



Dharma Soup

Notes from Karida

El Morro Buddhist Sangha
March 2009

Celebration of the Spring Equinox

Saturday, March 21, 6:00 pm

The evening will begin with a vegetarian potluck (dairy & eggs OK). The potluck will be followed by a brief lecture, with slides: "History of the Bodhisattva Kuan Yin, from India to America."

The main event will be the presentation of Roger's new book, "Journey of the heart: Meditation with Kuan Yin."

The book and seventeen original illustrations by artist Cynthia Elsner Hayward will be seen in public for the first time. Come join us for an evening of Buddhist meditation. Please call Fran Anderson (505) 783-4067 or Roger Irwin (505) 783-4127 so we know how many to expect.

Interconnectedness

The Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh calls "interconnectedness" "Interbeing." Whatever you call it the concept is expounded throughout the sutras. One of the clearest statements is found in the Avatamsaka Sutra:

There are causes for all human suffering, and there is a way by which they may be ended, because everything in the world is the result of a vast concurrence of causes and conditions, and everything disappears as these causes and conditions change and pass away.

Rain falls, winds blow, plants bloom, leaves mature and are blown away; these phenomena are all interrelated with causes and conditions, are brought

about by them, and disappear as the causes and conditions change.

One is born through the conditions of parentage; his body is nourished by food, his spirit by teaching and experience. Therefore, both flesh and spirit are related to conditions and are changed as conditions change.

As a net is made up by a series of ties, so everything in this world is connected by a series of ties. If anyone thinks that the mesh of a net is an independent, isolated thing, he is mistaken. It is called a net because it is made up of a series of connected meshes, and each mesh has its place and responsibilities in relation to other meshes.

Blossoms come about because of a series of conditions that lead up to their blooming; leaves are blown away because a series of conditions lead up to it. Blossoms do not appear unconditioned, nor does a leaf fall of itself. So everything has it coming forth and passing away: nothing can be independent without any change.

It is the everlasting and unchanging rule of this world that everything is created by a series of causes and conditions and everything disappears by the same rule; everything changes, nothing remains without change.

R. L. E. Ford, a British entomologist, in his book *Studying Insects*, tells the story of the attempt to save the Large Blue butterfly



from extinction. It seems that there are certain rather narrow ecological conditions necessary for the survival of the Large Blue. First, the Large Blue is so particular that it will lay its eggs only on the wild thyme bush. In turn, the wild thyme is so specialized that it requires anthills on which to grow. The most suitable anthills are those that are made by the small yellow ant *Donisthorpea flava*. Also required are two other species of ant, *Myrmica*

scabrinodis and *Myrmica laevinodis*. All three species of ants are so compatible that they take up residence close to each other.

Before the harsh winter sets in, *laevinodis* and *scabrinodis* ascend the stalks of the thyme, remove the butterfly eggs, and take them below ground. This, of course, serves to prevent the eggs from freezing.

Sheep, or rabbits, are also required in this community in order to keep the surrounding grasses under control so that the wild thyme can flourish. Too many rabbits, however, are undesirable since they are fond of using the anthills for their natural functions which will, in excess, kill the Large Blue's eggs and young larvae.

Ford continues to go on and describe the potential threat from gorse bushes. These bushes tend to grow rapidly and kill off the butterfly colonies. Local farmers, however, would burn off the gorse to improve the grazing opportunities for their sheep. Usually this destruction of the gorse led to an increase of the butterfly population. Unfortunately, the burning might not always be done in the winter when the eggs were safely underground. The fires would get too hot, killing the eggs, the ants, and everything else. Understanding this problem, Ford worked with C. W. W. Hulse on a project in Cornwall to burn the gorse in strips alternating with unburned strips. This careful burning experiment was an overwhelming success and it was reported that the Large Blue appeared "in unbelievable numbers."

In ending his notes on this subject Ford said, "...unfortunately, when matter had reached a climax, Hulse died suddenly and the area became neglected again."

Such a cliff-hanger in the saga of the Large Blue leaves us with many questions about interconnectedness. For example, what was most

important to the Large Blue's survival: Hulse's untimely death, too many rabbits with overactive bladders, or improper burning? On the other hand perhaps Hulse would have died sooner if he had not had the Large Blue to give meaning to his life. And what are we to say of the neighborly ants?

Ford's narration of the plight of the Large Blue has at least led me to one conclusion. It would seem difficult to find evidence, in nature, of the peculiarly human conceit that we are all independent of each other.

- Roger



TAI CHI WITH REED

(at Old School Gallery)

Sundays, 9:30 am. Join Reed Anderson for abbreviated Wu style movement and basic Wah Mountain Breathing discipline. Easy for beginners. Call Reed for info at 783-4067.

If you haven't done it yet, check out:
www.karidasangha.net
and while you're there light a candle.

