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*The 1500 year old Sultanganj Buddha statue at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. [See Telford Buddhist Priory](#)*

*For more information on the statue:  
<http://bmagblog.org/2014/10/07/the-sultanganj-buddha-1864-2014/>*

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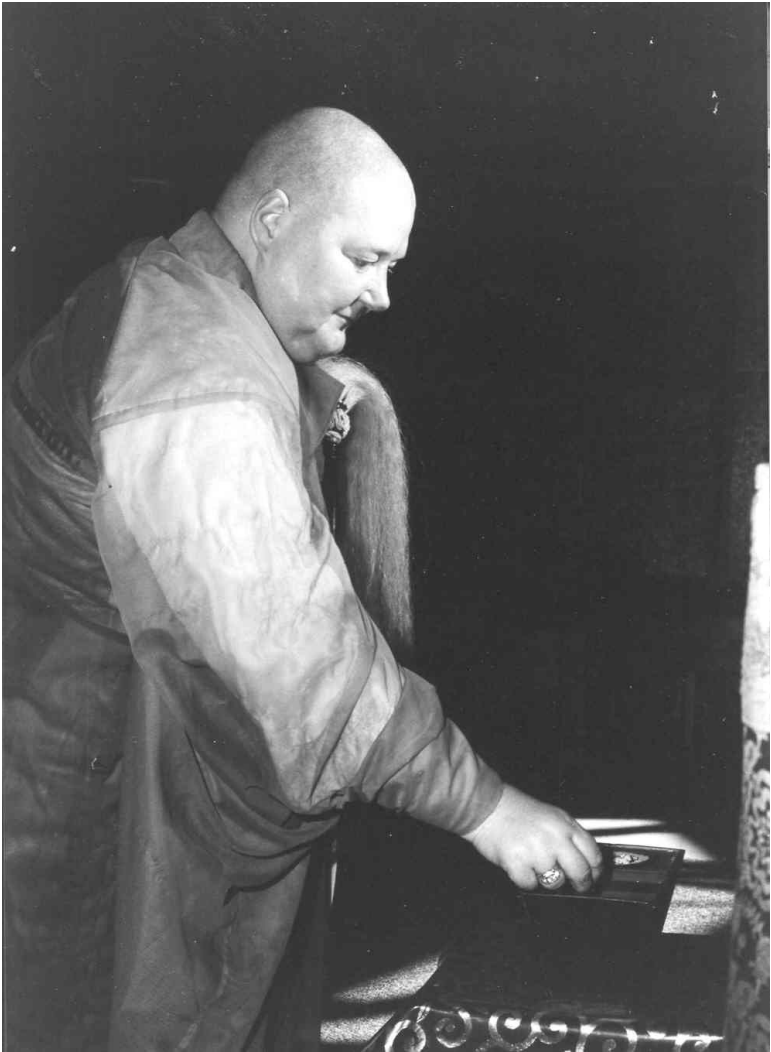
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*Reverend Master Jiyu-Kennett offering incense*

# The Truth Speaks for Itself; It Sings Its Own Song

Rev. Master Myōhō Harris

— *The Place of Peace Dharma House, Aberystwyth – Wales* —

*Whilst sitting quietly by the fire and contemplating the common room statue of Lord Jizō,<sup>1</sup> these assorted reflections arose into my mind and I offer them now in memory of my master, Reverend Master Jiyu-Kennett, who died 18 years ago this November.*

THE JEWEL OF ENLIGHTENMENT IS NOT RESTRICTED TO ANY PARTICULAR FORM OR APPEARANCE. It can take all forms and appear in any way that is most helpful for us to recognise and connect with. It is also called the Wish Fulfilling Gem because it reflects back to us what, in the depths of our being, we long for. When we see that wish, and feel the longing, we know that we can realise it, because it is already within us. The jewel can only reveal what is already there, it cannot give us something that we do not already have. By reconnecting us with our potential it affirms our purpose, and reassures us that our great longing is not a fanciful dream but the work of this lifetime and that, when we willingly, gladly, undertake that work, what we long for will come to us; we do not need to fight for it or try to grab at it; when we train

it will rise up from the depths of our being and make itself known. Indeed it will surpass anything we could have hoped for, imagined or dreamed of, as we could never self-create the wonder and depth of what we find. The realising of our True Wish takes us beyond the limitations of the mind and the life that we have known; the journey of realisation is itself the resolving of our karma, the clarifying of inner confusion and the fulfilling of our potential.

This realising of our potential is not something that we do just once, it is constantly being fulfilled because the incoming Buddha is always flowing and life is always unfolding.

As a new postulant at Shasta Abbey in the 1970's, I listened to Reverend Master Jiyu give a Dharma talk and it made my heart sing, she was speaking the Truth and I knew she would help me to find it, for and within myself. The way in which she spoke, the tone of her voice, was a holding up of the jewel. It reflected back to me my own true nature, it showed me what an ordinary flesh and blood being can become. It was not so much what she said, indeed most of it was far beyond my understanding, but what I did understand was the place the words came from. When a person trains deeply the Truth can manifest within and through them in an unobstructed way and has the freedom to sing Its own song. When that song is 'heard' by another it awakens something within them that has been waiting to come forth. This can also be described as 'one calls and one answers'. The movement of that awakening is the response to the call and

it sends out a call of its own; I am here, I am ready, ‘speak speak, give me direction’.<sup>2</sup>

After I had been at Shasta Abbey for a couple of years, the extent of my inner distress was beginning to make itself known to me. This is seldom an easy phase in anyone's training and it is essential that we not hinder the painful opening up of what has lain within us for so long. If it cannot reveal itself then it cannot be resolved. Reverend Master would say to me, “Myōhō, keep your faith strong and go STRAIGHT ON”. Hearing the confidence in her voice, I was connected with that heart of faith within myself, which is like a bottomless lagoon. However much faith (trust in the process) we need to take that next step, to sit still when we would run, to say ‘Yes’ instead of ‘No’, it rises up like a pure clear stream that keeps coming and coming and never stops. That endless flowing flushes out the memories of our past, it heals pain, illumines and clarifies confusion and, like a mighty tidal wave, causes all obstacles to dissolve; the beauty and purity of it, the vastness and magnificence of its flowing is a wondrous thing.

Reverend Master had turned the tide of karma within herself and her example showed me what was possible. How we are is far more important than the words we say, and Reverend Master had a quality of being that sang its own song. I saw the Buddhist way made real by this woman who was so fearless and so human, and somehow it was the seeing of her humanity that reassured me that I too, with my quirks and foibles, could make this great journey of discovery.

When I look back now at the earlier years of my training I cannot really remember the being I was. Much has changed and my life is so very different now to how it used to be. I entered Shasta Abbey with a mass of unresolved issues, pain, anxiety and desperation all jumbled up within me. As the meditation enabled me to accept and acknowledge more of that terrible distress, I felt it reach a low point that I do clearly recall. In meditation I saw myself as a barely human creature, lying in the darkness of abandonment, I felt like an outcast amongst my own kind, turned away from by others. As I saw myself in this pit of darkness, something caught my attention, I looked up and there was Reverend Master, standing as Lord Jizō stands, holding the staff and jewel, serenely still, at peace, content. Her body was radiant, like a beacon of light that warmed me from within. She was not waving her arms, telling me what to do or trying to make choices for me. She was just standing in meditation and that living stillness was enough, it had a sense of peace and sufficiency, a tenderness that reassured me.

Reverend Master would often say, “It is enough to know the Eternal”. There is a quality of being that reveals itself when a person has found that still centre in the midst of all conditions and trains in a way that enables them to live from it. When we abide within our natural purity, the physical space we occupy becomes the Pure Land. Looking at her I felt love, it was as though a beam of light reached down into that darkness and touched me, warmed me from within, bringing aching limbs back to life.



My favourite image in all of Buddhist iconography is that of Lord Jizō holding, showing, the Jewel of Enlightenment. The tenderness and beauty of it touches our hearts, speaks to each of us in a way that we can understand, calls us forth and shows us what we need to see; the Truth. The scriptures say that the Light of Truth shines of Itself and illumines the darkness of our delusion. That day it called to me, ‘come, put your hand in mine’, and I knew, beyond any doubt, that I was no longer stuck in that terrible place, that, step by patient step, the light of Truth would guide my steps. It did, and it continues to do so. However this is no ‘miracle cure’ or quick fix.

Sometimes an image or insight comes to us as a gift of grace. It shows us what is possible, what we are capable of, we then have to do the hard work of training that will realise that potential and this may, and probably will, take many years of dedicated effort. As a young novice, I once said to Reverend Master that this training we do is not easy and she replied that, if it were, it probably wouldn't be worthwhile.

The effort that we make is our offering and our asking to be taught. It is the giving of ourselves in simple faith and trust, bowing to the Master in the Heart and asking for help that makes possible the receiving of liberating insight and, through that, the transformation of a life.

When I saw Reverend Master, radiating sufficiency and peace in that dark and terrible place, I knew that I too could sit still in the midst of what life had given me to work with, and this knowing changes everything because it changes us.

It changes our relationship to what is arising within and around us. Instead of turning away from that darkness we turn towards it, instead of wanting to wallpaper over the cracks, we seek genuine understanding. We no longer fear or resist the Truth and this is what opens the doors of our suffering.

The scriptures tell us that Lord Jizō opens the doors of hell by holding high the great staff of the three Refuges of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. We can hold the staff high without making any physical movement for it is when a being can live, in an unobstructed way, from their original purity that the staff is raised high. The three great Refuges are one with preceptual Truth and this Truth dissolves all obstacles, it resolves the confusion of mistaken perception, melts resistance and gently soothes all agitation. When there is no distinction between the staff and the one who holds it, the doors of distress (and enlightening insight) open. This has little to do with a wooden staff and a great deal to do with the quality of training of the one who holds it. When ordinary human flesh, blood and bones and the spirit of Truth can merge as one, the pure original essence of that human life reveals itself, it ‘speaks’ by showing *what* it is that we are and says, without words, yes, there is an end to suffering. Reverend Master ‘spoke’ to me in this way.

Sitting within the vast peace of meditation, sensing and being calmed by Its completeness; the desperation, which came from the fear of feeling utterly alone within that darkness, was able to fall away. This trusting reliance, this

offering of our life to the Master in the Heart, stills and calms us, it opens our inner ear enabling a ‘hearing’ that is deeper than any ordinary human ear can detect. Entrusting ourselves to the refuge enables us to see in a way we could not before we sat within ‘the absolute upright’ that holds all conditions. The purity of our trust combined with our wish to be shown what we need to do (and our willingness to then do it) sets free and opens our mind. This makes us more receptive to being able to see clearly, and the sufficiency we find in that sitting place means we don't panic, despair or grab at desperate self-created solutions. Relaxing into this new found faith and patience, we wait for the path forward to reveal itself.

And it does.

Sitting within stillness and contentment is not a passive activity; being at ease within the unknown, or that which we find frightening, deepens faith and prepares the mind to receive the Truth. From this ‘call’ comes the liberating insight, the ‘light that separates the murky (confusion caused by not being able to understand) from the pure’ (Truth). This light of Truth illumines our minds from within and highlights the way forward, it beckons and our feet ‘hear’ Its call, they move and take a step into the unknown, and that step of faith connects our inner gaze with whatever we need to see as the path forward comes to meet us. Instead of feeling lost and trapped, I found myself being guided by the wisdom of clarifying insight. I also learnt that waiting for conditions to ripen is as much, and as valuable, a part of the

spiritual journey as are times of actual movement; indeed they are often what make that movement (change) possible. When we train there is never a time when nothing is happening, we may not be aware of it, but that is another matter.

Reverend Master would say to us, do not worry if you wobble or fall over, just get up and keep going. How right she was; I have lost count of the number of times I fell over and I know there were many days when I found the 'going on' so very hard. This is a slow and exquisite journey that cannot be hurried and we must be prepared to let faith take us where we need to go. The process of the unfolding of our inner pain and confusion is also the process of understanding what has made us the way we are, which in turn leads to freedom from fear. The fear that we cannot look, cannot cope with looking at what lies within us. From this comes great gratitude, relief and inner ease as layer upon layer of stress (caused by seeing only part of the picture) falls away. This is all made possible by the choices we make. We humans have a remarkable ability to bow and choose to take Refuge in Truth, choose to let the practice help us, which makes possible a life that is beyond compare.

The Truth reveals Itself within the stillness, it calls to us, it beckons, but it does not insist; we have to want it and then train ourselves to be one who can receive it. We find that the Dharma of true insight can only be received, it cannot be taken or held on to, it does not belong to anyone, it is not 'my Truth' or 'your Truth'. It flows forth and

training enables us to be always becoming it. Training with Reverend Master showed me that indeed our very existence is the unfolding of the Buddha's Teaching, and that unfolding will sing Its own song; I do not have to try to make anything happen, I just need to live in a way that makes real my wish to always be one with that unfolding.

They say that when the time is right the Master appears.<sup>3</sup> Who is the Master? The Master is what lies within the unfathomable depths of meditation; we use different words for It as seems right to us. Our human Master is the person within, and through whom, this great mystery (that I call the Master in the Heart) can call to us in a clear and direct way.

Throughout the ages, beings have trained closely with those who could practice more deeply than themselves. They have sat beside them and learnt from them. If we read in a book that we can find the source of our suffering and lay to rest all that grief, it is hard to comprehend what that means (it was for me) but when we see it as a living reality within and how another fellow human is then we can know it is possible. Reverend Master taught me by *how* she was. The way she moved, the purity of her training, the tone of her voice and by what I saw when I looked into her eyes.

What she was, is and always will be, (which is what you and I were, are and always will be), took the transient form and figure of a human being; Buddha Nature manifesting as a monk who taught the Truth.<sup>4</sup> One who, with great generosity of spirit, showed us by example how we too,

through training within the limited nature of a human lifespan, can find that which is without limit. She showed me how to take the ordinary and do something extraordinary with it.

For that I bow in gratitude.

### *Notes*

1. This statue shows Lord Jizō who appears in human form as a monk. He/she stands in meditation whilst holding the staff of the three great Refuges in the right hand and the Jewel of Enlightenment in the left hand. Lord Jizō is the patron Bodhisattva of The Place of Peace. Among other things, he leads beings out of darkness into the light and watches over those who need protection.
2. This is a line from *The Litany of The Great Compassionate One*, which is sung twice daily in our temples and can be found on page 78 in *The Liturgy of The Order of Buddhist Contemplatives For The Laity*, (Shasta Abbey Press 1990) p.78.
3. We need to be ready to meet our Master whose presence will both reassure us of what is possible and call forth, or draw to the surface, our karma (inner confusion that we find hard to look at and still influences our actions) and so being around them may not always be a comfortable experience because it brings us face to face with our own unresolved issues. At first this might seem disturbing. By allowing ourselves to be disturbed by the Truth we have the opportunity to do something about those issues and this can save us lifetimes of distress.
4. What Reverend Master, like Shakyamuni, was is and always will be, is in the flow of every breath and in the meeting in the heart. There is a place beyond space and time where all the true masters have, do and will come from. They teach reliance upon what flows forth from that great mystery, not upon themselves. Human beings appear and undertake many years of devoted practice so that the Truth can speak through them, they grow old and die, and the Truth speaks through that too. Physical forms / manifestations change but the Truth of what they are remains a constant; its song goes on as beings come and go within and as that eternal flowing.

# What part does Ambition play in the Spiritual life?

## A Buddhist perspective

Paul Taylor OBC

— Lancaster – UK —

*This is a slightly revised version of a short talk given to Faithshare, an informal termly interfaith gathering of students, staff and religious representatives, at Lancaster University. A member from each faith tradition was invited to make a short contribution on this mutually agreed topic, of which this was one. It was followed by a general discussion.*

IN THE OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY,<sup>1</sup> AMBITION IS DEFINED as: ‘a strong desire to do or achieve something’, or ‘the desire and determination to achieve success’. For a Buddhist, the questions might arise, ‘What are you ambitious for?’ and ‘Why are you ambitious for it?’

So, for example, some Buddhists might well express ambitions for themselves as ‘I want to become skilled and accomplished enough, and gather enough resources so that I can live fruitfully and help others’, ‘I want to achieve my full potential’, ‘I wish to realise what it means truly to be a human being’, or, ‘I want my family to be a success’, or someone might say ‘I wish to have a successful career’.

Indeed Buddhism suggests that if we don't have ambition towards something noble, or at least something better, we will probably become complacent and our lives may even gradually degenerate. A lack of ambition or aspiration could lead to despair and cynicism, even if a person is clever or nimble.

In Buddhism, we might direct our ambition to making progress on a spiritual path particularly within a perspective of accomplishing its stages. There are Buddhist texts and scriptures, for example, describing the four states leading to personal sainthood (*arahantship*)<sup>2</sup>, or the ten stages of the altruistic *bodhisattva* path<sup>3</sup> or the Oxherding Pictures in Zen<sup>4</sup>. Buddhism appreciates enthusiasm and aiming high.

Such frameworks can be helpful. They emphasise that the spiritual path needs to be cultivated; that there are depths to plumb, wisdom to be found, compassion to be attuned to, and that deep spirituality is not just about being kind and well-intentioned. They give pointers to where we are and where we are not. Getting some sense of the fruits of the path can be an encouragement. Such 'maps', which have been passed on by those most experienced in practice, can also be used to check whether the understanding of someone is in accordance with the cumulative experience of the tradition.

However, Buddhism points out that if ambition for 'progress' is not approached in an appropriate way, there is a huge danger of merely solidifying the acquisitive, grasping mind. This leads away from true spirituality. Complementary to such an 'accomplishment of stages' view of Buddhist practice is a 'letting go' view. This has been variously described as being drawn by something deeper, not



being limited by the intellect, responding to a ‘call’, or as the way of unknowing. Being willing to let go of an insistence in how we view things and to allow ourselves to be helped by someone more experienced in practice is helpful as a touchstone.

One ambition to be careful of from a Buddhist perspective is that of self-improvement<sup>5</sup>. If approached inappropriately it can lead to the mistake of self-aggrandisement—the more experiences I have, the better I am (if I do a thousand things before I die<sup>6</sup> I am more interesting, more popular, more powerful and therefore better). It is not that the wish for self-improvement is wrong, but one can easily go astray.

The symbolism of the Sumeru altar on which the Buddha statue is placed, is helpful. It has seven tiers. The lower three (or sometimes four) are like steps, but the higher three are like overhangs.

The teaching of the first four steps seems to be that we climb through our own effort. We seem to get better and better through our own will. But as we go higher (or is it deeper?) we reach the overhangs. Then we have to let go of our ambition for self-improvement and become willing rather than wilful. Here is intuition, trust and faith. Self-improvement is not our own property. Indeed ambitious striving raises obstacles. These overhangs call for perseverance and humility.



*The Sumeru altar in the Ceremony Hall at Throssel Hole  
Buddhist Abbey*

But this symbolism itself has a slightly sequential flavour, and other Buddhist writings convey that both will ('stages') and willingness ('letting go') are needed and are present together in each step<sup>7</sup>

In Zen it is sometimes said that in the beginning we train for ourselves, then we train for others, and then we train for training's sake (we practice just for the sake of practice).<sup>8</sup> A famous Zen Master, Dōgen, wrote, 'when one studies Buddhism, one studies oneself; when one studies oneself, one forgets oneself; when one forgets oneself one is enlightened by everything...'<sup>9</sup>

So, rather than being ambitious for accomplishment, we find ourselves more attuned and more responsive to what is here. An over-focus on self-improvement tends to lead to selfishness, which jars with the spiritual life. *Craving* for

accomplishment is a barrier. Instead we orientate ourselves towards being more selfless, not in terms of having a negative sense of self—we have a fully functioning self—but rather in the sense of not getting attached to defending an illusory, separated, isolated, and armoured self against a seemingly untrustworthy world.

However, goal-seeking ambition helps us in doing many of the complex things we do. But in outwardly focused tasks we learn to become less attached to outcomes and are willing to adjust when circumstances change. In terms of inner focus, we learn to let go of attachment to measuring spiritual accomplishment, which tends to arise from inadequacy or pride. Categorising people as ‘saved’ or ‘damned’ might be seen as an extreme version of such an attachment.

Buddhism suggests we can even become attached to the ambition of doing good. A ‘do-gooder’ (in quotes!) who always knows what is best for others better than they know themselves, and who interferes in others’ lives, is a menace! They fail to trust in the integrity of others, an integrity in which we help *and are helped* by others.

The term *bodhicitta*, used by many Buddhist traditions, is helpful to consider. It can be translated as, for example, ‘the awakened heart/mind’, ‘the will to enlightenment’ or, which I like, ‘the mind that seeks the Way.’<sup>10</sup> One definition is ‘the mind totally dedicated to others and to achieving full enlightenment to benefit all...beings as fully as possible’<sup>11</sup>. It is said that initially we aspire to this mind, and Buddhist writers tend to use the terms ‘aspire’ or ‘vow’ rather than ‘to be ambitious for’<sup>12</sup>. Then through practice, through our

committed efforts, we learn to attune and align ourselves with it. One analogy for it is that it is like a gentle gravitational pull, inherent, natural, always present unless we choose to go against it. We don't manufacture it. It underpins everything. Rather than striving self-centredly, we just stop doing what inhibits our knowing it, and get ourselves out of the way.

A few final observations: the inward nature of the spiritual path in Buddhism needs to be integrated with our ordinary daily life. Ambition in the world is not separate from ambition in a spiritual sense. Self-aggrandising external ambition influences how we are in a spiritual sense. For example, if it rests on a burning desire to acquire power<sup>13</sup> it remains extremely vulnerable to changing conditions, and can lead to our losing touch with the intuitive inner sense of belonging and connectedness at the heart of the spiritual life. Improving the world in a good way can help us improve ourselves in an equally helpful way. And in terms of our gathering together here, listening to what is needed and following our inner response, it may lead us to university to study to get a good job, to gain skills, to expose ourselves to fruitful life experiences, and encourage compassionate, caring and loving interactions with others. Still we need to take care that we are not just building up a fragile self-image, too easily punctured as we encounter the world. Whilst *following* the good example of someone else can be very fruitful, trying to *be* someone else is invariably a loser. And, how we respond when our ambition is thwarted can reveal quite a lot about ourselves.

## Notes

1. <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/>
2. See for example, *The Buddha and His Teachings*, Narada Maha Thera, Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy 1980, pp 547-550.
3. See for example, *Gems of Dharma, Jewels of Freedom*, Je Gampopa, tr. Kenneth and Katia Holmes, Altea Publishing 1995, pp 268-289.
4. There are various versions of these pictures, see for example, *Riding the Ox Home, Stages on the Path to Enlightenment*, Master Kuoan, commentary by John Daido Looi, Shambala Publications, 1999, or *Oxherding Pictures and Verses*, Master P'u Ming, tr. Red Pine, Empty Bowl 2011.
5. The short article, 'Ambition and Aspiration', on <http://www.buddhisma2z.com/content.php?id=15>, refers to the self-improvement movement in terms of its being a recent Western phenomenon. Other traditional Buddhist writings also suggest that it has been a live issue throughout Buddhism's history.
6. However the comments here do not mean to imply that there is anything wrong with having a rich variety of experiences in life. See also, for example, Chapter 9: Life is not Biography, *Buddha Recognizes Buddha*, Daishin Morgan, Throssel Hole Press, 2010.
7. For me, for example, these include *The Lotus Sutra*, and the *Sandōkai*. The former is available in a number of translations - one, for example is, *The Threefold Lotus Sutra*, Kato B. Weatherhill / Kosei 1984. Some of its important teaching stories are clearly and warmly retold and commented on in *The Stories of the Lotus Sutra*, Gene Reeves, Wisdom 2010. The latter, *Sandōkai*, by Great Master Sekito Kisen, is downloadable at: <http://www.shastaabbey.org/pdf/sandōkai.pdf>
8. See *The Necessity of Understanding the Heart of Avalokitesvara, Zen is Eternal Life*, Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, Shasta Abbey Press, 1999, p 39.
9. See *Genjo-Koan, Zen is Eternal Life*, Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, Shasta Abbey Press, 1999, p 206.
10. See <http://www.wisdomlib.org/definition/bodhicitta/index.html> 'Bodhicitta 14 Definitions', and *Gakudo-Yojinshu, Zen is Eternal Life*, Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, Shasta Abbey Press, 1999, pp 162-172. See also Chapter 2: The Wish for Enlightenment, *Buddha Recognizes Buddha*, Daishin Morgan, op cit.
11. See <http://www.bodhicitta.net/> 'What is Bodhicitta?'
12. See, for example, *Living by Vow*, Shohaku Okamura, Wisdom

Publications, 2012. I have been told that Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett had used the term ‘right resolve’ in this context in one of her lectures. See also footnote 5.

13. One of the ‘Five Laws of the Universe’ in Buddhism, which are the fundamental principles underlying reality as seen by Buddhism, is that ‘the world is not answerable to my personal will’—see, for example, <http://www.shastaabbey.org/teachings-glossary.html>

# Adapting to Conditions

Rev. Master Kinrei Bassis

— Berkeley Buddhist Priory, Albany, CA – USA —

*This article is based on a lecture I gave at Shasta Abbey in August 2012 as part of a week-long retreat. This lecture was based on An Outline of Practice by Bodhidharma. This describes four practices that encompass all of Buddhist training: suffering injustice, adapting to conditions, seeking nothing, and practicing the Dharma. This article is based on the lecture on the second practice—adapting to conditions. The talk has been edited and some sections expanded and originally appeared in Berkeley Buddhist Priory newsletter.*

Adapting to conditions: As mortals, we're ruled by conditions, not by ourselves. All the suffering and joy we experience depend on conditions. If we should be blessed by some great reward, such as fame or fortune, it's the fruit of a seed planted by us in the past. When conditions change, it ends. Why delight in Its existence? But while success and failure depend on conditions, the mind neither waxes nor wanes. Those who remain unmoved by the wind of joy silently follow the Path.<sup>1</sup>

I find this teaching of Bodhidharma's to be very helpful. I particularly like the line,

Those who remain unmoved by the wind of joy  
silently follow the Path.

Most people come to Buddhist practice wanting to deal with some aspect of their suffering. Most people recognize there are many difficulties in their life and they have numerous problems. But we rarely recognize how all our suffering and problems are simply the other side of what we are grasping; of what we are seeking and desiring.

There is a widely used teaching in Buddhism, the Eight Worldly Concerns. They are gain and loss, fame and disgrace, pleasure and pain, praise and blame. Naturally it is normal and helpful to want pleasure rather than pain, gain rather than loss, etc. For us to gain a real understanding of the Dharma, we need to understand the Buddhist teaching that nothing fundamentally important is happening when we receive gain and loss, fame and disgrace, pleasure and pain, praise and blame. Naturally, being a sentient being, we are deeply conditioned to prefer pleasure to pain and this is true of all the Eight Worldly Concerns. We naturally prefer gain, fame, and praise. Yet all these worldly conditions just pass away like a dream as time washes them all away. Everything in the past becomes a memory, which is very much like a dream; a dream of pleasure or pain, a dream of fame or disgrace, a dream of gain or loss, a dream of praise or blame.

For instance, nothing fundamentally is happening when you have either pleasure or pain; there is nothing you can grasp. Pleasure and pain are just passing transient conditions.



Praise and blame are just the floating opinions of others. Yet if you allow yourself to be intoxicated with praise, then you'll be crushed when you get criticized. Again with arising of the opposites, if you obsess on gaining something then it can be very hard, or even devastating, if it is lost.

Gain and loss seem so real in our daily lives yet as we approach our own mortality, it then becomes much easier to understand Dōgen's teaching,

The kingdom of death must be entered by oneself alone, with nothing for company but our own good and bad karma.<sup>2</sup>

Adapting to conditions is being willing to let go of what our little self is demanding and being willing to ask ourselves what choices can we make that will lead to the best possible outcome? That which is stopping us from adapting to conditions is our fixed opinions, our hard judgments and our strong feelings of how things should be.

When Great Master Dōgen returned to Japan after being a monk in China for a number of years, he was asked what he had brought back from China. Dōgen replied, "All I brought back was a soft and flexible mind." To find real peace and contentment, we need a mind that is flexible and a heart that is soft so we can adjust and adapt to whatever conditions we encounter in our lives. This means that we are not strongly grasping our opinions and our wishes on how all the myriad of things in our life should be. We are making the effort to stop filling our minds and hearts with a seemingly never ending flow of desires and needs. Instead,

we focus on having the right intention and then a willingness to pay attention to what results flow out of our choices.

There is great resistance to just allowing the conditions to flow through our life because we find it very difficult to abandon our strongly held views of how life should be. This very resistance seems to be a central part of what we view as being human. This means we are grasping our suffering and justifying it with our deluded views. To be inwardly still with all these difficult conditions allows all the feelings and thoughts to surface. Everything can be seen and felt. Unfortunately, this goes against our normal human conditioning which is to resist facing and feeling our difficulties and pain. There are many ways we resist being still and open to all our difficult karma. We find reasons not to meditate, reasons to not believe in our ability to deal with our difficulties. We can find fault with ourselves, fault with others, fault with the world. The solution to suffering lies in our wholehearted acceptance of whatever is happening in our lives, and all our suffering is rooted in our resistance to this acceptance.

Adapting to conditions requires us keep asking what is good to do, what is the right action in this specific situation, for these particular conditions. Whenever we are demanding that others be different, for the world to be different, we are then fighting with conditions rather than adapting to conditions. The most important condition we need to adapt to and accept is all the various conditions that are flowing through our hearts and minds. We do not actually control how we feel, nor do we control what thoughts arise in our minds.

Adapting to conditions means when difficult emotions like fear arise, the question then is, “what is the right response to these fearful thoughts and feelings?” When despair is coming up, the question is “what help can we offer to all our feelings of hopelessness and our critical thoughts?” The problem is not that we have these difficult thoughts and feelings but rather how can we help our difficult karma. It is like having a dirty room; how do I help the karma of the dirty room? The dirty room just requires the effort of cleaning and it feels right to clean. Yet, if you don’t have time or the opportunity to clean, then you have to just let it go and realize there is nothing fundamentally wrong with something being dirty.

Adapting to conditions means we have to trust that everything is fundamentally pure and no amount of dirt can change the truth of this inherent purity. Our spiritual training is to help these Truths to be seen and experienced; this is done by being willing to clean. Just as a dirty room is not fundamentally unclean or wrong, nothing is wrong with the dirt in our hearts. It just means we need to clean and purify our hearts. Fundamentally all fear, all hatred, all inadequacy, all pride, are just some of the things that need to be cleansed in our hearts.

Buddhist practice is the cultivating of our faith that everything we really want, our true treasure, can be found in the stillness of our hearts. When our hearts and minds are not grasping, not getting caught up with our desires, but instead being open to all the flow of conditions, then we can realize that nothing is fundamentally being affected in this flow. The word, ‘Buddha’ means awakened. The Buddha was someone

who was no longer lost in his dream of birth and death. The dreamlike nature of birth and death is not that birth and death are not real. The dreamlike quality lies in how we give profound meaning to our triumphs and failures, to our pleasure and pain. The story of our life, a tale we keep telling ourselves, is usually a drama, with tragedy, with triumphs, and with failures. A famous line from the *Diamond Sutra* is:

Thus shall you think of all this fleeting world: A star at dawn, a bubble in a stream, a flash of lightning in a summer cloud, a flickering lamp, a phantom, and a dream.<sup>3</sup>

To seek Buddhahood is to seek to awaken from our dream of birth and death. What people call worldly life usually means being lost in this dream of birth and death. Our day-to-day experience, what we call life, is generally a perception of a world out of harmony, in which good and evil are both pervasive, in which happiness is hard to find and suffering hard to avoid. In our lives we search for happiness yet this appears and disappears from our lives without us being able to grasp and maintain our joy and peace. We hold on to the past, both our past wounds which still disturb us and our past joys whose memory we try to keep alive so as to sustain us in our present life. We keep thinking and grasping after an image of our future which is better than our present and we fear a future in which we have lost what we cherish most about our present life. We hope and dream of a future in which our life's circumstances are better—an improved job, better relationships, a better body

and health. We hope and dream of a future in which we are a better person, no longer having our current feelings of inadequacy or fear, despair or anguish. We hope and dream of a better world, a world in which justice and truth prevail and in which mankind works in harmony for the good of all sentient beings.

Many of our hopes and dreams are, in themselves, good and virtuous. It is natural and appropriate that we should try to attain a good life for ourselves, for our family, for our friends, for our town, for our nation, for our planet, and for all sentient beings. Yet what we usually think of as reality is really just ourselves being lost in a dream. Our suffering is just like being lost in a nightmare, and our happiness and joy are just being caught up in a pleasant dream. The real goal of Buddhism is to awaken from our total absorption in these dreams and to do what the Buddha did, become awakened and experience the real ground of existence.

Dōgen wrote,

The most important question for all Buddhists is how to understand birth and death completely for then, should you be able to find the Buddha within birth and death, they both vanish.<sup>4</sup>

Buddhism points us to nirvana; it points us to a place in which we can find true liberation. This why Buddhism teaches us this body is not our true home and our small, often suffering self is not our Real Self.

The *Litany of the Great Compassionate One* says, ‘Om to the One who leaps beyond all fear.’<sup>5</sup>

It means we can awaken from this dream full of fear and longing, and realize that there is nothing we need to fear and nothing that we lack.

The Buddhist teaching of the Middle Way is found by not allowing ourselves to be caught up in the opposites of the Eight Worldly Concerns. The Buddhist Middle Way is the practice of adapting to conditions and finding the right way to relate to the pleasure and pain, success and failure, etc. It is like the balance we need to find in our sitting meditation. We are neither grasping after our thoughts nor pushing them away. We need to bring our mind back when it wanders down the various distracting pathways of our discursive mind. This takes discipline and effort. Yet we need to be mindful and accept the thoughts and feelings that arise and not push them away.

This is a soft effort which is a balance, because you can actually push everything away so you blank your mind, or you can put no effort in your meditation and let your mind just drift. In our meditation practice, we're accepting what's going on and yet we're still putting considerable effort into the hard work of maintaining our awareness—allowing all the thoughts and feelings to arise, but then, with mindfulness, letting them go.

But while success and failure depend on conditions, the mind neither waxes nor wanes. “Those who remain unmoved by the wind of joy silently follow the Path.”

How can we find the mind that neither waxes nor wanes? This can seem to be an impossible task. How can we sit still and not be moved when we confront all the various difficulties we need to deal with in our lives? How can we

not be moved by the power of these worldly conditions? Without the deep effort to try to see the deeper truth beyond these surface conditions, life can easily be depressing or bewildering, especially when disappointments or tragedies occur. An important part of the practice is to just be still and open our minds and hearts to the way things are. We will then start freeing ourselves from being overwhelmed and deluded by the appearance of things.

We free ourselves by letting go of ownership of the conditions that are passing through our lives. We are being deluded when we take ownership of any of the eight worldly conditions. All these conditions are just passing through us. Our world is created by the way our mind moves and becomes entangled in these worldly conditions. When our mind doesn't understand the real nature of all these conditions, it is moved by them. Encountering good, bad, pleasure, or pain, we take possession of these conditions and then allow our minds to be filled with desire and aversion. We are moved by these desires and fears and allow them to direct our lives.

To understand suffering we need to understand what is flowing through our lives and to understand our reaction to this flow of conditions. What is really happening when we suffer? When we are happy, where does the happiness come from, and what happens when the happiness goes away? If you cannot understand where your suffering and happiness come from, then how can you understand what is the real nature of your life?

We need a childlike trust in the impossible—our own Buddhahood. We must train with the faith that in the deepest

sense, the external conditions do not matter. This body of ours is a body of karma, flowing inextricably towards old age, disease and death. Yet the wonderful truth that lies at the heart of Buddhism is that our real heart and mind is always completely unbounded and free.

Every Buddha and every Ancestor realizes that he is the same as the limitless sky and as great as the universe. When they realize their true body there is nothing within or without; when they realize their true body they are nowhere more upon the earth.<sup>6</sup>

#### Notes

1. Bodhidharma. *The Zen Teaching of Bodhidharma*, trans. Red Pine (Northpoint Press, 1987) p. 5.
2. Great Master Dōgen. *Zen is Eternal Life*, trans. Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett, (Shasta Abbey Press, 1999) p.95.
3. Great Master Dōgen. *Serene Reflection Meditation*, trans. Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett, (Shasta Abbey Press, 1989) p.74.
4. *Zen is Eternal Life*, trans. p.94, op. cit.
5. *The litany of the Great Compassionate One, The Litany of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives for the Laity*, (Shasta Abbey Press 1990) p.78.
6. *Kyōjukaimon and Commentary* by Great Master Dōgen in *Serene Reflection Meditation*, p.75, op.cit.



# Beginner's Mind

Neil Rothwell OBC

— *Edinburgh – Scotland* —

ONE OF THE MOST INTERESTING DEVELOPMENTS DURING MY TIME as a clinical psychologist over the past 30 years has been the mainstream acceptance of mindfulness-based therapy. This has enabled me to apply the experience of my personal meditation practice into NHS healing work. One of the refreshing things about mindfulness is that it includes movement and attention to the body. Psychological therapists have traditionally focused overwhelmingly on conversation as the vehicle for change.

The core principle of mindfulness is being present, or awake to each, moment. If we notice we are worrying about the future or ruminating on the past, we let go of these thoughts and return to what is happening now, in our mind, body and surroundings. The aspect of mindfulness I would like to look at is beginner's mind. This is one of seven attitudes that are supportive of mindfulness, the others being:

Patience

Letting Go

Acceptance

Trust

Non-striving  
Non-judging

We connect with beginner's mind by letting go of all we think we know about a situation and approaching it with fresh eyes. We see this in children, who have a natural sense of wonder. Why is this helpful? The late Zen Buddhist teacher, Shunryu Suzuki, said, "In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities; in the expert's mind there are few". Often, when we approach a situation, we bring to it our knowledge of similar past situations. Each moment is unique, and if we rely too heavily on that knowledge, it acts like a filter of the direct experience of now. It is a bit like wearing a pair of sunglasses—everything we see is coloured by this past knowledge. By being willing to let go of this expertise, we can discard limitations and be open to all possibilities in this fresh moment.

This is not to deny that we—and all things—have a history. Our past has shaped us and made us who we are. In fact, the present moment exists as it is because of the infinite actions and conditions of the past. The past, then, shapes the present moment but it does not determine how we respond to it. We have free will, and can change the future by how we act right now.

The purpose, here, is not to reject the importance of expertise. We rely on experts in all manner of situations and know ourselves the importance of learning and experience in developing new skills. After all, children are naturally 'in the moment' partly because they have not fully developed the wonderful mature adult brain that enables us to plan new projects and solve complex problems. It is because our

intellect is so valuable that we tend to use it in situations that it was not designed for. So the same brain that can visualise a better future can also obsessively fantasise about negative outcomes, i.e. worry. And we know from experience that worried-about outcomes rarely happen. Similarly, we can rely on our conceptual mind to filter, and therefore limit, our immediate experience. This is often based on a lack of trust of our ability to respond spontaneously to a situation. In fact, we can never lose our expertise and experience. It will arise as and when we need it, if we allow ourselves to be open. We can allow experience and knowledge to function naturally rather than trying to grab on to them.

A couple of years ago I took up learning the violin again. I had studied it for a few years in my teens but had not played it for over 30 years. I'd assumed I would be going back to square one in terms of playing but, in fact, when I started to play, I discovered that much of my previous learning came back to me. This was a striking example of how what we know comes back naturally as needed.

Beginner's mind is very practical, and can inform our actions in everyday situations. It is very relevant to any movement, including yoga. Movement is something people normally do on 'automatic pilot' as it is overlearned, to use a psychological term. We are so familiar with it that we don't need to think about how to do it. Yet it is interesting to reflect that it took several months of hard work to learn even how to stand, when we were babies. Learning new movements like yoga provides the opportunity to a fresh attention to our body. In the mindfulness course, one of the practices is walking meditation, where awareness is focused on the

detailed movements involved in an activity we normally take for granted.

Another area where beginner's mind is useful is in relationships. One of the reasons we can feel close to another person is because of a shared history. Yet sometimes, aspects of that history can be problematic. For example feelings of hurt, disappointment or boredom can colour our view of another person. We then tend to see what we already know when interacting with them. If we want to make changes in a relationship, it is helpful to look at the person as though we were seeing them for the first time. This is actually true, in that we are all changing moment by moment. Doing this means looking at a person with fresh eyes, and we may notice aspects of them we had previously overlooked. Or maybe we will see aspects of our own mind we can let go of.

Change in work situations can also be engendered in this way. Most organisations have a momentum developed from the past which enables work to proceed smoothly. However, there often comes a point where circumstances change and new approaches need developing. Let go of the past, look with fresh eyes, and see what the possibilities are.

# How do I Know I'm Doing It Right?

Dan Brodribb

— *Edmonton, Alberta – Canada* —

HERE ARE SOME OF THE QUESTIONS I OFTEN HEAR BEGINNING MEDITATORS ASK: How often should I meditate? How many times a day? Why couldn't I empty my mind? What should be happening?

Here are questions I—a slightly more experienced meditator—often ask myself: Should I be meditating more? Should I be meditating better? Why are the same things coming up over and over? Have I been making any progress at all? What do the three lines from the Starland Vocal Band's 'Afternoon Delight' that have been playing over in over in my head through my entire morning meditation have to do with enlightenment?

These are all great questions. Some of them might even have answers, although in my experiences those answers are slippery things, darting one way or another depending on when and where the question is asked. But what those questions share is a single deeper question lurking behind them, perhaps the biggest question of all for new and experienced meditators alike:

How do I know I'm doing it right?

The good news is, so long as we're meditating, chances

are we're doing just fine. For one thing, the simplicity of our brand of meditation makes it hard to mess up. You can explain it in a sentence: Sit still, and notice what's happening.

It's important to emphasize that it's the 'noticing' part that's important, not the 'what's happening' part. Maybe we're experiencing peace and serenity. Maybe we're frustrated and annoyed. Maybe its thirty-five minutes of: 'Skyrockets in flight/Afternoon Delight'. Maybe we're just bored. All those things are fine. They might not feel fine when they're happening, but the longer I've trained, the more I've come to realize that I'm a poor judge of what I should or should not be experiencing.

As long as we are still and pay attention, chances are we're on the right track. But for many of us it isn't enough to just get on and do it. We need to know we're doing it right. Or at least see some evidence that we aren't doing it wrong.

I, personally, have not found that evidence in my sitting. I don't find meditation any easier, more profound, or better now than when I started. It's the same as it's always been—sometimes joyous, sometimes distracted, always unpredictable.

What I have noticed is that my life outside of meditation has changed. Other meditators have described similar experiences. When we notice any of the following things, chances are, our practice is deepening whether we're aware of it or not.

\*Others tell us that we've changed even though it doesn't feel like we're doing anything differently.

\*There is an effortlessness to our lives. It feels like we are trying less hard, but accomplishing more.

\*We experience what's happening more deeply when it's happening. Sights, sounds, scents, sensations...they aren't stronger exactly, but we notice them more. We are aware of thoughts and feelings inside ourselves that previously only existed in the background.

\*We realize we still aren't perfect and that meditation has not and will not 'fix' us. We become strangely okay with that.

How do I know I'm doing it right? I don't. And perhaps I never will. Somehow, I'm learning to be okay with that.

# NEWS OF THE ORDER

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## Europe

### Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey

— *Northumberland, England – UK* —

#### **Monastic news:**

The community and resident guests had a quiet month in September, following a daily schedule with no retreats or festivals. We welcomed Rev. Master Leandra back from her month stay in the US.

In October we had a welcome visit from Rev. Clementia, a disciple of Rev. Master Fuden's from Dharmazuflucht temple in Germany. She helped out in the Guest Department, joined in our Segaki retreat and was chaplain for the ceremony. We enjoyed her bright presence and wish her and Rev. Master Fuden well in their new temple.

#### **Visiting monks:**

It was a pleasure to have a visit from Rev. Master Saidō and Rev. Master Peter in October who came to talk about the OBC Activities Trust and the responsibilities and duties of trustees. They talked and took questions; a most helpful meeting. They are both Throssel trustees and stayed on for a trustees meeting later in the day.

We also had a visit from a Sōtō Zen monk from Wales, Rev. Taikyo, who came with five of his students to our November Introductory Retreat. Rev. Taikyo trains in the Blue Mountains White Hermitage lineage and works at the University of Lampeter where he runs a meditation group. He joined the monks during the retreat and it was a pleasure to have him with us. We also shared



memories of Rev. Master Chūshin who was one of the monks who introduced Rev. Taikyo to Buddhism.

**Segaki Festival:**

We had a full week during our Segaki Retreat, with teaching on three days from Rev. Master Leandra, who ran the retreat, a talk from Rev. Master Hugh, and the focal point of the Segaki ceremonies.



*During the ceremony*

This was Rev. Leandra’s dedication at the beginning of the Feeding of the hungry Ghosts ceremony as she offered incense:

“We offer the merit of this ceremony in particular to those who have died in painful, difficult and distressing

circumstances, or in unsettled and despairing states of mind.

We pray that through performing this ceremonial together, each of us and all beings from other realms who come to join us, will be helped to convert craving and delusion so that we may rise in joy upon the brilliant altar.”

### **Memorial at Samye Ling temple:**

In October, the community was invited to part of a week of commemoration events running up to the 1st anniversary of the death of Choje Akong Tulku Rinpoche, who founded Kagyu Samye Ling Tibetan Centre in 1967 along with his brother Lama Yeshe. His untimely death was a shock, not just to those at Samye Ling, but to his many disciples all over the world and his Dharma relatives and family in Tibet.

Seven monks attended. It was touching to catch up with monastic friends and others we'd met there on previous visits. Akong's indelible presence remains and the depth of so many people's love and respect for him was palpable. His Bodhisattva heart and life are expressed in this quote “The Buddhist principle is to be everybody's friend and not to have any enemy.” We were glad to bring back with us a beautifully compiled book of many people's remembrances, stories and photos of him.

### **Wood pellet boiler – good news:**

In 2011, we bought a new wood pellet burning boiler for Myrtle Bank. We applied for a grant towards costs from the Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme and beginning in November of this year we started receiving quarterly payments of just under £1,400 which will continue for the next seven years - a total of almost £39,000. The total cost of installing the wood pellet boiler was about £28,500. So in addition to paying for the whole system, the £10,500 on top of that will pay for about 4 years of wood pellets. In effect we won't have to start paying for our wood

pellets until about the end of 2015. This is excellent news as the costs for other sources of fuel for heating are rising for our three older boilers in other buildings. The oldest is a coal boiler in the Ceremony Hall block which is around 30 years old and will soon need replacing. (This has to be refilled manually three times a day). In the other buildings, we have an oil and a gas boiler.

**New wall for our animal cemetery:**

The retaining wall behind our animal cemetery had been gradually collapsing and the statue in the wall had begun to crumble. Peter Hulley of the Sheffield group, who is an experienced stone waller, offered to repair and rebuild the wall during his stay in August. He did a very fine job as you can see in the photo below. He was able to create an alcove for a Kshtigarbha statue, a figure traditionally associated with animals, and, if you look to the right, you will see he managed to build into the wall a ship and three drums, the symbol of our Order.



*Peter by the new wall*

— Rev. Alina

## The Dharmatoevlucht

— Appeldoorn – *The Netherlands* —

This summer we took on the task of sanding down the pine wood floor in our Zendo as it had darkened a lot over the years. Several lay trainees helped with clearing everything out, sanding down the floor, putting a natural white wax on it, polishing it with a big machine, and putting everything back in time to celebrate our 14th anniversary, with the ceremony of Avalokiteshwara and a vegetarian barbecue, that unfortunately had to be held indoors due to some unusual cold and rainy weather that descended on us that day. The Zendo now looks very clean and bright. Thanks to all who helped with this labour-intensive work that took almost a week and was done during some very hot summer weather.

To put the yearly International Day of Peace on the 21st of September into the spotlight, we have in the Netherlands a national ‘week of peace’, during which in many cities and towns all kinds of activities are organized that focus on present international (armed) conflicts, as well as local and national conflicts, and how to build a more peaceful world and society. The peace week in Apeldoorn was opened this year with an evening event in which all the local representatives of the various religions and spiritual traditions each gave a short talk on compassion. Rev. Baldwin talked about how to foster compassion for oneself and others from the Buddhist point of view, a talk that was well received.

In October we had our first 4-day retreat outside the temple, as there were 21 participants and the temple doesn't have appropriate accommodation for so many people. We also wanted to stay in a quiet countryside location and the temple itself is located in a relatively busy city environment. The retreat centre was a beautiful old farm building with a big central space that worked well as a Zendo, and a lovely conservatory style dining area.



The participants came from the various parts of the country, many of them already training with us for a long time. Rev. Baldwin gave two lectures and Rev. Master Hakuun, who joined us for this retreat, gave a lecture on the last day of the retreat. Every day one of the lay trainees gave us a half hour's class with qi gong and tai chi-style movements to help us keeping the body relaxed and flexible and to practice mindfulness of the body.



Another lay trainee gave a short workshop on singing the scriptures, with obvious results: our singing afterwards was so much better. At the end of the retreat everybody was very pleased about it and we hope to repeat this kind of retreat once or twice a year.



*The retreat group with Rev. Master Hakuun on the left and Rev. Baldwin, in brown, on the right.*

Rev. Baldwin built a new website for the Dharmatoevlucht as the old one could not be updated anymore and therefore was vulnerable for hacking, which actually happened a day before the new site went online. The new website will hopefully last for many years to come, as it is a labour and time-consuming job to transfer the complete contents of a website to a new format and design. The temple, together with the Utrecht and Groningen meditation groups, also has a facebook page which is increasingly popular as a means of sharing information about activities, Buddhist texts, pictures, etc.

At the beginning of the summer we were able to double the size of our allotment by renting the next door garden, which means that the temple now has a vegetable and fruit garden of 200 square metres. Our fruit trees and bushes are still young but have already produced apples, pears, plums, and lots of different varieties of berries, which were turned into jam. Also the vegetable garden

was very productive this year due to the very mild weather we have had this year. The garden now produces so much organic food stuff that we hardly have to buy vegetables in the shop.

The temple has had various visits from students and school children who came to ask questions about Buddhism. It is a joy to see that young people these days are stimulated by schools to enquire about religious traditions in their neighbourhood. We tend to focus on the practical side of Buddhism and let them experience, through the means of some exercises, what being mindful does to one's body and mind, something they always enjoy as it makes clear that Buddhism is something you can practice in daily life. Over the years we have had students from the local police, teachers and theological academies, and school children from schools of different denominations.

— *Rev. Baldwin*

## Norwich Zen Buddhist Priory

— *Norwich, England – UK* —

### *First anniversary celebration*

On Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> November, we celebrated the Priory's first anniversary. The highlight of the day's events was a festival memorial ceremony for Rev. Master Jiyu. We focussed on how her faith is an example for us and we reflected on how setting up and maintaining a priory is an act of faith for all of us. Like Rev. Master Jiyu, we have no master-plan, but we try to see the next step that is needed and keep going.

It was a lovely gathering, with plenty of opportunity to chat with each other over lunch and cake. It was good to be able to welcome some members of the Cambridge group and some people who are newer to our practice, as well as several longstanding

members of our Sangha. All in all, it was a fitting way to mark our first year.



— *Rev. Leoma*

## The Place of Peace Dharma House

— *Aberystwyth, Wales – UK –*

In November offerings of gratitude were made in memory of Reverend Master Jiyu-Kennett, who died 18 years ago. She is the Founder of the temple and of our Order. Rev. Master Myōhō gave a talk on how Reverend Master told us the Truth and taught by example.

During recent months we have welcomed visitors from as far afield as Huddersfield and Dublin. Making the long journey to a temple is both an offering and an asking for the teaching. Whilst people are travelling the temple has a special quality to it, the very bricks and mortar seem to know that a sincere trainee is on the way and a stillness settles as the house waits to receive them.



Lay ministers Catherine Artindale and James Gore-Langton continue to offer their time in helping with our accounts. Having experienced people cast a trained eye over the figures is very reassuring and we are grateful for their expertise. Gratitude is also offered to Gordon Jones who is always willing to help out where needed, and to Linda Denton and Morgan Sheehy for offerings of food.

It was brought to our attention that the contact details on the OBC website were inaccurate. They showed the wrong postcode and an old (832026) telephone number. This has now been corrected. If in any doubt please check our contact details as given in this Journal.

Once again this autumn, due to the very mild weather, the spring bulbs have all started to grow, and in October the daffodils in our garden, which is sheltered and gets full sunlight, had put up eight inches of leaf. The garden Buddha statue, which is an indoor one that has been varnished, is becoming rather weathered and we continue to look for a suitable replacement.

In October the temple car, along with a number of others parked in the road, was vandalised and required a new wing mirror.

We continue to offer monthly CDs called ‘Dharma Reflections From The Place of Peace’. These are taken by a variety of individuals, temples and groups. Selections from this series are listed, as individual CDs, on our website [www.placeofpeacewales.org](http://www.placeofpeacewales.org) and are available on a donations basis. If anyone would like a complimentary issue then please let Rev. Master Myōhō know.

Thank you to all who continue to offer support in so many different ways.

— *Rev. Master Myōhō*

## Portobello Buddhist Priory

— *Edinburgh, Scotland – UK* —

Here at Portobello we have had a busy year, with extra visitors over the Summer; mainly European students and migrant workers, which has added an international flavour to the Sangha gatherings.

A small group of us were accompanied by Rev. Finnán to the Isle of Harris this September. This was initiated by the Inverness group, particular thanks to Martin, Shooie and Ann and thanks to Rev. Finnán for his teaching.

A Sangha walk in and around Pitlochry also took place this Autumn, thanks to Bob and Sarah for organising the event.

As the season shifts towards the colder months we have had some paint work and garden prep carried out. Gratitude goes to Iain for the paint work, Jenny and Alan for the Temple signs and Kathleen for the ongoing care she offers to our garden.

Our weekly schedule and monthly group visits continues as usual.

— *Rev. Master Favian*

## Sitting Buddha Hermitage

— *Wirksworth, Derbyshire – UK* —

Summer was glorious here in Derbyshire, as it was for most, if not all, of the UK. Living in a wooden chalet by a lake I feel very connected to the outside, especially when I can have the doors and windows open, as was the case most days. Now, in November, it is cooler and the leaves have fallen but I am still very aware of the landscape and the wildlife all around me.

The nature of the Hermitage is to be quiet and uneventful, which doesn't make for a lot of news, though I have attended events elsewhere such as the opening of the new Dharma hall in

September at Kubong-Sa, the Korean Zen temple in nearby Matlock.

The number of retreat guests over the summer and into autumn has been small, but those who came expressed their appreciation of the opportunity the Hermitage offers for quiet retreat and will hopefully spread the word.

Here are a couple of photos from around the lake. The heron is plastic and is there to keep the fish safe from the real herons!



— *Rev. Alicia*

## Telford Buddhist Priory

— *Telford, England – UK* —

In November we celebrated the festival for our Founder Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett. Below is a picture of the Altar. We put a large cup of proper tea there as one of the offerings, a personal memory, as she often used something similar.



Earlier in October we celebrated the Feeding of the Hungry Ghosts, which is always a popular ceremony. The priory continues to offer day retreats, group meditation events on a regular basis, Buddhist teachings and more recently videos, on subjects like the Life of the Buddha. There is much more emphasis on showing children a variety of different faiths these days and Rev. Saidō was invited to give a short talk on Buddhism to a local scout group.



*The Sultanganj Buddha statue*

Birmingham museum and Art Gallery houses the 1500 year old Sultanganj Buddha statue. This year the Museum and the local West Midlands Buddhists have been celebrating the anniversary of its arrival 150 years ago. There have been a series of special events marking the occasion.

On Buddha Day Buddhist groups chant their scriptures and our congregation in the West Midlands chanted the *Scripture of Great Wisdom* in a ceremony in front of the statue. In October a number of groups were invited to put out stalls in the museum to show the Buddhist presence in the area as well as our contribution to healthcare and prison chaplaincies.



The picture above shows the Telford Buddhist Priory display and next to it one about Angulimala the Buddhist Prison Chaplaincy which a number of us from the OBC are involved with as prison chaplains.

— *Rev. Master Saidō*

## Turning Wheel Buddhist Temple

— *East Midlands–UK* —

In October, Rev. Master Haryo kindly gave his approval for a new temple of the Order to be established in the East Midlands, UK. The new temple will be called Turning Wheel Buddhist Temple, and it has a website at [www.turningwheel.org.uk](http://www.turningwheel.org.uk).

Rev. Aiden will be moving from Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey in order to run the new temple, and both Rev. Master Daishin and Rev. Master Haryo support him in doing this. Rev. Aiden has been the meditation group monk for the Nottingham and Leicester meditation groups for the last five years, and at the moment it is looking mostly likely that the temple will be in an area of Leicester.

The first step in establishing the temple will be to find a property to rent that has the facilities that we would need, and is easy for people to get to, both by public transport and by car. Rev. Aiden is currently in the East Midlands looking for a suitable property, and local sangha members are also helping and supporting him in doing this. Once established, the intention is that the temple will offer events for people in the East Midlands area and beyond, such as group evenings, day retreats and a daily schedule of events similar to many other temples of the Order.

The new temple has an email newsletter that is sent out approximately monthly, and you can sign up for it on the temple website. The [website](#) also has the current telephone, email and postal address details. We look forward to hearing from you, and to welcoming you to the new temple once it is established.

— *Rev. Aiden*

## Wolk-en-Water Hermitage

— *Vinkeveen – Netherlands* —

I am glad to announce that I am opening a small temple in the Netherlands: the ‘Wolk-en-Water’ (Cloud-and-Water) Hermitage.

Over the last four years, while taking care of my dying parents, I have given introductory retreats in a community center of De Ronde Venen, which is not far from Amsterdam. In January this year I invited those who would like to continue meditation activities in the property I inherited and where the ground floor has been transformed into a meditation hall/common room. As I have been here for a large part of the last four years, it seems now the time to formalize this sitting-place as a small contemplative temple. It offers meditation evenings and weekends. Those who wish to join the daily schedule are welcome.

The present address is: Kievitslaan 14, 3645 KL Vinkeveen. Tel. nr: 00 31 297 261812; it is possible that the premises will change over the coming year. For now I use the website: <http://www.unsui.eu/>



*The temple garden Buddha statue*

—*Rev. Master Hakuun*

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## The Americas

### Shasta Abbey

—Mt. Shasta, California – USA —

**Correction:** In the May-July news, we confused the names of two Vietnamese abbesses. The founding abbess of Duc Vien Temple was the late Thich Dam Luu, and the current abbess is Ven. Master Dam Nhat. Please accept our apology for this error.

**Fires:** Lightning strikes started several wildfires in the nearby mountains this summer. The Log Fire threatened the Compassionate Friend Hermitage for the first three weeks in August. We are most grateful to the firefighters and to the monks who endured hot weather and thick smoke to guard our place of refuge. The resident monks never had to evacuate and were able to aid fire crews from other areas find their way around the terrain.

The Boles Fire started suddenly in the nearby town of Weed on a windy day in September. By the time it was contained, it had burned about 150 structures to the ground including two churches, the town library and roughly 100 homes. We are glad to report that no human beings were killed or seriously injured; however, many people lost everything they owned, and cats and dogs were killed and injured. We have discontinued our monthly Alms Round for the time being so that food may be offered instead to fire victims, and the Abbey community has made monetary donations to the affected churches as well as the general relief fund.

To our great joy it has at last begun to rain, and the Abbey grounds have received a couple of good soakings. Abundant rain and snow this season would be a good start to recovery from the extraordinarily dry conditions of the past few years

**Friends of Shasta Abbey:** The Friends of Shasta Abbey held two workdays, during which they stacked firewood and filled



in the Maitreya House pond. They also donated and prepared meals on those days, which were enjoyed by monks and lay trainees together in the outdoor picnic area. We are very grateful for all the help they offer.

**Summer Events:** More than a dozen members of the lay sangha and lay residents at the Abbey joined with monks for the annual Sangha Walk at Lake Siskiyou on a warm, sunny August day.

**Travels:** Rev. Helen spent the month of August at the Eugene Priory, where she served as acting Prior while Rev. Oriana visited Throssel Hole Abbey. Rev. Master Scholastica served as acting Prior at the Portland Priory in September and October while Rev. Master Meikō was in retreat at Fugen Hermitage. We are grateful for their willingness to help out at other temples, and we are glad to have them both home again.

At the end of October, Rev. Masters Daishin and Oswin and Rev. Allard made a brief trip to Portland, where Rev. Masters Daishin and Oswin attended a memorial ceremony for Rev. Kyogen Carlson, who had died of a heart attack in September. Rev. Masters Meikō and Scholastica were both in Portland at the time of Rev. Kyogen's death, and they attended his funeral.

**OBC Monastic Visitors:** Rev. Master Haryo Young arrived back at the Abbey after a long day of travel on September 10. As head of the Order, Rev. Master Haryo divides his time in residence between Throssel Hole Abbey and Shasta Abbey, with periodic visits to other Order temples.

Rev. Master Mugō White arrived on September 3 to help with the lay ministers' retreat, and we were delighted to learn that she plans to be with us for a few months. We were pleased to offer retreat time at our hermitages to Rev. Master Leandra Robertshaw of Throssel Hole Abbey and Rev. Master Meikō Jones of the Portland Priory, and we enjoyed brief visits with both as they passed through in September and October.

Finally, Rev. Master Kōten Benson of Dragon Flower Mountain arrived in late October for a visit of several months. As always, we are grateful for the presence of these senior monastics whose years of experience in training are of great benefit to our monastic and lay sanghas.

We said goodbye to Rev. Leon Kackman, who returned to the Columbia Priory after spending much of the summer working with lay ministers and helping in our library, and we look forward to seeing him again next year.

**Other Monastic Visitors:** It was our pleasure to welcome two groups of Vietnamese Buddhist nuns in August. Eight nuns from Hue Lam Meditation Temple in Fitchbury, Massachusetts, accompanied by nuns visiting from Vietnam, arrived on September 27 for an overnight visit. They joined in our schedule and had tea with Rev. Master Meian and other monks. We discussed similarities and differences in our practices and reminisced about Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett and their own late master, who was influential in improving conditions for female monastics in Vietnam.

The following week we were honored to have a group of four nuns from Pennsylvania and Vietnam, accompanied by two lay trainees from Duc Vien Temple in San Jose, California, join us for a similar visit. Although we speak different languages, the language of Buddhist practice gives us a means of communication on another level.

We were glad to renew Dharma friendships with two American female priests in the Soto Zen tradition this summer. Rev. Jisen Coughlin, who trained at the Pittsburgh Zen Center, arrived in late July to join in our monastic practice for several weeks. During her visit, Rev. Renée celebrated a memorial ceremony for Rev. Jisen's mother, who had died in June.

Rev. Shuji Mintzmyer of the Des Moines, Iowa Zen Center joined us in early September for about a month during a trip to experience the practice at various Zen centers and temples in the

western U.S. Both priests were ordained in the lineage of Katagiri Roshi, who taught for many years in the Midwest.

Rev. Masters Jishō and Andō and Rev. Vivian attended the 20th Western Buddhist Monastic Conference at Deer Park Monastery in Escondido (near San Diego), California in mid-October, where they enjoyed meeting with monastics from various traditions. Highlights of the week included a presentation by Bhikku Bodhi as well as a fundraising walk organized by his Buddhist Global Relief, which works to help those suffering serious food insecurity around the world.

**Ceremonies:** This summer saw the passing of two long-time friends of the Abbey, Grant Brusegard and Laura Dolan (formerly Rev. Fidelity). Grant died in Vancouver, BC in September, and Laura in Portland, Oregon in October, both of cancer. Both Grant and Laura offered the stillness of deep meditation and the practice of fearlessness during illness and at death to all who knew them. We honored them in memorial ceremonies, each held the same day as their hometown ceremonies. Rev. Master Haryo was the Celebrant for Grant's memorial on Saturday, September 20, during the lay ministers' retreat. As a lay minister of long standing, Grant had touched the lives of many of those present, and we were glad of this opportunity to honor his memory.

Rev. Master Meian was the Celebrant for a memorial for Laura Dolan, formerly Rev. Fidelity, on October 25. Laura, who trained with us for many years as a lay minister and monk, traveled to the Abbey to visit in late July — knowing that she would soon die — in order to say goodbye to her sangha friends, and we were grateful that she chose to spend some of her final days with us.

On September 19, Rev. Master Daishin Yalon was the Celebrant for a memorial ceremony for Jonathan Barrow, a congregation member from Redding, who had been ill for several years. Jonathan's family, including four sons, attended, and a favorite Buddha statue of Jonathan's was placed on the altar.

Rev. Master Jishō was the Celebrant at a memorial for Silky (Rosemary Dyke's cat), Cocoa (Suzanne Kane's dog), and all the animals who died in the recent Boles Fire in Weed. Guests included friends of the mourners as well as a woman whose three dogs had perished in the fire. All enjoyed tea and cookies afterwards.

Rev. Margaret celebrated a small memorial for Mr. Beauregard, the Portland Priory cat, who died in July at the age of 17. We were happy to have Rev. Master Meikō Jones, who had given Mr. B a home and much loving care at the Priory, join in the ceremony during a brief visit.

Jennifer Fortson and Shawn Josey chose Mt. Shasta as the location for their wedding and drove from Georgia to have the ceremony here at the Abbey on October 23. Rev. Master Oswin Hollenbeck was Celebrant, and four of the couple's friends stood as witnesses. After the ceremony they all enjoyed tea and refreshments.

**Retreats: Exploring Monastic Life:** Every few years we offer a retreat with its focus on the monastic vocation and life, for people who have an interest in exploring this possibility. In August, nine people attended this five-day retreat which gave them a chance to rise early and attend pre-Dawn Office or sweep the cloister, meditate in the Gaitan, and participate in Dharma talks and discussions on various aspects of monasticism in our Order. Those who attended found that the retreat gave them a close look at monastic life which enabled them to consider it from a better informed perspective.

**Lay Ministers' Retreat:** Nineteen lay ministers joined Rev. Masters Haryo and Mugō and Rev. Leon from September 17-21 for a retreat on the theme of The Three Pure Precepts. The retreat included Dharma talks and group discussions as well as planning for next year's retreat, and there was ample time for personal practice. We are grateful for the example of commitment

to our practice demonstrated in the ongoing training of the lay ministers.

**Feeding of the Hungry Ghosts Retreat:** It was a pleasure to have 21 guests for the Feeding of the Hungry Ghosts Retreat from October 30-November 2. This year, unlike last, we were able to go ahead with the Burning of the Ceremonial Tombstones during the retreat, thanks to the recent rainfall.

—*Rev. Margaret*

## Berkeley Buddhist Priory

— *Berkeley, California – USA* —

On Sunday, September 14, the Priory had a booth again in the Solano Stroll, Albany's annual street fair. Many members of our Sangha helped man our booth. The fair attracted over 200,000 people and there was considerable interest shown in the Priory and Buddhism. This is always a good to meet people in our local community and have the opportunity to discuss many of their questions about meditation and Buddhism.



We had a well-attended Segaki ceremony on September 28th. More names than usual were recited at the service as what we offer at a Segaki went into some emails that were widely

circulated. We also held a potluck that day which went well with an abundance of food, first offered to the hungry ghosts and then consumed by the Sangha.

The fence around the Priory's front yard needed an additional section to cover where we had removed a large hedge, and this Fall the fence work was completed. Also we did considerable work on the front brick walkway, chipping away the excess mortar and pressure washing the whole area and it is impressive how much brighter the walkway became.

— *Rev. Master Kinrei*

## Eugene Buddhist Priory

— *Eugene, Oregon – USA* —

### **Trip to Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey**

Rev. Oriana spent much of August at Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey in the UK. It was invigorating to leave Eugene's unusually hot summer and return to the 'horizontal rain' of Northern England. Rev. Master Daishin Morgan was at Throssel for two weeks during the visit, and his presence and the teaching he gave to the monks were good reminders of what it means to live a monastic life. Thank you to Rev. Helen Cummings who came up from Shasta Abbey to support the activities of the priory while Rev. Oriana was away.

### **Visitors at Eugene Priory**

Rev. Oriana and our community at the priory were happy to have both family and monastic visitors this fall.

Our first visitor, in early September, was Rev. Leon Kackman, North American Lay Ministry Chaplain. Rev. Leon spent most of the summer visiting the Order's temples and priories, getting to know our lay ministers and their communities.

While Rev. Leon was here, he had a good visit with each of our lay ministers individually. We look forward to seeing Rev. Leon again in the future.

Several weeks later Rev. Master Leandra Robertshaw came for a visit. She was returning to Throssel after spending time at Shasta Abbey's hermitage in Northern California. We had a good visit at the priory and as Rev. Leandra felt well-rested, we decided to spend her last day in the States taking a walk at the coast.

On October 24th, Rev. Master Astor Douglas of Shasta Abbey came up for a visit. Rev. Oriana invited her to be celebrant for Segaki, the Feeding of the Hungry Ghosts Festival. Rev. Astor had not been to Eugene Priory for some years and enjoyed looking at the changes and getting reacquainted with the community. It was also good to have a visit with Rev. Master Shikō and Rev. Amanda, who brought Rev. Astor to Eugene and stayed for brunch when they picked her up a few days later.

**Segaki :**

The priory congregation celebrated the Segaki Festival late Sunday afternoon, October 26th. It was the first time we had the altar on our closed-in porch with the celebrant and community



looking out to the forest that surrounds priory buildings. The red Segaki banners looked particularly lovely over the entrance.

Rev. Oriana and congregation members worked with Rev. Astor the day before, setting up the altar and preparing for the ceremony. We had decided earlier to have the Toro bonfire directly following the festival ceremony rather than later in the day, which worked out very well as there seemed to be a nice flow from one event to the next. The festival began with a silent procession up our long drive from the road. Some thoughts on the Dharma from Rev. Astor with tea and discussion followed the ceremonies. It was a pleasure to have Rev. Astor's presence as celebrant and to enjoy her company while she was here.



*The Segaki procession*

### **Continuing Work on the Priory Grounds:**

Much of our outdoor clean-up has been completed with the contents of both sheds cleared out and the sheds torn down and materials taken away. A deep thank you to Ernie Rimerman for his persistence in guiding the completion of this project. The spot



for our new storage shed has been leveled and gravel put down so we will be ready to have the shed installed in February or March.

In October a local company, Cutting Edge, came and improved our drainage, put gravel down both drives, and installed low-voltage electrical lines down both drives. The first round of lighting has been installed on the main drive and additional lights will be added by the gate and lower parking area in November/December, as well as along the side drive.

Nick Williams, one of the owners of Cutting Edge, worked willingly with our second-hand path lights, changing to LED bulbs and repairing them as required. Cutting Edge also installed the electrical line on our side drive down to where the storage shed will stand without charge, even though it was not included in the original bid. It is very satisfying to know that we have a generous and responsible company to go to when we are ready for additional work on priory property.

Thank you to all those who have helped to move things along with the work on our grounds and for the hours that have been put in.

—*Rev. Oriana*

## Lions Gate Buddhist Priory

—*Lytton, British Columbia – Canada*—

Grant Brusegard, OBC

August 3, 1957—August 27, 2014

Grant was a member of the Priory for several decades. He and his wife, Michele, were together named Lay Ministers in 1989. Michele was with him at home when he died peacefully of pancreatic cancer. Memories of Grant include his love of the outdoors, a playful adventurousness (e.g. running up any nearby mountain, traveling to Shasta Abbey alone on his “hog”

motorcycle, or bushwhacking through Dragon Flower Mountain), his quirky, well-timed sense of humor, and his numerous and unpretentious acts of kindness. We are grateful for his life, and we will miss him.

Grant Brusegard had a private cremation ceremony on September 2. Rev. Master Kōten was celebrant. Grant's wife Michele and a handful of friends attended. On September 20 a memorial was held at Unity Church in Vancouver. Approximately 250 people were present, including the Vancouver congregation, relatives and friends. We chanted Dedication of Merit, during which time people had a chance to go to the altar and pay their respects. Afterwards people came up to say a few words and express their love and gratitude. The same day, memorials were held at Shasta Abbey and Throssel Hole Buddhist Monasteries.

\*

With the help of congregation and friends, we've settled into Bodhidharma Hall and are prepared for the winter. We rearranged the main loft to accommodate ceremonies and meditation during the cold season; all our firewood has been split and stacked; and we acquired a new set of storage batteries for our solar electric system. We also have a new, safe chimney. Our thanks go to Rev. Leon who donated his time and energy to install it properly.

Lay Ministers Chris and Terry, their daughter Emiko and the family dogs came for a Memorial Ceremony for their dog Max, whose ashes were interred in the animal cemetery. Rev. Valeria was celebrant.

Segaki was held this year on Sunday October 12 with several people attending from the local area and Vancouver, followed by a feast in Bodhidharma Hall.

On October 27 Reverend Master Kōten departed for Shasta Abbey where he will be spending the next several months researching and writing Reverend Master Jiyu's biography. We are grateful for Shasta Abbey for offering him the space and time to work on this important project.

Earlier this year, Rev. Master Aurelian was in Edmonton to see the meditation group there; he led a retreat and offered Dharma talks and spiritual counseling to the members. He visited Lac Saint Anne, a Catholic pilgrimage site near Edmonton, which attracts up to 60,000 people annually, mostly First Nations. He visited with the resident priest there. He also visited Truc Lam, a monastery and temple for the Vietnamese Canadian community. The Abbot took RM Aurelian and some congregation members on a tour of various facilities and projects of the monastery.

— *Rev. Master Aurelian*

## Portland Buddhist Priory

— *Portland, Oregon – USA* —

Autumn in Portland is wholeheartedly present as I write this on a windy, quite cold morning. The sun is brightly displaying all the autumn colors on the trees in a magnificent manner as the leaves fall and tumble on the streets, sidewalks and yards. This time of year is always a lovely reminder of how simple and natural the process is of 'letting go', within this natural world we are all a part of.

In these past few months the priory has had a number of visitors, both lay and monastic. At the end of August, Rev. Master Leandra arrived from Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey to spend a few days in Portland on her way to one of the Hermitages that are part of Shasta Abbey's land holdings. She and Rev. Meikō had a lovely time taking walks in the neighborhood, and climbed the trail in the Southwest hills that ends at Council Crest, an area which gives you a lovely view of downtown Portland eastward,

which includes a beautiful view of Mt. Hood. A few weeks later in mid-September, Rev. Master Scholastica drove up from Shasta Abbey to sit in place as prior for Rev. Meikō until mid-October. Because of this generous offering of Rev. Scholastica, Rev. Meikō was able to spend some time at Fugen Hermitage, located in Six Rivers National Forest, with Rev. Master Kōdō from Shasta Abbey.



*At the Fugen Hermitage*

It was a wonderful opportunity to meditate, eat and sleep, while being embraced by the silence of the forest that surrounds the Hermitage. The lay congregation deeply appreciated Rev. Scholastica's presence and the teachings of Dharma she offered.

In October, Laura Dolan, the former Rev. Fidelia, a former monk who trained at Shasta Abbey, died quietly with her family surrounding her, early in the month. For her Memorial service in late October, two monks from Shasta Abbey travelled to Portland to join Rev. Meikō in attending the service. Rev. Master Shikō Rom and Rev. Amanda stayed on after the Memorial service to participate in the Priory's Segaki ceremony and Burning the Wooden Tombstone ceremony the following day. It was so good to have these two fine monks join us in offering and enjoying much food and drink with all the lay people who attended this important Transfer of Merit ceremony.

In September, Rev. Kyogen Carlson of Dharma Rain Zen Center died of a massive heart attack. Rev. Masters Meikō and Scholastica were able to attend his funeral along with Marie “Hogetsu” Keith. There was a traditional Memorial service held on November 6th acknowledging the 49th day since his passing. Monks once again travelled to Portland from Shasta Abbey to join Rev. Meikō in attending this service. Rev. Master Daishin Yalon, Rev. Master Oswin Hollenbeck and Rev. Allard Kieres joined us for two days, and in addition to attending the Memorial, we had the opportunity to go to various garden centers looking for Buddhist statues on a cold and blustery day. A number of days previous to this, we had the opportunity to offer Rev. Master Kōten a place to stay and rest on his travels to Shasta Abbey for an extended visit. He was accompanied by Sharron Su, a lay woman who has been practicing with Rev. Master Kōten for many years. It is always enjoyable and enriching having these monastic and lay sangha members from the various temples in the Order join us when they are traveling through this lovely city where the priory is located.

At the end of the summer before leaving for the Hermitage, Rev. Meikō performed two wedding ceremonies for people affiliated with the priory over the years. On a lovely Friday afternoon, she offered the wedding vows to Garrick Arnold and Michelle Magid, in the priory’s back yard. There were a number of family members and friends who attended and Rev. Master Scholastica and Ambrose Schofield assisted with preparations and the ceremony itself. The next day in the late afternoon, Rev. Meikō and Ambrose travelled to a community center in Happy Valley, Oregon, to offer a Wedding Blessing ceremony for Erin Monahan and Nevada Westberg. We do wish these couples well as they nurture their relationship as man and wife through their practice of the Buddha Dharma as a guiding light.

— *Rev. Master Meikō*

## Vancouver Island Zen Sangha

— *Victoria, British Columbia – Canada* —

Before we head into our holiday season which includes a renewal period for our teacher and several sangha winter activities, we were happy to be able to gather to celebrate the publication of Rev. Master Meiten's third book of reflections called *Returning to Stillness*, copies of which will be going out to the Abbeys and temples later in November. If more copies are required, please just let us know.

For individuals wishing to download copies of any of the three books, please see the instructions on our website <http://www.vizs.org>. Although our sangha gladly offers these books without charge, we are nevertheless grateful for any who wish to make a donation since we are supported entirely by donations.

Two more events are on the horizon as well. One is another of Rev. Master Meiten's dharma intensives, this time on Great Master Dōgen's *Rules for Meditation*. These are always well-attended and appreciated. The second is a visit to Victoria by Rev. Vivian of Shasta Abbey in the last half of January. We look forward to having her with us for almost a week.



*Rev. Master Meiten signing a copy of one of her books for a long-time student, Miles Eldridge*

— Frank Bowie

## Wallowa Buddhist Temple

— Joseph, Oregon – USA —

It has been an active late summer and early fall at the Wallowa Buddhist Temple. Prolonged glorious weather allowed the completion of many winterizing projects. Cords of firewood were split and stacked, the logs on one side of the main temple building were re-caulked and re-stained, and outdoor statues were resealed. Bountiful garden produce continued to be offered the temple well into November this year by neighbors and others in the community. A goodly number of visitors to the area found their way to the temple, surprised and grateful to discover a Buddhist temple on their way up to hike and camp in the mountains of the Eagle Cap Wilderness. One of these visitors returned recently to spend retreat time with us.

On September 21st we held a memorial service for a long-time congregation member's dog, a standard poodle who manifested great dignity throughout her nearly twelve years of life. On a rainy October 26th congregation from both the local area and La Grande gathered for a festive Segaki Ceremony on the Temple's deep front porch and enjoyed a delicious potluck lunch afterwards. On November 16th we enjoyed a delightful mid-day visit from lay minister Helmut Schatz, who stopped in while traveling across the Northwest.

After three years of work, the retreat guest house is now very close to being open for guests. The gable ends were shingled and a 17-inch-high standing Kuan Yin statue—donated years ago to the temple by Mike Lara—has been placed up there in a little shrine niche which also serves as a vent to the attic storage area. The statue benevolently gazes out over the trees and valley below the temple property.





Another tall statue of the same height is being sought for the shrine on the other gable end. John Orland, a local furniture maker, designed and hand-built a beautiful cedar and redwood door to serve as an outdoor entrance into the 4-foot crawlspace. A ramp and steps are being constructed to provide access to the long south porch which looks out toward Chief Joseph Mountain. Countertops and faucets, interior trim, and a woodstove have all been installed, and the building's final inspection has been passed. Retreat guests will be able to stay in the retreat guest house as soon as the rooms have been furnished and decorated.

On November 20th, Rev. Master Meidō will celebrate the 12th anniversary of her first coming to northeast Oregon to serve as a priest and to establish a temple of the Order here. It is a happy coincidence that this same time of year is when the temple property was purchased 9 years ago and when the retreat guest house will be welcoming its first guests this year. We bow in gratitude to all those who have offered their support and encouragement throughout these past 12 years.

One of the temple's main purposes is to offer a place where both congregation and monks of our wider Sangha can come for individual retreats. Those interested in arranging such a retreat are welcome to call or write for more information.

—*Rev. Master Meidō and Rev. Clairissa*

## TEMPLES OF THE ORDER — THE AMERICAS

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## Affiliated Meditation Groups

**CA:** Auburn, Chico, Fresno,  
Morro Bay, Ventura, San Jose

**ID:** Sandpoint

**MT:** Whitefish

**WA:** Bainbridge Island

**CANADA:** Edmonton

## TEMPLES OF THE ORDER — EUROPE

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*Affiliated Meditation Groups*  
UK: Aberdeen, Aberfeldy,  
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Carmarthen, Chichester,  
Cirencester, Cornwall, Dundee,  
Galloway, Hexham, Huddersfield,  
Hull, Inverness, Jersey, Lancaster,  
Leeds, Leicester, London, Matlock,  
Milton Keynes, Newcastle-upon-  
Tyne, North Lakes, Norwich,  
Nottingham, Preston, Sheffield,  
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*Affiliated Meditation Groups:*

**The Netherlands:**  
Groningen, Utrecht.

*For details of meditation groups in Europe, please contact your nearest priory, or the Guestmaster at Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey.*

*For details of meditation groups in the US and Canada, please contact your nearest priory, or the Guestmaster at Shasta Abbey*

## Further Information

This Journal is published quarterly by the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives, which was founded by the late Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett. The Order is dedicated to following the tradition of Serene Reflection Meditation (Chinese: *T'sao-Tung Ch'an*; Japanese: *Sōtō Zen*) and includes both men and women monastics and lay ministers, all of whom are licensed by the Order. The main offices of the OBC are at Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey in England and Shasta Abbey in the US. These monasteries and several of the other priories and temples of the Order offer monastic training for women and men, whilst all temples offer instruction and retreats for lay trainees. Priests and those in training for the priesthood follow the celibate monastic path, while lay members of the Order follow the way of training of the householder. The Order also has a growing number of priories and affiliated meditation groups. The OBC is an international religious organization, incorporated with non-profit status in California, USA. The Ship and Three Drums image on the front cover of the Journal is registered in the United States as the logo of the OBC.

As Buddhism grows in the West, we wish to share the Buddha's Teaching through our Journal; we also share our experience of practicing the Buddha's Way, thus encouraging and supporting each other's training. Lastly, the Journal helps to keep friends and members informed of activities and events within the numerous training places of our Order.

We warmly invite our readers to send letters and articles for the Journal. If at all possible, we appreciate receiving Rich

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The views expressed in these pages are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the Order as a whole.

We thank you for your interest in, and support of, the Journal and the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives.

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