



Photo by Tom Gessner

Making macrobiotically correct meals involves more than preparing fresh vegetables and grains in aesthetically pleasing fare. Serious followers of macrobiotics find a balance of Yin and Yang foods correct for their individual needs. Melissa Spangler, a Glass Onion employee, makes natural foods on a mass scale.

## Food, philosophy combine to create natural way of life

By Mary Kay Wayman

**Y**ou are what you eat.

If people really looked like their food, the campus would be full of pop cans, Twinkies and potato chips running to their 8:30 classes.

Macrobiotics takes that old phrase seriously. Followers of the philosophy strive to make themselves better by limiting what they eat to a restrictive diet.

Many claim amazing changes in health after taking to the whole grain and vegetable regimen.

Pam Black, former manager of the Open Harvest, a health food store, has been following basically a macrobiotic diet for three and a half years.

"I have a strong impetus," she said. "I saw it was making me healthy for the first time in my life."

After beginning work at Open Harvest she took up vegetarianism, but exema she had had all of her life persisted. A friend suggested macrobiotics.

"Within six weeks my skin was perfectly clear," she said, noting that the skin disease returns whenever she goes off the diet.

Macrobiotics made its debut in the United States in 1950 when a Japanese man, George Ohsawa, claimed miraculous cures for many health problems.

ORIENTAL philosophy is the heart of the diet, which Mark Vasina, co-owner of the Glass Onion, a health food restaurant, said ties social structure into diet.

"In oriental philosophy there are two complementary forces in the Universe," he said. "These are Yin, an expansive force, and Yang, a contractive force."

Everything in the universe is either Yin

or Yang, Black said, and macrobiotics seeks a balance between them in all things, especially food. An imbalance results in disease.

"It's a philosophy of everything," she said. "There's no religious connotation. But it does involve adopting a certain life attitude and lifestyle."

The adoption of that lifestyle led to public apprehension about macrobiotics. In the early 1970s, groups of young people formed communes where they raised their own food and lived in a macrobiotic society.

The macrobiotic diet has evolved since then, and Black and Vasina said they don't consider themselves strict macrobiotics now.

People often think you are allowed to eat only brown rice on the diet, she said.

The diet begins with a 10-day brown rice and sesame salt fast, but Black said even that need not be an absolute. Those who can't fast that long, like herself, should fast three or four days and add some vegetables.

THIS PROCESS, Black said, "is to get rid of the cravings people have for sugar, to get in a pure, detoxified state." Then you begin to notice the effects foods have on you.

Instead of getting out of touch with what your body wants to do, Vasina said, the diet gets your mind in tune with your body.

Vasina said people realize the effect food has on the body when they change eating habits with the seasons.

Meat in winter gives the body warmth, but it would be out of line in summer when too much would slow the body down.

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## Ananda Marga

# Organization leads members down spiritual path

By Alice Hrnicek

**F**or Mary Kris Jensen, it was a way to prevent getting "burned out" from political campaigning. To Miguel Tristani, it signified developing trust while adjusting to a new city. Husband Steve McElravy and wife Cathy Cook found it a satisfying plateau on their mission as spiritual seekers.

Whatever their reasons for joining, these Lincolniters look upon the worldwide spiritual and social service organization, Ananda Marga, as a fulfilling and integral part of their lives.

The fundamental practices of the organization include meditation and vegetarianism. Members also aspire to achievement of yoga postures and proper exercise. The goal of the organization, founded in India in 1955, is to promote physical, mental and spiritual growth among its followers.

Once a person has built up an inner strength from these practices, he may feel a "strong desire to share the experience," according to Cook, a UNL student. Like the other group members interviewed, a quiet gentleness seemed to exude from her, enveloping the area surrounding her.

LINCOLN BOASTS several hundred participants active to different degrees, explained Jensen, a registered nurse at the Lincoln Regional Center. Commitment to the organization has come gradually for Jensen. Clad in a stereotypical peasant skirt and cool top, the nurse curled up comfortably in a hard-backed chair, wrestling to explain concepts with a tilt of the head and a relaxed look of the eye.

Jensen, a member of the group for four

years, stressed that Ananda Marga is not a religion, but a search for a spiritual path. She said, however, that members are encouraged to read spiritual works of their choice.

Because meditation is the central practice of Ananda Marga, followers are told that they should structure their lives around the practice. A Sanskrit phrase, "Baba Nam Kevalam," which roughly translates, "God is everywhere," serves as the mantra and is repeated during medita-

tion.

For a time, meditation was the extent of Tristani's involvement. On the physical level, he said he has noticed he requires less sleep, an important factor during the school year.

Openness has created a reciprocity which has helped him adjust to Lincoln after his move from the University of Minnesota. "The goal is to bring yourself closer to God, to get to a point where you are one with God. I'm not sure what that

"The purpose of meditating is to elevate or refine the mind to a higher place . . . pure self."

ion.

The mantra elicits a calming effect, Jensen said. "Continuing to meditate really built a love into my heart. It's hard to describe—kind of like the personal warmth of holding a little tiny baby. It's a special thing."

Tristani, a second year UNL graduate assistant in chemistry, began meditation classes last fall.

Sitting cross-legged on a countertop in pronounced guru fashion, the aura of his frankness permeated the conversation.

He explained that the twice-a-day sessions have helped improve in his relations with people. "I've begun to relate in a more loving way. I feel more open to my friends, and this is due to some part to

means in concrete terms."

McElravy, a coordinator in the Division on Alcoholism with a master's degree in social work, believes oneness can be achieved through identifying with God in everyday circumstances. "If you allow yourself to think about God constantly, you are moving toward a fuller appreciation of God and a final communion with him."

The coordinator spoke about his six years of involvement with an excitement and purposefulness which could not be hidden by his light-colored beard. After being introduced to meditation, McElravy noticed changes in himself. "I was opening up more to others and felt better about myself."

MEDITATING IN a group is even more

enriching than concentrating alone, the members of the meditation group agreed.

A strong force is created when everyone comes together, Jensen said. "The purpose of meditating is to elevate or refine the mind to a higher place, which means God. This doesn't mean the vision of the old man in the sky, but for many it is a cosmic-consciousness or a feeling they have of their most pure self."

Tristani agreed that meditating in a group is better than striving alone.

For McElravy, the meditation group represents the focal point of the week, he said. "The effects of the meditation are much more noticeable when you are with a group. Afterwards, there we all are to share what we individually felt."

Each Sunday afternoon, the five congregate at the home of McElravy and Cook. After the group session, a true vegetarian style meal is served.

"I find a great deal of continuity in the growing I have done," Cook said. "The more I'm involved with the group, the more I feel it affects my basic beliefs."

HER ASSOCIATION with the organization began about the same time as her husband's, but their growth was individual. It has become such an essential part of their lives, she reported, that in some ways they take it for granted. "The plans for what we do with our time center around this. It's been a part of our married life since we were married."

"Ananda Marga is the supporting force that keeps our lives and families together," McElravy explained. He admitted that there are time conflicts between the demands of their beliefs and their family which includes a three-year-old son.

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