is the role you are playing. Your social mask thrives on approval. It wants to control, and it is sustained by power, because it lives in fear.

Your true Self, which is your spirit, your soul, is completely free of those things. It is immune to criticism, it is unfearful of any challenge, and it feels beneath no one. And yet, it is also humble and feels superior to no one, because it recognizes that everyone else is the same Self, the same spirit in different disguises.

* *

How can we apply the Law of Pure Potentiality, the field of all possibilities, to our lives? If you want to enjoy the benefits of the field of pure potentiality, if you want to make full use of the creativity which is inherent in pure consciousness, then you have to have access to it. One way to access the field is through the daily practice of silence, meditation, and nonjudgment. Spending time in nature will also give you access to the qualities inherent in the field: infinite creativity, freedom, and bliss.

Practicing silence means making a commitment to take a certain amount of time to simply Be. Experiencing silence means periodically withdrawing from the activity of speech. It also means periodically withdrawing from such activities as watching television, listening to the radio, or reading a book. If you never give yourself the opportunity to experience silence, this creates turbulence in your internal dialogue.

Set aside a little time every once in a while to experience silence. Or simply make a commitment to maintain silence for a certain period each day. You could do it for two hours, or if that seems a lot, do it for a one-hour period. And every once in a while experience silence for an extended period of time, such as a full day, or two days, or even a whole week.

What happens when you go into this experience of silence? Initially your internal dialogue becomes even more turbulent. You feel an intense need to say things. I've known people who go absolutely crazy the first day or two when they commit themselves to an extended period of silence. A sense of urgency and anxiety suddenly comes over them. But as they stay with the experience, their internal dialogue begins to quieten. And soon the silence becomes profound. This is because after a while the mind gives up; it realizes there is no point in going

around and around if you — the Self, the spirit, the choice-maker — are not going to speak, period. Then, as the internal dialogue quietens, you begin to experience the stillness of the field of pure potentiality.

Practicing silence periodically as it is convenient to you is one way to experience the *Law of Pure Potentiality*. Spending time each day in meditation is another. Ideally, you should meditate at least thirty minutes in the morning, and thirty minutes in the evening. Through meditation you will learn to experience the field of pure silence and pure awareness. In that field of pure silence is the field of infinite correlation, the field of infinite organizing power, the ultimate ground of creation where everything is inseparably connected with everything else...

Another way to access the field of pure potentiality is through the practice of non-judgment. Judgment is the constant evaluation of things as right or wrong, good or bad. When you are constantly evaluating, classifying, labeling, analyzing, you create a lot of turbulence in your internal dialogue. This turbulence constricts the flow of energy between you and the field of pure potentiality. You literally squeeze the "gap" between thoughts.

The gap is your connection to the field of pure potentiality. It is that state of pure awareness, that silent space between thoughts, that inner stillness that connects you to true power. And when you squeeze the gap, you squeeze your connection to the field of pure potentiality and infinite creativity.

There is a prayer in A Course *in Miracles* that states, "Today I shall judge nothing that occurs." Non-judgment creates silence in your mind. It's a good idea, therefore, to begin your day with that statement. And throughout the day, remind yourself of that statement each time you catch yourself judging. If practicing this procedure for the whole day seems too difficult, then you may simply say to yourself, "For the next two hours," I won't judge anything," or "For the next hour, I will experience non-judgment." Then you can extend it gradually.

Through silence, through meditation, and through non-judgment, you will access the first law, the Law of *Pure Potentiality*. Once you start doing that, you can add a fourth component to this practice, and that is regularly spending time in direct communion with nature Spending time in nature enables you to sense the harmonious interaction of all the elements and forces of life, and gives you a sense of unity with all of life. Whether it be a stream, a forest, a mountain, a lake, or the seashore, that connection with nature's intelligence will also help you access the field of pure potentiality...

When you quietly acknowledge this exquisite coexistence of opposites, you align yourself with the world of energy — the quantum soup, the non-material non-stuff that is the source of the material world. This world of energy is fluid, dynamic, resilient, changing, forever in motion. And yet it is also non-changing, still, quiet, eternal, and silent.

Stillness alone is the potentiality for creativity; movement alone is creativity restricted to a certain aspect of its expression. But the combination of movement and stillness enables you to unleash your creativity in all directions — wherever the power of your attention takes you.

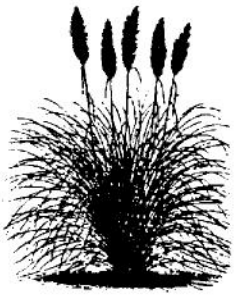
Wherever you go in the midst of movement and activity, carry your stillness within you. Then the chaotic movement around you will never overshadow your access to the reservoir of creativity, the field of pure potentiality.

Applying The Law of Pure Potentiality

I will put the Law of Pure Potentiality into effect by making a commitment to take the following steps:

1) I will get in touch with the field of pure potentiality by taking time each day to be silent, to just Be. I will also sit alone in silent meditation at least twice a day for approximately thirty minutes in the morning and thirty minutes in the evening.

2) I will take time each day to commune with nature and to silently witness the intelligence within every living thing. I will sit silently and watch a sunset, or listen to the sound of the ocean or a stream, or simply smell the scent of a flower. In the ecstasy of my own silence, and by communing with nature, I will enjoy the life throb of ages, the field of pure potentiality and unbounded creativity.



3) I will practice non-judgment. I will begin my day with the statement, "Today, I shall judge nothing that occurs," and throughout the day I will remind myself not to judge. ♡

Thanks...

Effective January 1, 1996, **Al Chase** will be leaving the GBF steering committee and his role as treasurer to pursue other interests. For more than three years Al has generously contributed his time and energy to the financial well-being of GBF and has done an outstanding job. His help and advice as a member of the steering committee have been invaluable. We will miss Al on the steering committee, but look forward to seeing him at our Sunday meetings and other events. John Krowka will serve as interim treasurer until March 1996, at which time Dinghao Ma will take over this position.

GBF is grateful to **Bakers of Paris** in San Francisco, which for the past year has generously contributed delicious, hearty breads each month for use at the monthly dinners GBF members prepare for the Hamilton Family Center. Thanks also go to **Alan Oliver** and **Daishin David Sunseri** for taking care of GBF's information line, responding to correspondence, and referring people to various Buddhist resources. ♡

Workshop

(from page 3)

The workshop will explore the levels of healing that are possible through living and dying with awareness. There will be guided meditations, lectures, and question-and-answer periods. Cost for the one-day workshop is $85 ($75 before January 20). A vegetarian lunch will be available for $8.00.

GBF member Lee Robbins, who has attended a number of Levine's workshops, characterized Levine as very gay supportive. He added that his workshops are well attended by lesbians and gays, and by those working with issues related to HIV. For additional information, call 415/753-5755, fax 415/753-5700, or send a SASE to Levine Workshops, 1615 24th Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94122. ♡