



A Journal of Buddhist Meditation

A non-sectarian Buddhist publication focusing on...

- meditation in daily life
- spiritual practice and social change
- women and Buddhism

Subscriptions are \$12 for one year, \$22 for two years.

Sample copy is \$3.

Published 3 times a year by the Karuna Meditation Society

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____ City _____

State _____ Postal Code _____



Send to:

Karuna Journal

P.O. Box 24468 Stn. C, Vancouver, B.C. V5T 4M5

BOOK REVIEW

DHARMA GAIA: A Harvest of Essays in Buddhism and Ecology. Edited by Allan Hunt Badiner. Parallax Press, 1990. \$15.00.

Reviewed by Tony Somlai



Sitting at the kitchen table, staring out the window of my second floor apartment. It is one of those crystal clear New England spring days, the kind seen on postcards. Looking on to the backyard, I watch two gray squirrels chasing one another through the tree branches. Blank sheets of paper lay next to *Dharma Gaia*, a book of essays on Buddhism and Ecology. A pen waits in silence, inviting my review of this work. The squirrels already understand ecology, as we humans search for the words that will explain ecology.

In a Dharma talk on ecology, Lincoln Rhodes, JDPSN, said, "Disneyland is easy; now a carrot — that is something!" He was investigating how humans could make something so complicated as a Disneyland, but have great difficulties making something so simple as a carrot. His talk provided insights on a deep appreciation for the carrot on our plate; an interconnectedness with something so simple and yet impossible to make. This dichotomy, between simple and complicated, reflects the difficulty of *Dharma Gaia*. The book is a Disneyland of ecology in a world that needs a simple carrot.

Dharma Gaia is a compendium of numerous essays by twenty-nine different authors. There are some fine, thoughtful articles with provocative ideas. The topic is timely, and this is one of the first books to tie together these two subjects. Unfortunately, with such a diversity of thought the book never seems to find a consistent focus or primary thread.

Dharma Gaia is divided into six parts: "Green Buddhism," "Shifting Views of Perception," "Experiencing Extended Mind," "Becoming Sangha," "Meditations on Earth as a Sentient Being," and "A Call to Action."

Part one, "Green Buddhism," gives an historical perspective of early Buddhist views on nature. The clearest essay is provided by Chatsumarn Kabilsingh's "Green Buddhism." Her focus is on the direct and immediate relationship of early Buddhists with the environment. Teachings from the Buddha to the Dalai Lama are provided as examples of our ecological interrelatedness.

The second section, "Shifting Views of Perception," is particularly confusing and lacks a clear perspective. Joanna Macy's "The Greening of the Self" is wordy and spends much



**ZEN CENTER
OF
LOS ANGELES**

ZCLA offers a year-round zen training program, including two 90-day intensive practice periods per year, under the guidance of Taizan Maezumi Roshi.

June through August 1990

At our Mountain Center

January through March 1991

At our City Center

You are welcome to attend all or part.

ZEN CENTER OF LOS ANGELES

923 South Normandie Avenue

Los Angeles, CA 90006

213/387- 2351

time on the sense of self (the big "I"). Her initial statement that, "Something is happening to the self!" is an attempt to make the self something meaningful and central to the issue. She believes that this self is "... being replaced by the ecological self or the eco-self ... co-extensive with other beings and the life of our planet." So, Macy finds us in the process of "greening the self." Such jargon confuses Buddhist teachings regarding the self with New Age concepts. If the self inherently doesn't exist, what is it that Joanna Macy is turning green?

David Abraham provides background and insight in explaining James Lovelock's Gaia Hypothesis (the earth is a single living entity) in "The Perceptual Implication of Gaia." However, the heavily emphasized academic conclusions will leave the average reader wondering if our relationship to the earth, and ecology, can ever be understood. For example:

These two steps toward a Post-Cartesian epistemology are remarkably consonant with the Gaia Hypothesis and the implication that perception itself is a communication or communion between an organism and the living biosphere.

So who are we "communing" with as medical waste laps onto the shores of the East Coast? Will understanding the two steps lead anyone to action? There is perception, but how does that perception bring about awareness and compassion? This solution appeals to the same analytical, logical mind that created the problem.

Martin Pitt's "The Pebble and the Tide" is the clearest and most focused piece of the third section, "Experiencing Extended Mind." Pitt's words are straightforward and cut through the complexities and confusion of the eco-fog. His premise is elegant in its simplicity: "Ecology is right here, in our practice, it is all around and in us." Pitt doesn't distance humans from ecology. Ecology is not something other, it is this moment. For Pitt, "Ecology is right here." Understand this and the self-made line between humans and the planet disappears. He clarifies this further with, "Morality, then, is not a question of piously doing the right thing but of being (and hence doing) what we truly are." This is the perspective from which humans can develop an active and participatory relationship with the environment.

Part four, "Becoming Sangha," has two well-developed essays: Sulak Sivaraksa's "True Development" and Ken Jones' "Getting Out of Our Own Light." Sivaraksa's searing statement, "For the most part, materialism diminishes the quality of human life and fosters violence," aggressively forces a review of our relationships with all humans. It is the stick, to the ego, leading to an awakening that, "cultivation must first develop from within."

Jones' essay investigates Buddhism's possible contributions to a spirituality that is both ecologically and socially



**B U D D H I S T
P E A C E
F E L L O W S H I P**

The 1989 Nobel Peace Prize Announcement

The Norwegian Nobel Committee has decided to award the 1989 Nobel Peace Prize to the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, the religious and political leader of the Tibetan people.

The Committee's decision emphasizes the fact that the Dalai Lama is his country's only spiritual leader and the only non-violent force for peace in the world.



*Interview with Desmond Tutu
Central America: Ailwin's Journal © Joe Garcia's Letter*

THE BUDDHIST PEACE FELLOWSHIP JOURNAL

The Buddhist Peace Fellowship publishes a quarterly journal of articles by and about Buddhists of all traditions and other spiritual peaceworkers.

Recent issues include: interviews with Mayumi Oda, Gary Snyder and Archbishop Desmond Tutu; articles on Central America, Tibet, homelessness and AIDS, as well as information on socially conscious consumption and boycotts.

To subscribe send \$25 to:

BUDDHIST PEACE FELLOWSHIP
P.O. Box 4650 Berkeley, CA 94704

THE VAJRADHATU SUN

is a bimonthly newspaper established in 1978 by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche to report on common interests of followers of contemplative traditions in the West, and to present the teachings of the Kagyu and Nyingma schools of Tibetan Buddhism. In the past 12 years of publication, it has become well known for its coverage of:

TEACHINGS: talks, book excerpts and interviews with great spiritual teachers and reports from students of many contemplative disciplines, from Aikido to Zen,

ARTS: poetry, visual arts, book reviews, interviews and articles on contemporary art as well as contemplative disciplines such as ikebana, tea ceremony and calligraphy,

NEWS: worldwide coverage of events and newsmakers – from our writers, correspondents and the media.



FOR A SAMPLE ISSUE: Send \$3 to The Vajradhatu Sun, 1345 Spruce St., Boulder, Colorado 80302.

a r y a l o k a

Classes and Courses


Retreats

Books and Taped Lectures

Guest Accommodations

a r y a l o k a
Heartwood Circle
Newmarket NH 03857
Tel. (603) 659-5456
Call or write for details.

Buddhist Retreat and Study Center



Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

grounded. His activism is apparent throughout his writing, and his knowledge is based on involvement with planetary social issues. He questions Buddhist practitioners who involve themselves with “ethnically unproblematic issues” rather than “with the militant wretched of the Earth (especially close to home), and with the structural violence of our social system.” Is it safer to save the whales than to clean up our own backyards? Jones asks us to get dirty, participatory and engaged with the realities of this earth rather than the “safer” and “cleaner” aspects of ecology. Ken Jones’ meaningful analysis may be to engaged Buddhism what Ken Wilbur’s writings have been to transpersonal and Buddhist psychology.

Part five, “Meditations on Earth as a Sentient Being” ends with Allen Ginsberg’s “Do the Meditation Rock.” Ginsberg’s poem is the jewel of the book, no matter whether you read it down or across.

Part six, “A Call to Action,” is the focal point of Dharma Gaia. Aitken Roshi’s “Right Livelihood for the Western Buddhist” brings the notion of engaged Buddhism full circle. He quotes Zen teacher Yung-chia, “We are here only briefly, and we are parts of each other.” What more would be needed in understanding our relationship with this planet?

Dharma Gaia has essays clear like space and essays cloudy as mud. The book has many paths; some will lead to action, some to understanding, and others will lead to further words and confusion.

It is my turn to cook tonight’s meal. As I head off to the grocery store I remember to bring along my two recycled paper bags. The squirrels are still playing tag and the cardinals have left for a bit. As I leave the backyard, I begin to think about what I will prepare for this evening’s meal. Carrots seem appropriate. Carrots, now that would be something! □

PRIMARY POINT

Subscription/Change of Address

Send to: **PRIMARY POINT**
528 Pound Road, Cumberland, RI 02864 U.S.A.

- For a one-year (3 issue) subscription, I am enclosing:
 \$12 in U.S. \$15 in Canada \$25 Foreign
Send payment in U.S. dollars only. Personal checks can be accepted only if drawn on a U.S. bank. You may also send Canadian or International Postal Money Orders in U.S. dollars, or bank checks payable on any U.S. bank or banker's agency.
- Please make the following change of address. (Please enclose the mailing label from this issue).
- Enclosed is a tax-deductible contribution to help produce **PRIMARY POINT**.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Country _____ SU90

How did you hear of **PRIMARY POINT**? _____
 Your cooperation in notifying us of your address change will insure that you receive every issue of **PRIMARY POINT** and help reduce our mailing expenses.

EUROPEAN SANGHA

Monastic Rules Announced

Ji Kwang Dae Poep Sa Nim, spiritual teacher for the European sangha, has established guidelines for her students to become Bodhisattva monks and nuns. Single people vow to live a monastic style life for six years; during this time they may continue their career, but otherwise focus themselves wholly on practice and do not have any sexual relationships. This training is powerful because one must maintain an ascetic practice while being confronted with the temptations and desires that come with living in society. After six years, the Bodhisattva monk or nun is eligible to take the traditional monastic vows.

Married couples may also take Bodhisattva monk or nun precepts if they are grounded in practice and have a harmonious relationship. They do not engage in the ascetic part of the training, but commit to use the love and happiness they have to help others.

Dae Poep Sa Nim has also revised the requirements for becoming traditional monks and nuns. To do so (unless one is already a Bodhisattva monk or nun), one must first be in training as a “Haeng-Ja.” A Haeng-Ja works only for the temple and sangha, and takes a vow of celibacy. After three years, he or she is eligible to take full monastic vows. □