

“Finding info about Buddhism is quite a chore”: Some Preliminary Thoughts on Teaching the Dharma in America

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, it will be argued that in order for Americans to really “take to” the Dharma, it will need a great deal of responsible interpretation and application. Teachers will need to be well-trained in both the Dharma and the techniques of teaching and preaching found in “indigenous” American religion. The anomie found in America today proves that America needs the teachings of the Buddha; but the “packaging” and presentation must be suited to the American temperament. Carriers of the Dharma must steer between the Scylla and Charybdis of on the one hand setting the bar too high, and on the other oversimplifying and watering down the Dharma into a meaningless smattering of New Age platitudes. The contents of this teaching and preaching should focus on issues central to Buddhism, such as can be found in Henry Steel Olcott’s fourteen-point platform—or better, in the Buddha’s first sermon to the five ascetics, the Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta, or the “Setting the Wheel of Dhamma in Motion.” Americans are fond of the trappings of Buddhism—sitting Zen, or playing at Tibeto-Hollywood Buddhism—but for the Dharma to take root and become self-replicating, Americans need to understand the central tenets of the Buddha. Only then can a true “America-Yana” begin to develop.

Some time before August 2001—the date is not clear—a young man (we’ll call him “Greg”) left a post in the guest book on the website of a Southern California Buddhist temple. “I’m sorry to pester you with a bunch of questions,” it read in part:

... I’m in the process of investigating Buddhism. ...So, where to start? Where might I find a group of Buddhists in the Riverside/San Bernardino area? And is Buddhism a religion, spiritual practice, or an ethical system? If you can tolerate a pestering student, please email me at [address]. Buddhists need to be obnoxious and annoying like many Christians. At least I can tell them to go away. *Finding info about Buddhism is quite a chore.* [emphasis mine]

I discovered this plea in December of 2002, as I prepared to write this article. Thinking that the last line would make a good title, I wrote to “Greg” and asked if he would mind if I quoted him. I also asked—incidentally—whether his questions had been answered by the temple to which he had written.

They had not.

He wrote back, and said that he was without a car, so even though there were temples less than an hour’s drive from his house, there was no easy way for him to get to them. He also reiterated his main points from the post: that finding information on Buddhism was “a chore,” and that Buddhism—and *all* religions—should proselytize more.

In recent history, Buddhism has not been a proselytizing tradition. Nothing

could be more alien to the modern Buddhist ethos than such aggressive practices as “street witnessing” or door-to-door visitations. It is deemed more appropriate for Buddhists to wait for seekers to come to us, as we minister only to those who ask.

But there are two difficulties with this reserved approach. The first is the attitude of Westerners. The American people are accustomed to street witnessing, door-to-door visitations, televangelism, and other methods of “outreach” that have been used by the more aggressive Christian ministries. Thus, the typical American, rather than going out to seek answers, sits back and waits for the answers to come to him—dropping out of the sky, as it were. There is a kind of stalemate, then, as the Americans with questions and the Buddhists with answers each wait to be approached by the other.

The second difficulty with the idea that Buddhism should not be a missionary religion is that it directly contradicts the attitude of “original” Buddhism. The Buddha and his disciples did not sit around in temples and wait for devotees to come to them (although certainly many traveled far to meet with, and be taught by, the Buddha). Rather, the early teachers of Buddhism met people where they lived, traveling from village to village and teaching any who showed interest. This shows that it is possible to be *available* without being *aggressive*—an idea that modern Buddhist institutions in America would do well to ponder.

But how can we bring the Dharma to people in a manner that is both faithful to the non-aggressive nature of Buddhism and simultaneously effective in reaching those who are unwilling or unable to approach Buddhist institutions on their own?

This article will explore that question informally. The views herein are not based on market surveys, sociological research, or other “scientific” approaches. There will be no footnotes or supporting charts and graphs. Rather, this will be a case of the author “thinking out loud,” based on his (admittedly limited) personal observations and his experience as an educator. The main source of this article, then, is the position of “It seems to me...” It is hoped that, in time, a dialectic will develop around this subject that leads to some fruitful action.

An increasingly popular topic of discussion amongst my friends and colleagues centers around the question, “What is the appeal of Buddhism to Westerners?” Many of those in these discussions are either immigrants from Buddhist countries, or American-born members of those same cultures. They are Buddhist, one might say, “by birthright,” although in every case there was a conscious decision to embrace Buddhism. As serious practitioners themselves, many are fascinated to know what it is that Americans see in the Buddha’s teaching.

In answer, I generally start by discussing what Americans have lost. The same principles of religious liberty on which America was founded bore within them the seeds of chaos. When there is no central, government-sponsored spiritual authority (the absence of which, I contend, is overall a good thing), there are two possible results. One is a rich, productive environment in which the free exchange of ideas leads to ever more refined levels of progress.

The other is anomie.

In effect, America lacks a *center*, and is experiencing the aimlessness that comes with such a lack. Americans today, and especially the young people, do not feel that they are connected to anything beyond themselves. This leads to gang membership, drug abuse, sexual obsession—and Columbine. Make no mistake: these

"social ills" are rooted not in sociology, not in politics, and not even in ethics. They are rooted in the breakdown of an effective religion, a "re-connection" to that which transcends the individual.

In the cultural pandemonium which is the American scene today, no traditional Western religion has the societal impact to anchor its believers effectively. Whatever one's affiliation, religion is usually a mere appendix, a post-script to the rest of one's life. Ironically, the more dedicated one becomes to one's church, the more fervently one practices one's faith, the more one is cut off from the mainstream of American culture, with its scientific, humanistic bias.

In a seeming paradox, many are finding that the "way in" is the "way out." That by developing a personal practice without allegiance to a specific creed or dogma, by looking within ourselves for answers, we can rise out of our current morass and overcome our spiritual muddle. That by being "lamps to ourselves," we will truly connect with others. The time has arrived for a true personalization of religion beyond the bounds of institutions.

The time has arrived for Buddhism.

The American religious scene has developed into a sort of spiritual smorgasbord, a place where virtually every flavor of religious "food" is available—much of it junk food. How can we be sure that Buddhism, in nutritious and authentic forms, has a place on the table for *everyone* who seeks it? There are books, to be sure, and magazines. The Internet is flooded with sites; many of them, such as *Access to Insight*, are Pillars of American Buddhism. (Even so, our media options have not been adequately utilized: where, for example, is the Buddhist presence on American radio or television?)

Nevertheless, print and other media can only go so far. A key ingredient of Dharma propagation since the earliest days of Buddhism has been the transmission of the teaching from person to person. *There is no substitute for the experience of one person leading another.* This can lead to abuse, of course, and has already done so in the brief history of American Buddhism. But the negative is far outweighed by the positive, and the desire of the "Gregs" of America for a living teacher is ever more keenly felt.

This "American Buddhism" that I refer to is not a single, unified entity. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of Buddhist associations in America, each appealing to its own unique audience. Which of these will best be able to fill the needs of "Greg"? While an exhaustive survey is out of the question, it will be useful to consider American Buddhists in three broadly-defined groups, each with its own benefits and drawbacks.

First, there are the Ethnic Buddhists, those who have immigrated—or whose forebears have immigrated—to America from countries with traditionally Buddhist cultures. In Southern California it is not difficult to find Japanese temples, Chinese/Taiwanese temples, Sri Lankan temples, Thai temples, and many others. And in each one we tend to find people from the ethnic groups named in the description of these temples—and few others. Few native-born Americans outside of these ethnic groups even make it across the physical thresholds, let alone the linguistic and cultural barriers, that separate them from the Dharma in these places.

Many such temples actively seek to bring in a diversity of people. (I am myself employed in such a capacity.) But the barriers are high enough that few people

outside of the targeted ethnic groups ever really make it inside.

Those who *do* make it inside generally do so only after a process of embracing at least some of the ways of the ethnic groups in question, while consequently losing some of their “American-ness.” The large number of non-Japanese Zen devotees is one outstanding example. The man-or-woman in the street has a sense that he or she will have to metaphorically “go Japanese” to participate in this tradition, and to that extent, the Average American still perceives him- or herself to be locked out of Ethnic Buddhist institutions.

A second group among whom the Dharma has flourished in America has been the Academic Buddhists. These are the ones who—through East Asian Studies, World Religions, or Comparative Linguistics—have discovered the riches of Buddhism and Buddhist culture, and have pursued deeper understanding through scholarly endeavors. This is not to say there is not diligent practice and true devotion in these people—Robert A. F. Thurman comes to mind—but overall the numbers who have moved beyond academic interest to full participation are small, and they operate in a rarefied sphere.

Finally, we turn to a group which is harder to name, but easy to recognize. Some would call them “old hippies”; market researcher Paul H. Ray has identified them as “Cultural Creatives,” and claims that there are 50 million of them in America. These are the people who, according to Ray, have local and global ecological awareness; value quality relationships; are big on volunteering; focus on their psychological and spiritual development; are concerned about gender and racial issues; want to find a viable way between the political Left and Right; are guardedly optimistic about the future; seek an alternative lifestyle on a human scale; distrust materialism; and wish to understand other cultures. They have taken to Buddhism in a big way, and from my observations probably account for a large percentage of the Buddhists who do not fall into the other two categories.

Taken together, these three categories constitute quite a large number of people. So what’s the fuss? Why do I maintain that the American people are underserved in their desire for the Dharma? The first group, as argued above, appeals predominantly to people from historically-Buddhist ethnic groups. The second, the Academics, is a relatively small group. And the third—and I write this with some hesitation—is in many ways unauthentic. That is, their ideas of Buddhism are based on teachings that are rather far from the source.

Starting, perhaps, with Jack Kerouac (though some might even go back as far as the Theosophists), a sort of American philosophy has developed that resembles Buddhism in some ways, and uses some of its terms, without really having any grasp of the authentic teachings of the Buddha. The typical American “Buddhist”—other than the Ethnic and Academic Buddhists—is generally unaware of such essential teachings as the Four Noble Truths or the Five Precepts. In recent, more New-Age-influenced manifestations, what is *called* “Buddhist” is hardly Buddhist at all. For example, the “Zen” of this, that, and the other is mistaken for the true Dharma.

How, then, do we propagate *authentic* teachings? It’s up to the Ethnic Buddhists and the Academic Buddhists to find ways to make the true Dharma available to every man, woman, and child in America.

That’s a tall order. There are many in America who, like “Greg,” have no access to living teachers of authentic Buddhism. Some of these inquirers have an

inkling of what Buddhism is, and want to know more about it. And there are others who know nothing about Buddhism, but *do* know that they're *just not happy*. Both of these types languish for lack of available teachers.

To solve this problem, we might ask ourselves—to paraphrase a popular Christian catchphrase—"What would Buddha do?"

He would send teachers into the streets, into homes and schools, into workplaces, to bring the Dharma to those who seek it, and to those who don't even know it exists. He would ensure that these teachers have the training to engage potential followers in meaningful discussion, and use Skill-in-Means to create a space in their lives for a new way of seeing. He would want every person, from the movie star to the dockworker, to have access to this excellent truth. Because every person knows the suffering that results from desire, and every person has the capacity to put into practice the principles he enumerated.

In short, the Dharma must break out of the temple and the academy and find itself on the road again, as it was in its earliest manifestations.

What I propose is a three-phase model that begins at existing Buddhist institutions and ultimately reaches into every community in America. This model respects the differences between the various schools of Buddhism, while outlining a uniform system of "delivery." And it makes maximum use of available resources, in such a way that nearly every Buddhist temple or university could implement the program with a minimum financial impact. Please note that in what follows, I will use the term "Institution" to refer to any Buddhist organization, whether it's a major temple or a lay organization, a university or a small study group—or even one individual teacher with a lot of energy!

In Phase I, the Institution simply teaches a responsible, well-rounded program of Buddhist General Studies. Most Institutions are already involved in this phase, at least in part. In Phase II, the Institution begins to lay the groundwork for expansion by training Certified Teachers to carry the work beyond the Institution's reach. Finally, Phase III involves a system of support for those teachers after they have "left the nest." The first two phases of this plan can take place at the Institution; or, Institutions with sufficient resources can establish programs at satellite sites, facilitating the transition into Phase III by training Teacher Candidates in areas more remote from the Institution's immediate environs. Phase III, of course, extends far beyond the walls of the Institution into the surrounding communities.

What, then, would be the minimum for a program of General Studies in **Phase I**? I propose five Areas of Emphasis:

- Occasional lectures for the curious;
- A brief introductory course for those with more interest;
- A one-year course in the "basics";
- An on-going sutra study; and
- Instruction in, as well as opportunities for, putting Buddhist teachings into action, including methods of practice, such as meditation or chant, and social action of some kind, such as hospice care, food programs, etc.

Considering the Areas of General Studies one by one:

Public Lectures: Not everyone who is curious about an idea is willing to immediately make a commitment. For this reason, every Institution should establish a program of frequent, well-publicized, easily-accessible lectures for the public. Once a month

would be a good target for frequency; making it regular, such as “every first Tuesday,” can also be effective.

The topics should be aimed at a popular audience, being neither highly esoteric nor overly academic. “What is Buddhism?” would be a good place to start, or “Who Was the Buddha?” Catchy titles or a “spin” on the topic are a good idea. Perhaps, as I write this in January of 2003, “A Buddhist View of War” or “Buddhism and Islam” would be appealing. If topics are planned in advance, they can be listed in flyers and other advertising for several months to come.

Whatever the topic and whatever the tradition of the sponsoring Institution, every talk should center on Buddhist basics. Refer to the list below for what I mean by “basics”; the point is that, while attempting to be timely and appealing, we must be sure that what is presented is a kind of introduction (and enticement) to things to come, leaving the audience wanting more.

As for publicity, if an Institution already has members (temple devotees, for example, or university students), they should be enlisted to invite friends. Flyers can be made, and local media—such as newspapers or radio—can be contacted either for paid advertising, or for the possibility of a free “community events” listing.

Every lecture should include a question-and-answer session, and should be followed by light refreshments. The time-commitment should be limited: perhaps 30-45 minutes of presentation, followed by 15-30 minutes of questions, then refreshments, keeping the whole evening between one and one-and-a-half hours.

Finally—need it be said?—not only should the *topic* be interesting, but the *speaker* should be, too. Frankly, what we are talking about here is a kind of PR for the rest of the Institution’s General Studies program. Little benefit will come if the entire event is comprised of someone droning out an academic paper filled with abstruse terms and obscure illustrations. Everything should be well-done, from technicalities like microphones and adequate lighting, to the refreshments served, to the quality of the presentation itself.

“Buddhism 101”: After people show some interest in going deeper, the Institution should offer them a chance to learn more without making a long-term commitment. I recommend a four-week course, offered frequently (even monthly) throughout the year. The guidelines above regarding publicity, timing, and attractiveness can be followed. Again, the goal is to expand the inquirers’ possibilities, letting them see how much more Buddhism has to offer.

A four-week program might look something like this:

- Week 1: An introduction to core concepts: Who was the Buddha? What is his life’s story? What were his basic teachings (perhaps using the *Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta* as a guide)?
- Week 2: An overview of the geographic spread of Buddhism and the development of various schools and traditions; special emphasis can be given here to the Institution’s own tradition, clarifying similarities to, and differences from, other traditions.
- Week 3: A survey of forms of practice (such as rituals, meditation, and chant) as well as such sociological effects as charitable works, artistic efforts, and educational advancements.
- Week 4: A review of sutras, books, magazines, and other resources available to those who want to go further, as well as of the Institution’s offerings of classes,

publications, etc.

"The Basics": Once inquirers are ready to sign on for more, they should have the opportunity to join a class in basic Buddhist concepts. This should be a class with a finite limit, and a defined curriculum. One year of approximately 45-50 weekly meetings, one to two hours in length, should be sufficient.

This could be taught by one teacher, or a variety, depending on the Institution's teacher resources. But in any case, there should be one coordinator—whether the teacher or another—who is responsible to ensure that the curriculum is being taught, that appropriate facilities and materials are available, and that there is continuity in maintaining student contact. This last point cannot be over-emphasized: someone should be responsible for publicizing the class, following up with new students, informing the class of changes in schedule or location, and generally including smooth communication between the students and the Institution.

What, then, are "The Basics"? Through repetition, the Buddha made it clear that certain ideas were central. Here is a list of some—certainly not all—of these ideas. Because the "Basics" class should be on-going, in the sense that students can join it at any time during the year, some repetition may be necessary within any particular topic, giving the background of an idea as it appears in the curriculum. There is no particular order to this list; each Institution should design its own curriculum. One aspect of such lists is that there will never be agreement: to publish such a list is to invite criticism, whether additions, subtractions, or changes in emphasis. Here, at least, is a starting point:

- Arhats and Bodhisattvas and the Four Bodhisattva Vows
- Cause and Effect
- Dependent Origination
- Emptiness
- Karma
- Methods of Practice (chant, sitting and walking meditation, etc.)
- Nirvana
- Prajna (Wisdom)
- The empirical base of Buddhism
- The Five Precepts
- The Four Cankers
- The Four Noble Truths and The Noble Eightfold Path
- The Middle Path
- The Paramitas
- The Three Characteristics of Existence (Impermanence, Suffering, Non-Self)
- The Three Evil Roots (Greed, Anger, Delusion) and their opposites
- The Three Trainings (Morality, Concentration, and Wisdom)
- The Triple Gem

One question that has arisen in relation to this Area of the General Studies program is whether there is a textbook that covers all of these topics. While no one book is likely to fill the need, there are certain classics that can be used at least as background reading for such a course. Maha Thera Narada's *The Buddha and His Teachings*, Walpola Sri Rahula's *What the Buddha Taught*, and Christmas Humphrey's *Buddhism: An introduction and guide* come immediately to mind. Venerable Master Hsing Yun's *Lotus in a Stream* and the anonymously-written *The*

Teaching of Buddha published in Tokyo by the Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai are also good choices, as are some of the more recent overviews by such authors as Donald Lopez. Books originating in the Ethnic and Academic Buddhist communities are generally to be preferred.

Sutra Study: After completing the “Basics,” or at least some defined portion thereof, students can begin attending an on-going study of sutras appropriate to the Institution’s tradition. In this regard, think of the Christian ideal of the “Bible study.” Sutra Study should be our goal, and just as a wise teacher once told me, “The Bible sheds a lot of light on those commentaries,” so the study of sutras would cut past a lot of the “pop Buddhism” that’s out there, and keep us mindful of the original traditions. It is better to read the Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta with understanding than to read any number of bestsellers.

Practice and Social Work: All of this study is important, but the Dharma is worthless if it’s not *applied*. Within the Institution’s tradition, students should be provided with opportunities to participate in various practices, such as different forms of meditation, chanting, and rituals. Frequent, brief introductory sessions should be held in addition to regular practice.

In addition, the practice of compassion would call for a regular agenda of social action. If the Institution does not have the resources to run its own activities, its students can participate in existing programs, volunteering in hospices, in soup kitchens, to work with underprivileged children, and so on.

As a final note to Phase I, an essential component of all of these Areas of Emphasis, implied but not discussed above, would be opportunities for socializing among the members. Whether the Institution is a place of worship or practice, or an educational institution, the people who learn there constitute a community with a common interest and, as such, will benefit greatly from a chance to get to know each others’ situations and needs.

All of the above might seem a bit overwhelming, especially for smaller Institutions. In fact, this General Studies program includes three classes a week—“Buddhism 101,” “The Basics,” and a Sutra Study—in addition to monthly lectures and regular opportunities for practice and social action. So what is proposed as a minimum is four or five activities per week—not much for an Institution truly committed to spreading the Dharma.

Phase II adds one more weekly activity to the lineup. Some of the students in the other classes may show an interest in, and aptitude for, teaching. These should be encouraged to enroll in a Teacher Training course.

To ensure that Teacher Candidates are well informed, the Institution should set standards for what the potential Teacher Candidates should know *before* beginning the course. At a minimum, they should be able to demonstrate mastery of “The Basics” as described by the Institution, perhaps through oral or written testing. They should also be enrolled in the Sutra Study concurrently with the Teacher Training course, having special opportunities to discuss the material with the teacher of the Sutra Study. The Teacher Trainer may want to tailor assignments to take advantage of what is being taught in the Sutra Study.

The Teacher Training course should also be approximately one year, meaning that, along with “The Basics,” Teacher Candidates would need about two years to complete their studies, after which they would be certified by the Institution to lead

classes under the Institution's guidance.

The content of the Teacher Training would include both teaching and organizational skills. Teaching skills would include how to interpret a text; techniques of exposition; how to present and illustrate a point; and how to lead a discussion. Generally, these skills should be taught by people with a background in teaching, always remembering to respect the boundaries set by the Institution's tradition. Much of the class would consist of practica in which Teacher Candidates make presentations to be critiqued by the Teacher Trainer and the class. Organizational skills would include how to organize and start a group, and principles of responsible leadership.

Looking ahead for a moment to Phase III, remember that the goal is to create learning opportunities for inquirers who don't have access to Institutions. With this in mind, Institutions might consider starting at least "The Basics" and Teacher Training at remote sites. The Institution could send a Teacher Trainer a couple of hours' drive away twice a week, meeting in a community center, library, or other public meeting location. Or an Institution with sufficient resources might develop interactive online programs, where lessons would be set and e-mail or telephone interaction between the trainer and the Teacher Candidates would take place.

In any case, it is essential that representatives of the Institution have a solid, long-term relationship with Teacher Candidates. Over the two years of the training, there should be ample opportunities for the Institution and the candidate to interact, so that the Institution can be sure of the Candidate's character and intentions before certifying the Candidate as a Certified Teacher.

With **Phase III**, we finally come to the solution to the problem described in the story of "Greg" at the start of this article. In this Phase, the Institution commissions Certified Teachers and supports them in their teaching efforts.

There are two ways this might happen. In one, the Institution might create, promote, and conduct off-site classes, that is, classes located away from the Institution's premises. The afore-mentioned public facilities might be used for these classes, and the Institution would make all of the arrangements and assign the Certified Teacher.

Another way this might happen is if Certified Teachers create and conduct their own classes, under the Institution's supervision. At high schools and universities, in homes, restaurants, and places of business, Certified Teachers could gather their friends and colleagues to learn the Dharma.

In either case, Certified Teachers would register their classes, so Institutions could refer inquirers to local groups. Likewise, periodical events—monthly or quarterly—should be held at the Institution to draw together the various Certified Teachers and their students for further education and practice—or just for fun.

The classes taught by Certified Teachers would depend on the individual teacher, with guidance from the Institution. Naturally, as lay people engaged in other ways, Certified Teachers could not teach a full spectrum of classes. Most Certified Teachers would probably only be able to commit to one class per week. They would choose, then, between "The Basics" and the Sutra Study. Occasionally, they might also be able to offer "Buddhism 101" in addition to—or in place of—the regular weekly class. And some teachers might also want to give an occasional Public Lecture for new inquirers in their area, in conjunction with a preview of the class(es) offered.

With this in mind, Institutions would be wise to prepare three fixed sets of materials, and one on-going one.

The first two sets of ready-made materials would be simply a one-time introductory lecture on Buddhism, and the four-week "Buddhism 101." These would be used by the Certified Teacher in the same way they are used by the Institution, as described above. Methods of using these materials would be discussed in Teacher Training, and Teacher Candidates would be required to demonstrate their ability to teach them successfully before being certified.

The third fixed set of materials would be for teaching "The Basics." For this the Institution would choose one or more texts, as listed above, and write teacher-support materials to go with them. So, for instance, a Certified Teacher might use Narada's *The Buddha and His Teachings* for six months, and Venerable Master Hsing Yun's *Lotus in a Stream* for the other six (representing the Theravada and Mahayana traditions, respectively). The Institution would provide teachers' background notes, presentation outlines, discussion questions, student worksheets, etc., to support the use of these books. Over time, the Institution might add other books to the curriculum, so that Certified Teachers who opt to teach "The Basics" as their sole class could do so beyond the one-year mark.

In addition to these three sets of materials, the Institution would also publish an on-going set of materials for Certified Teachers who choose to teach the Sutra Study as their weekly class. Homepages such as *Access to Insight* provide English translations of numerous texts online; an Institution might simply develop materials like those listed above for a given sutra. At least in the beginning, all Certified Teachers sponsored by a particular Institution would teach the same sutras at the same time. Later, as the Institution's library of materials builds up—perhaps through sharing with other Institutions—Certified Teachers would be allowed to choose from a variety of sutras (always under the Institution's guidance).

Beyond preparing and disseminating these materials, Institutions would also provide other forms of support. They would schedule regular meetings with the Certified Teachers, either in groups or individually, to preview upcoming materials, help the teachers with any problems they are having, etc. They would provide a newsletter or other means of communication, with teaching tips, upcoming events, a teacher information exchange, and so on. They would also be standing by to answer questions from the Certified Teachers by e-mail or phone. In short, they would equip this Army of Expositors before they go out into the field, and provide continuing support services once they are in the field.

A plan such as this could revolutionize the teaching of Buddhism in America. Each Institution could start its own program according to its own traditions and emphases; or one Institution could take the lead and create a General Studies program, a Teacher Training program, and a series of lesson plans for Certified Teachers which could be disseminated through other Institutions. Perhaps, as an outgrowth of this idea, a "Society for the Propagation of the Dharma in America" could be formed to provide materials and support to Buddhist Institutions across the country.

If this plan is carried out, "Greg" would be served. Buddhism would move off of its metaphorical mountain and into schools, homes, and places of business. Anyone who was thirsty could drink the pure water of the Dharma, and a responsible, authentic Buddhism could at last become a significant force for good in American society.