

## **Dedicated Practitioners Program**

### **Reading and Homework, August 2003**

The theme for this month's homework is cultivating awareness of Diversity – in our Dharma communities and in the world.

#### **Readings:**

**Sutta Quotes on Race and Class**, compiled by Ajahn Amaro, attached as a Word document.

**Majjhima Nikaya**, *Esukari Sutta*, #96, or Sharda's study guide.

**Turning Wheel**, *Journal of Socially Engaged Buddhism*, Summer 2003, "Black Dharma."

**White Privilege: Essential Readings**, ed. By Paula Rothenberg, in particular "*How White People Can Serve as Allies to People of Color*"

**Diversity Trainings** in Bay Area and other locations, attached as a Word document.

#### **Reflections:**

1. In the teachings on Diversity in April, Anna spoke about differences based on race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. Since that time, have you been aware of any changes in your thoughts or actions in relation to people who are different from you?
2. Based on your reading, what do you understand about the difference between prejudice and racism? What is "white privilege?" By extension, can you begin to identify "gender privilege," "class privilege," and "heterosexual privilege?" In particular, what "privileges" do you benefit from based on your race, class, gender or orientation? Where do you notice a lack of privilege? Also, notice your resistance to identifying your privileges.
3. After reading the story of Ananda and the Untouchable, reflect on the choice Ananda made not to go to the well for the higher castes but instead to choose the well for the Untouchables. Try to imagine what a contemporary analogy might be in your own life, and what would be required of you internally to choose as Ananda did.
4. In your daily life, what individuals or groups of people are "invisible?" i.e., who do you tend to ignore, not relate to? Who or what groups of people are you drawn to? Without judgment, can you be curious about your avoidance and/or attraction? What is it based on?
5. What is your vision of a diverse sangha? In terms of the Buddha's teaching, what would make such a sangha cohesive?

## **Practices:**

### **Daily Life**

1. When you notice your tendency to make someone “invisible”, gently investigate what you are experiencing. Send metta or compassion to yourself and the other. If it is appropriate, initiate contact with the person, even if it is only to say “Hello.”
2. As a practice, go out of your way to have conversations with people whose views and opinions are different from your own. Can you listen without defending your position or going into opposition. Can you identify what underlies your need to attach yourself to views and opinions?
3. Have a conversation with your Dharma buddy about how you experience yourself in relation to people who are different from yourself. When you feel different, what is that like for you? What is the experience of not being different?

### **Sitting Practice:**

1. Pick one person of a different race, one of a different class, one of a different gender, and one of a different sexual orientation to send metta or compassion for one week. ( Four specific people)
2. Cultivate metta or compassion for a group of people who are of a different race, class, gender or sexual orientation for one week. (Four different groups)
3. Share the merit of your practice with these four groups. Imagine what benefit your practice might bring to beings not of your race, class, gender, or sexual orientation.

Be sure to schedule time to connect with your Dharma buddy for a discussion of this month’s readings and practices, and for an interview with your mentor if you are receiving monthly interviews.