
connections

Number 2

Newsletter of the Regina Insight Meditation Community

Spring/Summer, 2001

Connect-ed

My gratitude goes to all contributors to this issue of ".....connections....." for the time and energy you have devoted to expressing your wisdom and insight as they relate to "communication".

My hopes are extended to all readers of this issue of ".....connections....." that you will somehow benefit from understanding the words and concepts it contains.

My encouragement is offered to all who wish to share their thoughts and experiences that somehow relate to "attachment", the theme for our Fall/Winter issue (please make sure I receive them on or before 15th September), and/or to "impermanence", the tentative theme for our fourth issue, by 15th March next year.

In the act of absorbing what appears in this issue, writers and readers make a connection with each other in an obvious and real sense. Through this

means of communicating, we move closer toward unifying self and other, and hence toward total freedom. In this movement toward liberation, I am reminded of this verse in Stephen Batchelor's translation of Nagarjuna's "*Verses from the Centre*":

"I do not connect with me
Nor do I connect with you –
No connecting, no
Connections, no connectors."

..... which might raise the question "Why this newsletter, especially considering the name it bears?"

I invite you to read on and to reflect upon how what is written matches or differs from your own experiences and understanding of yourselves, and of Life.

Chris Gilboy ☸

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The Practice of Wise Speech

In order for verbal communication to happen, two essential factors need to be present. First, there needs to be someone who is *speaking* effectively. Second, there needs to be someone who is *listening* effectively. Otherwise, I'm not sure we can say we are communicating.

Communication happens when the speaker senses she or he has been heard. In order for this to occur, both the speaker and the listener need to be attentive. However, in many cases, one or both are not. How often do we engage in dialogue and the person we are speaking to isn't really listening to us? Or when we are speaking, we are not engaged with the person we are talking to, but rather caught up in our own agendas and demands? Or when we are

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listening, the speaker does not seem that engaged with us, or we are thinking about how we are going to respond and really not listening at all? How can we truly engage in communication when either the speaker or the listener is absent?

What does it really mean to be present when we are engaged together?

When I communicate, I am reporting my thoughts, feelings, needs and underlying motivations to someone to whom I think these will matter. One of the primary reasons why communication is so complex is because knowing myself well enough to articulate what is going on in the present moment is not that easy. Self-knowledge is generally hard to come by. Another reason is because I may not trust that the person to whom I am speaking is interested in what I have to say, so I might feel unsure about myself.

Mindfulness practice helps me to be aware of my thoughts, feelings and motivations in each moment, and allows for sensitivity and receptivity towards the person I am with. Even if I don't know what I am thinking, feeling and intending, I can be aware of this present state of not knowing. Even if I am feeling disconnected from the person to whom I am speaking, I can still be connected to myself. When I am present with myself in this way, I am more likely to be able to articulate my experience. When I can speak about my direct experience, my words carry freshness and immediacy. I communicate a sense of authenticity and sensitivity that is more likely to get my listener's attention.

Every time I open my mouth to speak, I have an intention to fulfill some need. As human beings, we all have needs, and our speech communicates those needs. "I need someone to fix my car." "I need to get some shampoo." "I need to be with people today, rather than be alone." "I need to find some way to express myself creatively." Much of the time, our needs are practical; we need to get things done. These needs are very straightforward. But much of the time we have emotional needs – need for connection, for friendship, for love, for community. We have a need for recognition, to be seen and to be understood. These needs can get quite complex and I can get confused and overwhelmed by all the feelings, and not be able to track what is going on. This will affect the way I communicate and unless I

am able to be in touch with my thoughts and feelings, what I communicate may be confusing, too. As a listener, I might also be overwhelmed with my internal dialogue and not be able to be present with the other person.

Every time I speak, I can ask myself, "Why am I opening my mouth right now?" For two years in the early stage of my meditation practice, I looked at the intention that arose with my speech. I was horrified how often my intention was to get back at someone, how often I hoped someone would be hurt because they hurt me, or how often I was confused and overwhelmed by my experience and felt angry that no-one noticed me. I hoped that if I ignored my friends, they would be upset too. I saw how often I wanted to express my pain in an indirect way because being truthful seemed too risky. I was bringing these difficult, painful patterns into the light of my consciousness for the first time because I trusted that mindfulness would transform them. As time went on, I was willing to take more risks to be truthful and I saw that my speech was softer, more direct and connected. I had evidence that transformation was indeed possible.

I discovered that looking at my motivation each time I spoke, in order not to cause harm to myself or another, was in itself an intention of good will. I was generating conditions for trust, respect and safety in my communication with people. My friends began to trust that my speech was genuine and truthful and that I was willing to share myself in an authentic way. This behaviour inspired others to take risks in their communication and encouraged a circle of sensitive and genuine sharing.

Mindfulness of speech is a powerful practice. In my reading of the old texts, the Buddha repeatedly spoke about the importance of wise speech. The forces of greed, ill-will and delusion in the mind influence our thoughts, and our thoughts become our speech. Our speech shapes our character. When we purify our minds, we purify our speech. When we purify our speech, we change our character. Then we communicate without greed, ill-will and cruelty. We communicate with non-attachment, lovingkindness and compassion. This is what transforms our reality and the state of the world.

Sharda Rogell ☸

Craving Connection

The image of Indra's Net is a vivid symbol that portrays the harmonious connection and inter-connection of all things. Covering the entire universe, at the intersection of each vertical and horizontal strand is a crystal bead, each bead symbolizing a single existence, each bead reflecting not only every other bead but, as well, the reflections of every other bead.

It's a powerful image, but here, earthbound and literal, we have to make the connections. As someone commented in a recent dharma discussion, "It's hard to talk about connection; it's easier to talk about lack of connection", reflecting a sense of disconnection that seems to be growing in direct proportion to the growth in technology purported to "connect us to the world". Now we can communicate all day by fax, phone and e-mail without once encountering a warm body and in the end feeling more disconnected than ever.

From books, articles and workshops, we learn communication techniques that work, but strangely don't necessarily satisfy, and there remains in us a longing for something more. Even those who turn to spiritual practice are caught in this dilemma. Says son and spiritual heir of Trungpa Rinpoche of his own community: "I have seen a lot of people doing exotic practices ... but then they [still] have great difficulty just being nice to one person."

Mindfulness is not one of the world's exotic practices but it is a straight pathway to connection. When we remind ourselves of the basic understandings of the practice, we move towards full and satisfying connection not only with each other but with the world around us and, most importantly, with the heart.

Someone wiser than I has said it isn't hard to be mindful, it's just hard to *remember* to be mindful. We

could also add: it isn't hard to do mindfulness practice, it's just hard to remember *why we're doing it*.

So why are we?

First, it's a means of understanding suffering: not to help rid ourselves of suffering, because suffering is a given, but rather to help us *understand* suffering and its cause. We learn that when conditions such as illness, loss or betrayal arise and cause suffering,

when we respond with anger and resentment, we add to the initial suffering whereas when we respond with acceptance, patience and compassion, we don't. So the practice helps us to *not add* to the initial suffering.

Secondly, we have to remember the cause of suffering is craving, wanting. We would probably agree that this yearning for connection in all its forms is craving of the deepest kind.

We also want to remember that craving is a state or condition in and of itself, quite separate from food,

sex, a new car, ice cream or whatever we usually attach it to. It's simply wanting.

To experience wanting is so uncomfortable that we seldom allow ourselves to notice it by itself, but because we reach so quickly for something to relieve it, it becomes attached to that "something" ... the food, sex, car or ice cream. How often do you move, even slightly, to be more physically comfortable? How often do you respond to that vague hollow inside before it reaches consciousness, by reaching for a snack, calling a friend or going shopping? Anything to relieve the discomfort of wanting.

However, there are times when we actually experience that hollowness all by itself. Ever felt you wanted something but didn't quite know what?

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Indra's Net

Reproduced with the kind permission of the artist, Skydancer. To view the original, visit <http://www.skydancerz.com/indrasnet.html>

The next time that happens, invite yourself to stay with it, to be curious about what "it" is you feel, not necessarily to change it, but just to feel it, to understand it. You might even name it "wanting" and stay with it long enough to see that it goes away all by itself. Could it be that, like other phenomena, it too will disappear all on its own? Could it be that it doesn't have to be "satisfied"?

Or you might notice that, when left unsatisfied, it grows to be a bigger, deeper wanting than can be satisfied by a quick fix. This is the craving we are talking about when we talk about the yearning to connect. This is the longing that we often *interpret* to be the desire to have something "out there" ... the car, the sex, the ice cream ... and it is driven by an underlying longing to connect with something much deeper: a longing to connect with this body, this heart, right here, right now. This is the ultimate craving, the ultimate wanting that underlies all craving, the ultimate wanting that underlies all others. It is the desire to be intimate in a way that truly satisfies, to be intimate with ourselves.

To make this connection is so simple, if we can only remember. It begins in each moment of mindfulness, in the willingness to pay attention to each moment, just the way it is; to be intimate with each moment. We begin with the willingness to connect with just one thing, the breath. Then with other body sensations, then feelings, then emotions and mind states. We let go of what isn't essential,

the stories, and connect to what presents itself right here and right now: our direct experience. We connect with the voice of our own heart.

This is the essential connection. Just as we can feel unconditional love for another only when we can feel it for ourselves, just as we can feel compassion for another's suffering only when we can feel compassion for ourselves, so we can experience satisfying connection with another only when we have felt the satisfying connection to our experience, our own heart.

The teachings tell us that, as long as there is attachment to the pleasant and aversion to the unpleasant, liberation is impossible.

So connection means giving up our preferences. It means taking each moment just as it is.

Can you let go of always having to be comfortable? Can you listen to the heart in the pain and discomfort of loss, betrayal, loneliness? Can you listen and not lose yourself in the stories?

Not to judge the heart, not to fix the heart, but to hear it with compassion. Because when you connect with the moment in this way, with the heart in this way, you create the conditions to connect with another human heart in a meaningful and truly satisfying way.

Joanne Broatch ☸

From Dana ~~LOW DUBB~~

In this issue of "...connections...", I want to explore communication as it relates to our community.

In our early days, we sat together in silence regularly, but there was some hesitance to engage in discussions following sittings. Discussions were often seen as an intrusion into the peaceful atmosphere created by our being together. Over the years, however, our confidence level with discussions has greatly increased. Now, each week at the sitting group, participants openly share their personal reflections on the theme. As we do this, we all benefit and grow in our understanding of the Dharma.

New participants to the sitting group often report that they feel very safe and accepted in the community, and are comfortable whether or not they choose to speak. I think that this atmosphere of safety and acceptance is created by our commitment to interacting in ways that demonstrate our respect for each other's experience and inner wisdom. We all benefit from the care and attention we pay to how we communicate.

Now that we have created this nourishing environment for meaningful discussion and reflection, I feel we are in a place to explore more deeply what being part of a sangha can be. The gift of a sangha is not only that we have others with

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whom to sit, but that we can share our journeys, inspiring each other, and reflecting back to each other aspects of ourselves that we may be overlooking.

In our society, finding an environment in which we feel safe and respected enough to share our feelings and thoughts honestly, especially when such sharing may in some way create difficulty or tension, is very rare. I think that sangha can be that place where we can risk being authentic and honest even when this may go against the perceived grain of the group or might lead to some tension or conflict. In my own experience I often choose to minimize or overlook areas of difference because I do not want to risk stirring the pot. In doing this, though, I miss the opportunity that comes from sharing with others our uniqueness, our differences, our edges. It is in sharing ourselves fully that we discover deeper levels of trust, acceptance and connection, and we feel more whole in our relationships. Because we have such a warm and accepting environment in our

group and community, we can stretch our capacity to share what is true for us. We may choose to do this by exploring for ourselves those areas in which we refrain from expressing ourselves honestly through fear of being different, of not fitting in, or of somehow disturbing the peaceful and loving feeling within the group. The gift of exploring how we can bring more awareness to our interactions with each other is that our participation in the group process deepens our practice of the Dharma. It is a true friend indeed who can respectfully point out to us aspects of ourselves of which we are unconscious, giving us the opportunity to focus our awareness on them. In doing this, we become mirrors for each other, supporting our transformation and liberation from unwholesome tendencies of mind. Because we have a shared commitment to our community, to Dharma practice, and to mindfulness in our lives, we have the support we need to explore these uncharted areas together.

Dana White ☸

To speak or not to speak?

What do we mean by “communication”? How do we communicate? And why?

My 1959 copy of the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, amongst the several definitions of “communication” offers “the imparting, conveying or exchange of ideas, knowledge, etc. (whether by speech, writing or signs)...” In describing the action of communicating, it includes “to impart, confer, transmit; to share in; to use, or enjoy, in common with; to participate; to converse; to open into each other....”

I found several of these brief explanations beautiful, for they so clearly imply unimpeded flow of information from sources to destinations, especially the “to enjoy in common with” and “to open into each other”. Yet so often in everyday life, this unimpeded flow does not happen. We continually experience communication barriers – those we have created to defend ourselves, and those others have created to defend themselves. Defence from what? Hurt, mostly, or unwanted interference.

From earliest childhood, we find we are unable or unwilling to understand others or to be understood

by others. This in part reflects an inherent inadequacy of language and actions (which speak much louder than words according to a common saying) to impart information clearly. It also reflects our varying, mostly unskillful, ability to use speech, writing and action to communicate effectively. Recognizing a general sequence whereby thought leads to speech then to action, we start to lose faith when actions – our own or others’ – belie what we or they say. We lose more self-respect on those occasions when we find that what we say belies what we know in our hearts to be true. Our words are underpinned by thoughts and intentions that we know intimately because they are our own. When, therefore, we find ourselves saying and doing things which our deepest intuition tells us are harmful or unwise or simply untrue, we start to lose some respect for ourselves. We become aware of, and run the danger of considering acceptable, our hypocritical tendencies. We then naturally grow to suspect the words and actions of others, and to question deeply their underlying intentions. We gradually create, enter, and become trapped in, a world of distrust.

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VIPASSANA EVENTS, 2001

THE SASKATCHEWAN SCENE

May 8 to June 19 June 10	Introductory Meditation Class with <i>Dana White</i> in Regina (Tuesdays) Day of Mindfulness with <i>Dana White</i> in Regina; for registration and enquiries concerning both these events, contact Dana White (306-352-5691)
May 26 to June 2	Residential Retreat, " <i>The Heart of Wisdom</i> ", with <i>Sharda Rogell</i> at Wood Acres (Moose Jaw); for registration and enquiries, contact Cherie Westmoreland (306-545-5673)
June 22 – 24	Non-residential Weekend, " <i>Generosity and Gratitude</i> ", with <i>Joanne Broatch</i> (from Vancouver) in Regina; for registration and enquiries, contact Chris Gilboy (306-522-0616)
July 12	Public Talk, <i>Sharda Rogell</i> , in Regina
August	Summer Break
September 13	Public Talk, <i>Sharda Rogell</i> , in Regina
September 15 and 16	Non-residential Weekend with <i>Sharda Rogell</i> in Regina
October 2 to November 6 October 28	Introductory Meditation Class with <i>Dana White</i> in Regina (Tuesdays) Day of Mindfulness with <i>Dana White</i> in Regina
November 9 – 12	Residential Retreat with <i>Rodney Smith</i> (from Seattle) at Wood Acres (Moose Jaw)

Retreats: require pre-registration; if you are on our regular mailing list, details of residential retreats will be mailed two to three months before the event. Please contact us if you want more details of mindfulness days or non-residential weekends, or wish to be placed on the mailing list.

Introductory Meditation Classes: require pre-registration; dates may be changed and extra classes added (Regina and Moose Jaw) if necessary; please contact us for up-to-date information.

Weekly Sitting Group, Regina: Wednesdays throughout the year, 7:30 to 9:00 p.m.; 2672 Robinson Street; Dana White will lead whenever possible.

ALL EVENTS are fragrance free – please avoid wearing perfumes, perfumed skin-care products, clothing washed in fragranced detergents, or anything else which can cause distress to those who are chemically sensitive.

Contacts for all information: Jill (306-522-5553) or Maureen (306-352-1750)

Contact for Saskatoon events: Doris (306-242-5004)

Another contact: for a Vipassana schedule in B.C., visit this website: www.vipassanabc.ca

Insight Meditation Classes: Since the last newsletter was printed, Dana has taught three classes – two (last Fall, Spring) in Regina and one (last Fall) in Moose Jaw. For the Regina classes, 19 and 18 people registered and for the Moose Jaw class, 13. Although a few registrants dropped out of each, most of us who came to learn more about some of the fundamental Dharma teachings found our time very well spent. A day of mindfulness formed an intrinsic part of each course, providing us with an opportunity to experience our own company in silence for a prolonged period. Several class participants now regularly come to Wednesday evening sittings and/or have attended a retreat. We welcome all of you into our community.

Chris Gilboy ☸

What is the practice of *dana* ?

In the spirit of the 2500 year-old tradition of the Buddha's teachings being priceless and freely offered to everyone who wishes to hear them, our programs are open to all, regardless of their ability to pay. Registration fees for retreats and classes cover administrative costs only.

Dana is the Pali term for "spontaneous generosity of the heart." Everyone wishing to express appreciation for hearing the teachings can voluntarily offer donations for the support of the teachers.

ABOUT OUR TEACHERS

Sharda Rogell started practising in the Theravadin



Buddhist tradition in 1979 and teaching worldwide in 1985. She brings a strong emphasis to awakening heartfulness. Sharda has also been influenced by the non-dual teachings of Advaita, as well as Dzogchen in the Tibetan tradition. She presently teaches at the Insight Meditation Society in

Massachusetts, and Spirit Rock Meditation Center in California. She has recently moved to Seattle, Washington to be a teacher with the Seattle Insight Meditation Society.

Joanne Broatch has been practicing Vipassana in the Theravada tradition since 1980, and teaching since 1994.



Her primary guide as a practitioner and as a teacher is Jack Kornfield and she has practiced extensively with senior teachers at I.M.S. and Spirit Rock. She is influenced by

Diamond Heart work, the Painting Experience, and her own years as a teacher, business consultant, writer and editor. She teaches retreats in Canada and the U.S. and has classes and sitting groups in Vancouver.

Rodney Smith is a former Buddhist monk whose Asian teachers included Mahasi Sayadaw and Ajahn Buddhadasa. In 1983, he began teaching Insight Meditation (vipassana) nationally and working in hospice in a variety of clinical and administrative positions.

He recently left hospice care work after 16 years and currently serves as Guiding Teacher for the Seattle Insight Meditation Society and Senior Teacher for the Insight Meditation Society. He is the author of the book *Lessons from the Dying*.



Dana White has been practicing insight meditation



since 1988, attending retreats in Canada, United States, England and India. Last year, she began teacher training under the guidance of Sharda Rogell. For the past eight years, Dana has been the guiding member of the Regina Insight Meditation Community.



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The moment comes, perhaps, when we suddenly recognize that our unwise thoughts, speech and actions produce unwelcome consequences both within ourselves and within our surroundings.

If we are fortunate, we discover such teachings as those of the Buddha, which point out that our path to happiness and liberation follows eight basic Noble Practices, amongst which are Wise Thought, Wise Speech and Wise Action. Our continuing efforts to understand clearly and to implement these three practices in each moment of our daily existence are critical if we have an intent to develop love and respect for ourselves and thus to love,

respect, and show deep compassion toward the world around us.

As our love for ourselves and the world deepens through our practice of Wise Thought, Wise Speech and Wise Action, we find many benefits ensue. We become less defensive. We no longer confuse ourselves with our endlessly long internal arguments and debates as thoughts, words and deeds harmonize. We are increasingly comfortable in the company of anyone around us as external communication barriers, such as mutual suspicion or disinterest, crumble. All the open-hearted honesty that results leads to a decrease both in our

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internal dialogues and in our external conflicts. Our minds tend to become more quiet, more still. The *need* for words lessens, for everything in and around us simply flows as ongoing experience. Now we *are* Wise Thought, now we *are* Wise Speech, now we *are* Wise Action, for duality and unity are not separate. We communicate fully with everyone and everything around us in the silence of a smile, or in the words of a poem, or in the warmth of a hug. We can choose to think or not to think, to speak or not to speak, to write or not to write, to act or not to act, without lessening in the slightest our ability to “enjoy in common” or to “open into each other.” Deep awareness of this process of opening into the fullness of complete communication is carried in this short verse from the *Ashtavakra Gita* (author unknown):

“First, I gave up action,
Then idle words,
And lastly thought itself.
Now I am here.”

What, then, is the reason for communication? In some ultimate sense it is, for me, the only means I have, living as I do in worldly conditions that tend to separate me from myself and from others around me, of helping myself and others to recognize Truth, and thus to find and to dwell in Freedom. In a relative, everyday sense, it is, for me, to enrich deeply the hours, days, weeks, months, and years that I spend with my family, friends, colleagues, strangers, myself

Chris Gilboy ☉



Words

A lake of words
is boiling and building
behind a dam of silt and memory

And soon
in an instant
the words break through
break free

The energy terrifies
But my heart can't wait

It's breaking open
needs to hear
the beat of my words
needs to see
the image of them
pulsing
backlit against the eggshell sky

For that instant
before they, too
are a memory

Like the last heartbeat
building a dam
to hold the words

Cherie Westmoreland ☉

Community Dharma Leaders' Program: Session 1

Last year, Sharda recommended that I attend the Community Dharma Leaders' (CDL) training program at the Spirit Rock Meditation Center in San Francisco in order to further my development as Dharma Guide of this community and thereby strengthen my ability to nourish our sangha.

The program was set up in 1997 by James Baraz. He saw the value of supporting the many people acting as Dharma leaders in their communities so that Dharma teachings and practice opportunities are made increasingly available in many areas where there are no resident Dharma teachers.

Through the generous donations of both our local and extended community, I was able to attend the first session of the CDL training. Enough funds remain for me to go to the next session in September. I am very heartened by the generous financial support I am receiving – it emphasizes to me that this program is for the benefit of us all, and is not just for my own enrichment.

I wish to share with you a few highlights of my first session of the program.

The setting of Spirit Rock is a delight to experience. The Center has been built totally through the support of the sangha, mainly by means of donations. Every detail has been carefully planned

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to create a meditative sanctuary in which to practise. I hope that some of you will at some time have an opportunity to sit a retreat there.

For the first day or two of the program, I felt excited and somewhat overwhelmed to be with 84 other people who have Dharma service at the centre of their lives. Much of the value of the program lies in developing a supportive network with other Dharma leaders. I encountered a real challenge in trying to get to know at least some of the participants given that we had so little free time, and knowing that it will be another nine months until we next meet. Still, as the days passed by, we slowly began to make connections, and a group bond began to form. Interestingly, a point of great conflict really provided the opportunity for us all to start feeling a meaningful connection. This was an important teaching, for so often we try to avoid conflict for fear that it will bring division in our relationships and community (see "From Dana").

To explore the conflict in depth, we met as a council. I believe that this process at Spirit Rock has been adapted from a Native American Indian tradition for communally resolving conflict. In the council, members sit in a circle with a talking piece placed in the centre. Whoever wishes to say anything picks up the talking piece and then speaks spontaneously from their heart, without rehearsing in their minds or repeating what has already been offered, and being brief to allow for others to contribute.

In our case, the issue at hand concerned our unconscious attitudes of racism and how we are so often unaware they are operating in us. I saw how painful this

issue is for everyone, not just for those who happen to be part of a minority group. Racism in all of its forms hurts each of us because, even though we may not have any direct contact with incidents of racism, we are all interconnected within our communities. From experiencing a council in operation, I witnessed the healing that can come out of just being heard, out of listening with our hearts open, even when answers are not easy to find. For the first time, I wondered about our meditation community in Regina, and realized that it does not really reflect the cultural diversity of the city. I felt, and continue to feel, committed to exploring ways to make Dharma opportunities available to minority groups. I am deeply grateful for this having been part of my CDL training experience.

Much of my learning came through being part of the CDL group process. Watching James and other Spirit Rock teachers lead us skillfully when differences of opinion arose about how we should proceed was very valuable. This and the council process are showing me as a facilitator how to create in our community a more inclusive environment – one that embraces difference rather than shuns it.

Ajahn Amaro, an English monk and abbot of a nearby Buddhist Monastery, joined us for most of the retreat. His presence always reminded us of the monastic roots of this tradition. I particularly appreciated the session he presented on sutta study as I have wished for a long time to be able to read the suttas directly. His guidance was very insightful and inspiring. Ajahn Amaro is committed to being present for much of the CDL training, which is a gift for us.

About half the Spirit Rock teachers made a point of being with us over these days of training. What a great opportunity we had to begin to become more familiar with their various teaching styles, strengths and interests as Dharma Teachers! It was pretty clear that no one teaching style is right, which was a relief to witness.

While I learned much from the formal sessions, much benefit also came through informal connections with other participants. I sensed how broad is the variety of ways in which people create community. This is

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Supporting Dana to attend the CDL Program

The CDL Training Program is a two-and-a-half-year commitment involving five four- to six-day-long sessions at Spirit Rock. As is apparent from this write-up, the benefits of Dana's participation will be felt throughout our community. Our financial support in helping to cover her travel and accommodation expenses is of great value to her. If you wish to assist Dana in this way, please send your donation to: Regina Insight Meditation Community, Apt. G, 2210 15th Avenue, Regina, SK S4P 3P7, clearly indicating it is for the CDL Program fund.

important as limiting our vision of what sangha can be is so easy, especially when we are isolated from other meditation communities.

The eight Canadian participants met one evening to share what is happening in their communities. I was really pleased to discover so many of us were from “up here”.

After five days of training, I knew connections were being created which would affect our community. In the future, for example, we will likely invite some of the teachers to lead retreats in Saskatchewan. Also informal groups of CDL participants formed around a variety of shared interests. Because I know these groups, I may be able to help those in this province who have similar interests to make helpful link-ups. In addition, we have a list serve system which provides us CDL participants with a way to maintain daily contact with each other between sessions, and to share with one another various issues and items of information as they arise.

Since arriving back, I feel more confidence in my role as Dharma leader, and I am noticing that I am more willing to risk doing things differently. This is a welcome change. I feel a strong commitment to nourishing ways in which our community deepens its capacity to include both our shared interests and commitment *and* our differences. I look forward to seeing how my CDL experiences will influence my work here with our sangha.

Dana White ☸

Untitled Poem

this moment
this breath
this sensation
this thought
this sound...

I wrote this poem last year. At times, when my mind and thoughts are everywhere except in the “present”, I find (reciting) it a very powerful way to calm myself, recentre, and return to the moment.

Gisela Stuhm ☸

The Fourth Precept

Morality (*sila* in Pali) is one of the three areas of training into which the Eightfold Noble Path can be subdivided (the other two are Mental Discipline [*samadhi*] and Wisdom [*pañña*]). Lay people are encouraged to adopt the first five precepts into their lifestyles to the greatest degree they can in order to help them realize happiness and peace. The five precepts are: to refrain from taking life, to refrain from taking what is not freely given, to refrain from sexual misconduct, **to refrain from false speech**, and to refrain from consuming alcohol and drugs. An obvious connection exists between the fourth precept and the step of the Eightfold Noble Path that encourages use of Wise Speech.

Ayya Khema, in her wonderfully insightful commentary (“*Who is my Self?*”) of the *Potthapada Sutta* (subtitled “*States of Consciousness*”), quotes a long and illuminating passage about the fourth precept from Maurice Walshe’s “*The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Digha Nikaya*”. The quotation provides clear guidance into the nature of Wise Speech:

“He dwells refraining from false speech, a truth-speaker, one to be relied on, trustworthy, dependable, not a deceiver of the world. Abandoning malicious speech, he does not repeat there what he has heard here to the detriment of these, or repeat here what he has heard there to the detriment of those. Thus he is a reconciler of those at variance and an encourager of those at one, rejoicing in peace, loving it, delighting in it, one who speaks up for peace. Abandoning harsh speech, he refrains from it. He speaks whatever is blameless, pleasing to the ear, agreeable, reaching the heart, urbane, pleasing and attractive to the multitude. Abandoning idle chatter, he speaks at the right time, what is correct and to the point, of Dhamma and discipline. He is a speaker whose words are to be treasured, seasonable, reasoned, well-defined and connected with the goal.”

These teachings clearly show us that, by paying more attention to the words which come out of our mouths, we will benefit ourselves and others. If, with mindfulness of speech, we discover our words contain elements of falsehood, malice, harshness,

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and/or idle chatter, we can refrain from uttering them and instead incline what we are saying more toward truth, kindness, softness and usefulness. In attempting this kind of transformation of our speech, we can see for ourselves the difference it makes to our lives and to our relationships with

those around us, and we can observe whether we are a little (or a lot) happier, a little (or a lot) more peaceful.

Chris Gilboy ☉

Communication

I, the knower of all things,
Yearn to communicate this totality of my knowledge
To you, my fellow beings
But I recognize that you, as I,
Are the knowers of all things,
And have nothing to learn,
So together we sit,
You in the west,
I in the east,
Connecting fully in the silence of emptiness.

I, the knower of all things,
Yearn to communicate the totality of my knowledge
To you, my fellow beings
For I recognize that you
Are the knowers of nothing
And have everything to learn,
So together we sit,
You above,
I below,
Connecting fully in the eternity of the moment.

I, the knower of nothing,
Yearn to absorb the totality of your knowledge
From you, my fellow beings
For I recognize that you
Are the knowers of all things
And have everything to offer,
So together we sit,
You within,
I without,
Communicating fully in the infinity of space.

I, the knower of nothing,
Yearn to absorb the totality of your knowledge
From you, my fellow beings
But I recognize that you, as I,
Are the knowers of nothing,
And have everything to learn,
So together we sit,
You to the right,
I to the left,
Connecting fully in the emptiness of silence.

Chris Gilboy ☉

Retreat News

We began our new 2001 retreat schedule with Sharda's non-residential retreat. The theme was "Equanimity". The retreat was held in a new venue, Sherwood Forest Country Club, which proved to be perfect as, too, was the weather! In all, thirty-three people attended. Sharda led us into a deeper understanding of equanimity in our moment to moment experience. We thank Pat Cavanaugh and Jo Brown for organizing and managing the retreat and, of course, Sharda who was willing to come here in mid-winter.

Early in March, Dana led a Day of Mindfulness at the Old College Building on College Avenue. This was another new venue for us. The day was well

attended with nineteen participants half of whom were from the Spring meditation class. Most of the others were new to our community, but several of our more experienced members were also there. Thank you, Laura Bourassa, for organizing and managing the day.

Several weeks ago, Joanne Broatch led a residential retreat with the theme "Working with Emotions" at St. Peter's Abbey in Muenster. The retreat, with forty participants, was full to capacity and had a waiting list. Although short (held over a weekend), it was clearly beneficial to all who attended. We are grateful to Jill Forrester for the time and energy she put into organizing and managing the retreat for us.

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Just before the retreat, Joanne led the Wednesday sitting group. The theme of her Dharma talk was "Patience". Joanne's visits to the prairies are always appreciated.

Our next event will be Sharda's weeklong retreat in Moose Jaw. Many of us look forward to the opportunity to be able to focus on our practice for a full seven days.

When we planned the 2001 schedule, it was not clear whether we would be able to run all the retreats, but so far everything has been well attended. We thank you for your participation at retreats, for this makes them available for others who are interested in attending.

Dana White ☉

".....connections....." readers interested in an unmatted, 8.5" x 11", archival quality, colour print of Indra's Net (limited edition of 50; also, see page 3) can purchase it from Skydancer for a discount price of US\$45. For details about postage etc., visit:
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Sangha Council

Members of the Sangha Council, which guides the Regina Insight Meditation Community.

Barb Bell

Jill Forrester

Kelly Bourassa

Chris Gilboy

Laura Bourassa

Veronica Marner

Jo Brown

Shauna McFadden

Pat Cavanaugh

Dana White

The Council is deeply grateful to Patrick Close and Susan Wiebe who have resigned after sharing our first year together.

We are looking for ways to create closer connection between the Sangha Council and our community. If you have any ideas or suggestions about how we can do this, or have any other issues you would like to be brought forward, please let the Council know.

"Once a Zen master stood up before his students and was about to deliver a sermon. And just as he was about to open his mouth, a bird sang. And he said, "The sermon has been delivered."

From: *The Power of Myth* by Joseph Campbell.

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