A Complete Path to Awakening by Rodney Smith

Seattle Insight is attempting to offer dharma students a broad range of practice opportunities in 2000 and beyond. We are doing this in a variety of ways. First we are welcoming several authentic voices of insight to our community. A few of the speakers this year including Joseph Goldstein, Sharon Salzberg, and Christina Feldman, are the Founding Teachers in the Vipassana tradition and brought the Buddha's message to the West 25 years ago. Others like Steve Armstrong, Arinna Weisman, and Gregory Kramer built upon this tradition with their own unique expressions of insight. It is SIMS intention to encourage and sponsor high quality Buddhist teaching in the Northwest.

The voice of SIMS is not confined to a single teacher. As a community we represent a diverse group. It is our hope in offering a variety of dharma expressions and personalities that everyone will find compatibility with someone. Sharda Rogell, a Senior Teacher for the Insight Meditation Society in Barre, Massachusetts, was invited and has agreed to settle in Seattle beginning in March. This will allow a gender balance with me as the existing Guiding Teacher. Together she and I should compliment one another in style and interest to more thoroughly fulfill the need in this area.

There are several new programs that will be presented in the year 2000. One of these is a four-week beginning meditation series in March for 14 – 18 year olds. We hope this will be the beginning of an ongoing class for the young. Sharda's own interest and experience includes the effects and intentions of wise communication. I know she will want to teach classes on this important subject. Steve Armstrong is also presenting a SIMS sponsored series on Buddhist Psychology beginning this winter. Sharon Salzberg will lead a Metta weekend in late July. Together these and many other new and continued classes, retreats, and programs will build upon SIMS' 1999 schedule.

The success of all of these programs depends upon your participation. There is a strong core of dedicated Vipassana students in the Northwest. Some students choose to attend only the retreats, while others confine their attendance to the classes or

special dharma events. Only a few students frequent the entire range of dharma activities. Many students are limited in their participation by factors beyond their control such as family obligations or other engagements. It is not only understandable but also critically important that the "other parts of our life" such as family do not suffer in relationship to dharma work. Dharma practice is supposed to decrease suffering, not complicate it. In fact the only purpose behind offering such a wide display of programs is precisely to help integrate dharma into "the other parts of our life." Attending the whole range of programs without neglecting any of our responsibilities can facilitate this integration process.

These offered activities are not isolated events. They are strings that form the whole tapestry of dharma. It is the rare student who can radically change his/her life through an isolated daily sitting practice. A sitting practice is only a single thread of the cloth. Most of us require ongoing engagement, periods if intense self-reflection, and a probing investigation of our habitual patterns to round out our growth. In addition we need the supportive view of others who are working in the same direction. SIMS offers activities in each of these areas. 2000 is a very exciting time for the growth of SIMS. Please join us in bringing love and insight into the next millennium.