



Gay Buddhist Fellowship

The Gay Buddhist Fellowship supports Buddhist practice in the Gay men's community. It is a forum that brings together the diverse Buddhist traditions to address the spiritual concerns of Gay men in the Bay Area, the United States, and the world. GBF's mission includes cultivating a social environment that is inclusive and caring.

The Visualization of Home

Tony Richardson spoke to GBF on May 21, 2000. The first half of his talk appeared in the August 2000 newsletter under the heading "Me and My Lama." In the second half of his talk, Richardson guided us through a somatic visualization exercise.

A bit of preamble for this. One of the things that the Tibetans like to do is exactly the opposite of what we in the West have decided to do to be better people. The whole thing about psychotherapy and all that is, you know, the onion stuff, and the rings of the onion. You peel the rings of the onion off and therefore learn more about yourself. Tibetans are much more in favor of starting at the very center of the onion and moving out, whereas we're very much in favor of starting from the outside of the onion and moving in. Because the Tibetans are so interested in moving from the center of the onion, it's very disruptive to those rings of the onion. Those rings of the onion are the things we use everyday to say hi to each other and look in the mirror and recognize ourselves. So when Tibetans start to do stuff with you, or you start to do with them something on the center part, then there is a lot of disruption that happens, and it's an uncomfortable process. However, since we don't have a direct relationship with that center part of ourselves that we can so easily know, maybe if we grew up in another culture, part of the barrier is to look into those places. We don't do that much of that – we look at the outside much more, or the more superficial rings. We're not so practiced at it. I've been wondering how to help with this process without going all one side or the other. We seem to need our rings basically just to give ourselves some food and function every day, but we can get really caught in those things and spend all our time with them and not nurture the central part of us which is so essential to the change in Buddhism. So how are we to go about trying to do both of these? The guided imagery is an attempt to do that, distilled out of a little bit of practice, and it may not fit you and may not be something you want to do, but you may find it useful in that process.

The other thing I want to say is that the Tibetans do a lot of ritual

GBF Committees

We always want and need interested participants, so please, JOIN IN! Call the contact person on the committee, or talk to him (or anyone on that committee) at a GBF sitting or event. This is a great practice opportunity!

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where they actually place inside you, in the central parts of you, these seeds, if you like, that would be sitting in the middle of the onion. They'd be sitting right in the fertile soil in the middle, and they are happy for them to take life times or generations for these seeds to grow and push the onion in its way. And because of their culture, they have been very interested in the heart. Now I happen to think that for gay men we've got some other stuff involved. And it's a little lower than the heart. So I'm thinking that maybe we should start down there. So with that in mind, let's see how you do.

Notice that your back is on something firm. Get yourself into whatever you feel is in alignment, with a sort of a connection between top and bottom somehow. Until you can take that little leap for granted, that you've got a connection between the top and the bottom, because we're not going to talk about it much, but just any sitting practice has already helped you with this. I'm interested and want you to be interested in your asshole. That's just a general interest of mine. And I want you to come down and see what you can notice about it. Any area around your ass, insides, outsides and what you can notice about you as an asshole. I don't mean that really, but down there, there you come. Now if you are able to notice the anal verge, if you like, it's held by structures all the way around, part of your perineum, that thing that stop you falling out when you stand up, not just the holding of your anal verge

but that whole skin area. And if you move forwards – it's quite a long way in consciousness, but if you can move forward you will come to your genitals, to your testicles. And if you can, you notice that. And what is sometimes a bit more difficult is to move sideways out towards your hips, to the cheeks of your butt, and outwards. Now that's actually a diaphragm; it's skin of course and stuff like that, but there's also a set of muscles under there which is known as the perineal diaphragm. And if you want to notice it, you can practice whatever breathing cycle works for you, either breathing out or breathing in, and letting that part of your body, between where your asshole is, where your hips are, where your genitals are, come down to touch the thing you are sitting on. It's as though you were moving your hips apart, because you're bringing that stuff down to touch onto whatever you're sitting on. It's technically impossible to get very far with that, but you can get a sense of it as you either breathe out or breathe in. I like to do it as I breathe out; some people like to do it as they breathe in.

For those of you who want to be advanced, bounce any seed syllable off this sensation. You can pick OM if you like, just going OMMM joined together. (Group OMS together.) You can do it by just imagining that it's happening; you can do it by the breathing; you can do it with the seed syllable, whichever works best for you, or by rocking.

If we were to assume that this is

