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 Ajanta cliff with carved entrances; river lower right.

Buddhist Cave Temples in India
Text and photos by Kevin Havener

Around-the-world airfares were cheap in 1988, and in September of that year I went west from San Francisco, eventually stopping in India for 16 days. Being interested in archaeology as well as in Buddhism, one of my goals was to visit the ancient Ajanta and Ellora rock-cut temples and monasteries, situated in river valleys near the city of Aurangabad (in central Maharashtra state, east of Bombay/Mumbai). The state-run Indian tour agency gave excellent tours of these remote sites, which Indian people themselves took. One elderly Indian couple was very determined to visit the wheelchair-bound woman paid two strong young men to carry her around the sites in a makeshift sedan-chair.

Cut from living rock cliffs, the temples and monasteries sometimes echoed their wooden predecessors, with imitation wooden beams and other structural elements painstakingly carved into the stone. Artistic styles changed over generations of royal dynastic patronage, and depictions of Buddha's visage grew from plainly symbolic, to intricately decorated high-relief figures. Some of these man-made caves had numerous deep rooms, 30 to 50-foot high ceilings, and even multiple stories with interior columns and staircases. Most of the caves were inhabited by bats (and the
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!

Steering Committee
Call 415.974.9878
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Howard King        Don Wiepert
Robin Levitt

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webmaster@gaybuddhist.org

Hamilton House
Clint Seiter, Contact
415.386.3088

Sunday Sitting Facilitators
Call 415.974.9878

The following committees are currently without chairs:
Development Committee
Social Committee
Practice Committee

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact us at 415.974.9878.

Temple cave with standing Buddha relief on tall stupa, Ajanta.

powerful smell of their guano), illumination was often limited to daylight,
and amenities were non-existent; yet all of this contributed to the
excitement of being in such extraordinary places.

The Ajanta cave-temples are exclusively Buddhist, and famous for their
tempera on dry plaster murals, relief carvings, and elaborate columns. The
wall and ceiling paintings depict Buddhist legends, or Jataka tales, and some
are incredibly, beautifully elaborate. Spanning the 2nd century BC through
the 7th century AD, there are five temples/sanctuaries (chaityas) and 25
monasteries (viharas) overlooking the Wagurna river valley. Inside the oldest
temple cave there is a tall, free-standing circumambulatory stupa (funerary
symbol/reliquary of Buddha) with a plain egg-shaped “burial mound” atop a
squarish pedestal. Later temples have reliefs of a standing or sitting Buddha,
carved onto the front of this “mound.” The more numerous monastic caves
usually have rows of small, plain cells with raised platforms for meditating
or sleeping.

Elaborately painted sanctuary inside monastic cave at Ajanta.
The Elora Cave-Temples are Buddhist, Hindu and Jain. They are carved into a mile-long cliff called the Charmandari. In the Buddhist group, there are 12 impressive statues and one carvings, (carved in the 6th through 8th centuries AD). But Elora is more well known for the grotto-like Hindu Kailasa temple, which was built in the 7th century AD. The temple is a reconstruction of the mythical Himalayan home of Shiva, and was completed around the 9th century AD. After generations of work, the temple is now a huge free-standing temple building surrounded on one side by tall, free-standing carved towers and life-sized deities in the courtyard.

(continued on page 4)
Ask Dharma Daddy

Dharma Daddy hasn’t received any questions this month, but he hasn’t been idle. His article “The Gay Buddhist Fellowship” has just been published in Engaged Buddhism in the West, edited by Christopher Queen (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000), pages 269–279. A version of this essay appeared in a previous issue of the GBF Newsletter. Dharma Daddy has just received his copy and, since it has a publication date of 2000, the book may not be in the stores yet, but if you contact the publisher you can reserve your copy.

The Honolulu Advertiser for Monday October 25, reports that Buddhist wrist malas are now a fashion item. (I indicated this in my Dharma Daddy column in the November newsletter, but now there’s proof.) Known in this form as “powerbeads,” their popularity stems from their being designed by Zoe Metro of New York and marketed under the Stella Pace brand. (Dharma Daddy is behind the times. He hasn’t heard of either of these names.) “Celebrities such as Ricky Martin, Richard Gere, and Madonna have been spotted sporting the bangles” says the Honolulu Advertiser. Nieman Marcus of Honolulu sells the Stella Price line but “as soon as we get them, they fly out the door” said Pauline Worsham, public relations manager. (continued on page 7)

When I travelled to India and other historically/archaeologically significant places in 1988, my latent interests in archaeology—and Buddhism— took form. It was in a dimly lit rock-cut temple at Ajanta, that I first intuitively walked around a stupa, sensing the devotional, artistic, and intellectual forces that had hewn the sacred space. Here was the timeless manifestation of a mystery and a viewpoint about human existence, worth investigating. And I feel that I have been investigating it ever since. To learn more about these fascinating cultural remains of ancient India’s religious life, I recommend the following books: Early Buddhist Rock Temples by V. Dehejia (Cornell University 1972); The Art and Architecture of India by B. Roland (Penguin 1953); Viharas in India by D.K. Barua (Calcutta 1969); Buddhist Art and Architecture by R.E. Fischer (Thames and Hudson 1993); Holy Places of the Buddha by E. Cook (Dharma, 1994). For travel to India, try the usual culturally sensitive guidebooks: Lonely Planet, India and Rough Guide, India.

The Two Shores

David Richo, Ph.D.

A fully human journey requires a visit to both sides of the spectrum of behavior:

**There Is a Time To:**
- Take hold or hold on
- Fight
- Take on more cargo
- Hold a hand
- Poke
- Do
- Jump to it
- Act on logic
- Go for it
- Be involved
- Control
- Pull weeds (yank)
- Say it
- Plan
- Knead the dough
- Hit
- Know
- Create
- Break rules
- Transcend boundaries
- Show male/Yang energy
- Use the time
- Feel whole
- Make a choice
- Achieve by effort

**And There Is a Time To:**
- Let go
- Pull back
- Jettison valuable cargo
- Let go of a hand
- Prompt
- Be
- Sit with it
- Act on faith
- Wait for it
- Be alone
- Allow
- Pick figs (gently tug)
- Be silent
- Be spontaneous
- Let it rise
- Bunt
- Not know
- Imitate
- Follow rules
- Honor boundaries
- Show female/Yin energy
- Respect timing
- Feel fragmented
- Take a chance
- Receive grace

(continued on page 7)
GBF Calendar
December 1999/January 2000
San Francisco/Bay Area Events

Sunday Morning Sittings,
9:30am and 10:30am: San Francisco
Buddhist Center, 37 Bartlett St,
between 21st & 22nd, one block
west of Mission St.

December 5  Clint Seiter
December 12  Jim Wilson
December 19  Julie Henderson
December 26  Discussion
January 2    Jim Wilson
January 9   Discussion
January 16  Discussion
January 23  Alzak Amlani
January 30  Michael Hyman

1Clint Seiter is an active member
of GBF and heads its “Feed the
Homeless” project. He makes his
living as an environmentalist and is
a practicing Buddhist, but not
within any particular tradition. He
will be discussing his article in
Queer Dharma 2 entitled “Finding
Sangha—A Gay Perspective.”

2Alzak Amlani is a licensed psychol-
gist in private practice using
Eastern and Western approaches in
serving his clients. He gives talks
and conducts seminars on Queer
Spirituality in the SF Bay Area. He
will be discussing his article in
Queer Dharma 2, entitled “From
India to Africa to Buddha: Weaving
a Path Home.”

3Michael Hyman practices at
Sonoma Shambhala Center and is
currently exploring the Dzogchen
tradition. He will be discussing his
article in Queer Dharma 2, entitled
“Doubt and Commitment in
Buddhist Practice: A Gay
Perspective.”

Tuesday, December 7, 7:30pm:
Steering Committee Meeting (open
to all GBF participants), Clint
Seiter’s home, 769 Cole St, SF,
415.386.3088.

Saturday, December 18,
3–6:30pm: Preparation and serving
of dinner for homeless families,
Hamilton Family Center, SF.
Information: see notice above
right, and/or call Clint Seiter at
415.386.3088.

Saturday, December 25, 2pm:
Christmas Potluck Party at the
home of Howard King, 2208A
Ward Street, Berkeley (near the
Ashby Bart station). Bring a small,
funny gift to exchange. For
information and to RSVP to
Howard, call 510.649.1697.

Tuesday, January 4, 7:30pm:
Steering Committee Meeting (open
to all GBF participants), location to
be announced.

Saturday, January 8, 3–6:30pm:
Preparation and serving of dinner
for homeless families, Hamilton
Family Center, SF. This is the first
dinner we’ll serve on the new
schedule of the second Saturday of
the month. Information: see notice
above right, and/or call Clint Seiter
at 415.386.3088.

Sunday, January 23, 1pm:
Newsletter Mailing Party, Snake’s
home, SF, 415.552.6378.

Saturday, January 29, 7pm:
GBF Potluck Dinner at the home of
John Benet, 26 Topaz Way, SF.
415.647.0828.

GBF Homeless Project
Changes Monthly Date
Beginning in January 2000, GBF’s
monthly dinner prepared for
homeless families staying at the
Hamilton Family Center will be
given on the second Saturday of the
month instead of the third. GBF still
funds the dinner and we still do it all
with volunteer labor and love, and
your contributed time will be
valuable to us and rewarding for
you. If you are available to volunteer
your time, please contact Clint
Seiter at 415.386.3088.

Your Thrift Store
Donations Earn Money for GBF
GBF members can donate their
quality cast-offs to the Community
Thrift Store (CTS) and GBF will
receive a quarterly check based on
the volume of items sold. This is a
great way to support our Sangha,
and the community. So far this year
we have received over $800 through
members’ generosity. Bring your
extra clothing and other items to
CTS at 623 Valencia St between
10am and 5pm, any day of the week.
The donation door is around the
corner on Sycamore Alley (parallel
to and between 17th and 18th)
between Valencia and Mission. Tell
the worker you are donating to GBF.
Our ID number is 40. Information
415.861.4910.

East Bay Meditation and
Discussion Group
Wednesdays, 7pm–9pm: meditation,
tea, and discussion. For more
information, call Howard,
510.649.1697.
Local Dharma Centers
A list of local Dharma centers is available on our website and as a handout at our Sunday sittings. We encourage members to explore what these Dharma centers can offer to their practice.

Meditation Group in Sonoma County
A Buddhist meditation group meets near the town of Sonoma every other Wednesday evening starting at 7pm, and GBFers are always welcome. The group now has Gay and non-Gay practitioners. For more information, contact Bob Hass, 707.938.8868.

Ongoing Meditation Group On Monday Nights
Led by Jon Bernie, a meditation teacher in San Francisco with thirty years' meditation experience (including eleven years of Zen Buddhist training and seven years of Vipassana training). The group is free and open to all; donations gratefully accepted. Quaker Meeting House, 65 9th Street (between Mission & Market), 7-9pm. For more information, call Jon at 415.621.7314.

GBF Website
http://www.gaybuddhist.org

Local Dharma
December 1999/January 2000
San Francisco/Bay Area Events

Saturday, February 19: A Day of Queer Dharma (third in a series). Gay men, Lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered people from all Buddhist traditions gather for practice and sharing our stories.
Information: 510.655.6169

The Buddhist Aids Project (BAP)
This project provides free information and referral to Buddhist resources and events, and to current HIV/AIDS information and alternative medical services for anyone living with HIV/AIDS, including family, friends, caregivers and people who are HIV-negative. An all-volunteer, non-profit affiliate of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, BAP is a non-sectarian effort which presently include more than 30 volunteers, from physicians to body workers, counselors to meditation instructors, and others who graciously offer their time and attention. To donate your skills, or for information, call 415.522.7473, or visit http://www.wenet.net/~bap

Prison Meditation Project
Some members of GBF have been corresponding with Gay prisoners interested in Buddhism, supported by the Buddhist Peace Fellowship and the San Francisco Zen Center, who jointly sponsor the Prison Meditation Project. Letters are exchanged through their addresses, and sometimes books can be sent, as well as the GBF Newsletter. Contact Don Wiepert for information: 510.540.0307.

If you would like to recommend a Dharma event for this column please e-mail information to: <halburt@aol.com>.

Tuesdays, Thursdays, & Fridays, 10:30am: HIV Sitting Group.
Hartford Street Zen Center, 57 Hartford St., SF.
Information 415.863.2507.

Wednesdays, 7:15pm: Evening Meditation.
Gay Men’s Buddhist Sangha. Two 20-minute sessions with a short break in between and social time after. All practitioner levels welcome.
Information 415.207.8113.

Thursdays, 12:30pm-1:30pm:
Mindfulness Meditation for People Living with Chronic or Life-Threatening Illness. Instruction, practice, talk led by Eugene Cash and Frank Ostaseski. Zen Hospice Project. Information 415.285.7502.

Saturday, December 18, 10am:
Lecture by Jim Wilson. Hartford Street Zen Center, SF.
Information: 415.863.2507.
The left is active; the right is receptive. In every story, we see the hero exploring both shores of the river of experience. We often fear or feel ashamed of visits to the right side. We trust only effort and activity. Is this because we have noticed that its noise-making drowns out our panic about the gap, the void that opens when there is nothing that can be done? Is this what makes us more at home with changing things than with accepting things?

We fear a visit to the other side of the ego, where control dissolves and action is ineffective. Quiet gaps seem ominous, boring, or lacking in the adrenaline we are accustomed to. We fear having no story. The fact is, however, that marvels happen best in the pause between plot developments.

This pause is serene attentiveness: “Be still and know.” Yet we also hear a call to action: “Be swift my soul . . . be jubilant my feet!” Our practice is about mindful sitting as well as about risking an heroic journey. These recommendations seem contradictory, but only to the intellect. In the psyche’s world they deftly combine apparently opposing but truly legitimate phases of our work. The result of such a combination happening in us is the inner rainbow, i.e., all the light of the spectrum.

Now it is a reservoir in us and a channel through us.▼

From Unexpected Miracles: The Gift of Synchronicity and How to Open It.

Ask Dharma Daddy (continued)

At Sedona, a New Age store in Honolulu, customers chose beads made of different materials for different purposes—rose quartz and clear quartz for positive energy, tiger’s eye for luck, hematite for stress reduction and, indeed, sandalwood “which evokes the traditional Buddhist prayer beads [sic] that first inspired the craze”.

So, guys, if Ricky Martin wears them, can you afford not to?▼

Send your questions on Buddhist doctrines and practices to Roger Corless, a.k.a. Dharma Daddy, 1757 Algaroba Street, Honolulu, HI 96826, or by e-mail to <roger.corless@duke.edu> or to the editor, <halburt@aol.com>. Please do not send personal questions; Roger is not a therapist or Dharma teacher, just a Professor of Buddhist Studies.

We’ve Got a New Address

GBF has moved again. Please note our new address:

Gay Buddhist Fellowship
2215-R Market Street, PMB 456
San Francisco, California 94114

GBF Website
http://www.gaybuddhist.org