



# The Journal of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives

*Serving Members and Friends  
of the Order Worldwide*

---

Volume 32, Number 1  
2560 B.E. (Spring 2017)  
ISSN 0891-1177

---

Copyright © 2017 Order of Buddhist Contemplatives  
All rights reserved



*Mount Shasta this winter*

Spring 2017 issue:

*Editor:* Rev. Alina Burgess

*Assistant Editor:* Rev. Master Scholastica Hicks

*Transcribing:* Chris Hughes

*Proofreading help:* Rev. Caitlin Clark, Dan Brodribb,  
Eldridge Buultjens, Pete Corbett, Eric Nicholson, Deb  
Smith, Sarah Whiteside

## CONTENTS

### [Presence](#)

*Rev. Master Daishin Morgan* 5

### [Thoughts on Putting Anatta into Practice](#)

or Don't Believe Everything You Think  
*Rev. Master Rokuzan Kroenke* 13

### [Confusion: Cures and Causes](#)

*Rev. Master Oswin Hollenbeck* 19

### [What is real, what is true?](#)

*Rev. Baldwin Schreurs* 31

### [Imperfect Grief](#)

*Alex Reed* 35

### [A Bodhisattva's Perspective on Social Relations](#)

*Rev. Kyōsei Kempinsky* 43

### [Fish and Ball](#)

*Roger Kahn* OBC 47

[News of the Order](#) 50

[Temples of the Order](#) 79

[Further information](#) 82



*A statue at Columbia Zen Buddhist Priory of Budai (C) or Hotei (J), the legendary Chinese monk who became associated with Maitreya Bodhisattva*

## Presence

Rev. Master Daishin Morgan

—Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey, Northumberland—UK—

*An edited version of a talk given at the August 2016 sesshin.*

Homage to the Buddha

Homage to the Dharma

Homage to the Sangha

I'm very glad that you could all come: it's a real offering, not only for yourself, but for everyone else here, and beyond that as well.

Zazen is acceptance. We can't accept while we remain as a self-conscious self, a separate self. I think you've all probably been sitting long enough to know how persistent thoughts are. It's something of a shock at first to realise how we get run-around; and it's worth distinguishing between what we think, and the fact that we think. In other words, in zazen it's helpful to just notice that thinking is happening, but don't worry about the content. By not worrying about the content, we can accept. Whilst we get hooked into the content of thought, we tend to get lost in it.

There's no magic method for getting rid of unwanted thoughts. Buddhism has come up with lots of strategies: sometimes they work, sometimes they don't. What we need is to recognise that our thinking is the primary expression of our self: who we believe ourselves to be — what it is that we think we are. This finds expression in our thoughts, and one reason why thoughts are so persistent is because it seems like our existence, as a self, depends on our thoughts; and indeed that's true, but it's interesting to notice that when you're not thinking you don't stop existing. So actually, what you really are, is more than your thoughts.

We have to move away from an adversarial relationship with our thoughts. The old advice, “neither trying to think, nor trying not to think”, is a description of acceptance, and it's worth realising that acceptance is not a method. Or at least, if we try to make acceptance a method, we don't actually have acceptance at all.

In zazen we are not trying to fix something. And that's quite a difficult thing to grasp, because it seems like we come because we have things about ourselves that we want to deal with. Or maybe we are very conscious of the suffering that surrounds us, and we look for a solution; but zazen is not about trying to fix something.

When you read the Scriptures' description of enlightenment (I'm thinking of the *Ten Stages of a Bodhisattva's Progress*, for example, and in many other places in the Scriptures), you find described what the enlightened qualities of a Buddha are. They just seem to be

beyond any human being we know, beyond any realistically achievable thing that we could possibly imagine, and there's a point to that. And although in one way of coming at this, we could say that enlightenment is all about an accumulation of good, we do not achieve enlightenment by accumulating good. We may, indeed, become a better version of ourselves, but that will always be a relative improvement on who we think we are.

We might say that in the beginning we have an Olympic view of training: you train incredibly hard, you put your life and soul into it, and finally you win the gold medal. The trouble is that, speaking personally anyway, you never quite seem to win the gold medal. There's something perfectly correct about that Olympic method: there are things we need to improve on, and it's excellent that we take that seriously, and do something about that. Without that, there is no Buddhism, there is no training, there is no basis. But what I'm wanting to point out is that there's more than that, and without understanding what this 'more' is, we can reach an impasse. Especially after training for a number of years, we seem to reach a middle area where we've gone beyond the initial enthusiasm and the idealism, and we wonder, "How do I keep going? What does it really mean, to deepen?" What I think is good to notice is how, what for a shorthand, we might call the 'Olympic model', works: at its core there is the sense of oneself, the improvement of oneself. This is where strategies can pay off: we can have strategies that actually are effective. But they don't really solve the existential problem: that, "here am I, seeking something

more than myself, and yet, in the end, I seem to be tripped up by myself.”

In the Olympic model there is a ‘me’ that exists through time: I train and accumulate good, I learn to express enlightenment, to verify enlightenment, to realise enlightenment. So in a way there is a path from delusion to enlightenment.

In our tradition we have a different model. It’s one that begins with enlightenment. And this is where the heart of acceptance comes in. When we begin with enlightenment something is profoundly different to the Olympic model. It’s actually not a matter of ‘you do one or you do the other’. I still need the Olympic model, but without understanding how our tradition presents training and enlightenment, that model won’t be sufficient.

We begin with enlightenment. That’s difficult to get your head round. Just so. We sit: and in the sitting, thoughts come forth. The fact of thoughts arising is a fact we must accept — if thoughts are arising. We don’t need to go further than that. We don’t need to engage in a dialogue. Just, “something is going on here”. What? It’s always ‘this’: the myriad things that come forth. You need to make no move towards nor away. The way that Dōgen, in particular, taught was not a path. He spoke of enlightenment, verification, expression, and practice. He deliberately inverted how training is, and was, often understood. He was by no means the first to do this, but I think he clarified this very profoundly.



Your sitting is not progressing. Your sitting is ‘this’, just this, now. Leave aside progression. It does not mean to say that there is no change. Acceptance is acceptance of the presence of ‘this’. Acceptance is selfless, because if you make a self, if you get into, “well, how can I accept?” you lose it, because that question, as the grammar demonstrates, comes from ‘I’. We open the depth of zazen by being willing to let go of that ‘I’ as an axis around which everything must revolve. It’s not that there is no self: it’s that it cannot be stained. What is the self that cannot be stained? That’s different to the accumulation of good, it’s different to the purification of the self.

We have in our tradition, probably in every tradition, the aspiration to put others before oneself. While we approach that from the Olympic model, there remains a conflict of priorities: “OK, I resolve to put others’ needs before my needs”, but there remains ‘the needs of others’ and ‘the needs of me’. What we learn in zazen — what we discover in zazen — is another sense of relationship that I want to explore in the coming days. It’s not that we abandon the aspiration of putting others first, but that we see that voice that arises within us that says “Well, OK, but what about me? I have needs too”. And when we find what appears to be a difficult or even an unresolvable conflict, that’s a sure sign that we need to take our understanding — or allow our understanding to move — to a different level, a different paradigm. This is not some trick that you can pull, some change in the use of grammar that removes the word ‘I’ from the equation and then ‘Bob’s your uncle.’ But think

of ‘putting others before oneself’ differently, as ‘doing what needs to be done’. Dōgen, in *Genjokōan*, speaks of an attitude, or an approach to the world — an understanding of the world — of “taking the self forward to meet the world”, and he describes that as illusion.<sup>1</sup> And when we’re putting others before oneself, from the point of view of the heroic model — the Olympic model; there’s something admirable and profound in that, something that is a true effort, even if we don’t manage it all the time (we probably don’t), but it remains a real conflict often, because the ‘I’ element is at the heart of it still. Whereas in ‘doing what needs to be done’, we move to Dōgen’s second point, which is that, yes, taking the self forward to the world is delusion, but “allowing the myriad things of the world to come forth,...to verify the myriad things”, that is enlightenment.

‘Doing what needs to be done’ is to sit in the heart of the situation. What is it that comes forth? What — in *Genjokōan* terms — are the myriad things that are right here? Not a strategy. ‘What is ‘this?’ You may have to do a lot of letting go to come to ‘what is this?’, and that is the effort in training, that is the path in training. But ‘what is this?’ is truly ‘what is this now?’, not ‘what will this become?’ We verify the myriad things as they come forth, so in putting others before oneself: what is the actuality, the actual presence, not the thought about presence, but the actual being of this, now? And from that comes forth the activity, the life of Buddha. The life of Buddha, the living Buddha, arises from acceptance, arises from the immediacy of ‘this’. And that can be a strategy, that can be any one of the myriad

things, any combination of the myriad things, it is not limited.

The difference is that it does not need to have the axis of the self around which to revolve. So as you sit, and you see the mind creating the axis of the self — you see the mind worrying over this or that — notice how that fits into desire, fear, reassurance. We spend a lot of time thinking as a means of reassurance. There's something in us that is desperate for love and acceptance, and this is at least as powerful as greed and hate. We may approach the world driven by a need for love and acceptance, and the Olympic model is very bad in that context, because we try awfully hard to get love and acceptance, and our very effort pushes it away. On the other hand, we can sit with open hands, recognising the arising of a desire for love and acceptance; letting it be, without judgement, without feeding it, yet without decrying it: what is it? When we ask, "What is it?", we seem to enter a very slippery world indeed, slippery in the sense that there's nothing here to get hold of. It appears to be an awful lot easier to have some kind of analysis, and don't get me wrong, I'm not suggesting that analysis has no value: what I'm pointing to here is something more than that, something I believe is deeper than any analysis. Analysis is dealing with our perception of ourselves, our perceptions as abstracts. Beyond the abstracts, what is 'this', really?

There is no self in the desperation for love and acceptance. That may seem utterly counter-intuitive. But truly accept the myriad things that come forth — even our apparently unanswerable desire for love and acceptance—

and you find it is not what it appears to be. When we let go of what I've called 'self-making', when we let go of spinning ourselves, in the 'spin doctor' sense; when we let go of that spinning, there is a verifying, a seeing of the truth — of the myriad things — and if that happens to be a desire for love and affection, for love and acceptance, let it be. And it's already not what you thought. What is it? In the heart of acceptance like that, there's nothing missing. There is a sufficiency, but it does not adhere to you: 'you' are not sufficient: there is sufficiency.

Let's explore the sufficiency.

Homage to all the Buddhas in all worlds.

Homage to all the Bodhisattvas in all worlds.

Homage to the Scripture of Great Wisdom.

*Our thanks to Chris Hughes for his work in transcribing this talk.*

#### *Notes*

1. Great Master Dōgen, *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*: Great Master Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō*, Ed. Tanahashi, Kazuaki. (Shambhala, 2010) Vol. I p. 29. The full quote is: "To carry the self forward and illuminate myriad things is delusion. That myriad things come forth and illuminate the self is awakening."

## Some Thoughts on Putting Anatta into Practice

### Or Don't Believe Everything You Think

Rev. Master Rokuzan Kroenke

—Columbia Zen Buddhist Priory, Columbia SC—USA—

For some time I have found myself reflecting on the Buddha's Teaching of anatta or 'not-self' and how it might be applied in daily life—willingly opening ourselves to radically changing our perspective on ourself. For it to truly affect our lives, anatta must become not so much a philosophy or belief, as a practice, a way of life, that helps us to realize the Truth for ourselves; it must become something that we actually **do** in our great work of training in the Buddha-Dharma.

In my experience, a good start in beginning to develop this practice is to do your best to work on not believing everything that you think. Although this is very simple to state, I have found that it is extraordinarily difficult to do, so if you wish to grow in this, I urge you to start now, today. And then, although it may take longer, a similar, further step is to work on not believing everything that you feel. I understand that encouraging a willingness to make these changes can seem quite counter intuitive. We tend to experience our thoughts and feelings as self-evidently

dependable and important, but being willing to open ourselves to the possibility that they aren't, at least not reliably, as well as to work on not being controlled by them is, in my experience, remarkably helpful in dealing with our suffering, our discomfort, our stress or distress.

Now be careful. I am not suggesting that we **ignore** any of our thoughts or feelings—they are potentially informational. Some might be useful and even consequential. It is simply not helpful to cling to them, to allow them to control us.

You may well ask then, what are we supposed to do? If we don't allow our thoughts or feelings to control us, then what **do** we follow? My Teacher, Rev. Master Jiyu said: "Suffering occurs because of a not understanding of the Precepts, a non-keeping of the Precepts."<sup>1</sup> So, as trainees, we should start by using the Precepts as our guide and aspiration for all actions—of thought, word and deed. Through this practice we begin to gain a new perspective on our habitual inclinations of thought and feeling. It is immensely helpful to regularly try to bring the Precepts to mind as a guide to all our actions during our daily lives, and then let this guidance inform or 'control' our actions.

The next step in keeping the Precepts was outlined by her when she said:

This seeing beyond oneself to the unity of all things is also important with regard to the Buddhist Precepts. While the Precepts are only [perceived as] rules that bind you, they don't really help all that much (which is the danger of the 'Thou shalt not...')

idea). But once you understand them from the point of view of ‘For the benefit of all beings, I will train myself to refrain from...,’ once you have got to the positive side, then true Preceptual training can commence.<sup>2</sup>

This points directly at anatta, at how our delusion of separation, of duality, is a cause of our suffering. It is an aspect of turning the stream of compassion within, and changing our perspective.

If you are familiar with our practice of Serene Reflection meditation, then you are already familiar with this idea of perspective change. We are taught from the very outset of our practice to try to allow our thoughts and feelings to arise and to allow them to pass; to not hold onto them or push them away. This opens us to the experience and appreciation of not allowing them to control our actions.

We all have the opportunity, sometime in our lives, to realize that when some desire or aversion arises, we may choose to not require that particular desire to be met, or aversion to be avoided—at least not immediately, or in that specific setting. Perhaps it is a very minor desire or aversion; nevertheless, if we succeed, this realization is a beginning of wisdom, a change of point of view, and a comprehension, albeit perhaps very vague, that is an essential quality of anatta. So through this realization, the beginning of the process of training in anatta, and an understanding of its value, can be available to us all—arising from our own experience.

The more I train and work on letting go of attachment or clinging to body and mind, to my *self*, the less suffering I experience. When we think of self as permanent and unchanging, we tend to think of aspects of ourselves, like stubbornness or impatience or anxiety or confusion as permanent and unchanging. It can be difficult to recognize that we **can** change, we **can** convert, any aspect of this self or, at least, our **view** of any aspect of this self. It just takes time, and we need to work on letting that be OK. Giving ourselves permission for it to **take** time while not **wasting** time, is an important part of our practice, of turning the stream of compassion within.

We may at times feel quite judgmental about ourselves, especially about characteristics of the self we don't like. Although it was not at all obvious to me for many years, I have come to realize that any arising thought or feeling does not say anything fundamental or essential about myself. Just because we think or feel something does not mean that we are somehow that thought or feeling, or that that thought or feeling is a characteristic of ourselves, or reveals something intrinsic about ourselves. It is just a thought or feeling and not inevitably anything more, unless we allow it to control us and then, by indulging it, we literally create or expand or intensify a self, or at least an aspect of a self.

Our feelings are the results of our actions, but that doesn't mean that we should use them to judge ourselves, either positively or negatively. It is important that we don't ignore them and that we are alert to what they may teach us, but as long as we don't allow them to control us, feelings are ultimately ephemeral. A significant part of our practice is to



change, to convert our habitual tendencies, i.e. to compassionately help ourselves; to not cling to any characteristic of ourselves. After all, clinging is the source of our suffering according to the second of the Four Noble Truths. Doing something about ourselves is what is important—not necessarily what we happen to be thinking, or feeling, or how we might define ourselves, at any given moment.

How I try to put anatta into practice is, when I experience, e.g. anger or lust or despair, etc., while in the process of trying to not indulge them, I make an effort to change my perspective and be willing to not point them at anything—not to assume that some worry or irritation arises from a specific proximate relationship or situation, or that some depression arises from my essential badness or the unendurability of life, etc. I also try to not reflexively believe them, to not simply assume that they are real or that they arise from some fundamental reality, i.e. to not take them for granted. It is important that I don't ignore them—they are potential information, but not inevitably anything more. I try to deal with thoughts in the same way.

The next step is continually to try to convert my reactions to these thoughts and feelings: I try to turn the stream of compassion within; to literally not take them 'personally'; to sit still in their midst. I try to embrace them (or 'him,' i.e. 'my' set of skandhas, 'my' karmic stream, 'my' body and mind), to pervade them with loving kindness, compassion and non-judgmentalism. After all, I am the being who can most deeply help me/them/him, and I/they/he sometimes feel(s) desperately in need of some kind of help,

of care and comfort. I try to continually look up and ask for help with all of this. Altogether this seems to make things ‘better.’ While doing this potentially ‘feel good’ stuff, I try to always be careful, keeping in mind not giving in to the desires or aversions of self; to be willing to not push away the ‘feel bad’ stuff. I am thus always walking a fine line, trying to find the Middle Way.

I find that I am much more often now able to be significantly less affected by my thoughts and feelings as I continue to train. I may still find some of them to be unpleasant, perhaps very unpleasant, but it can end right there if I allow it to, without any judgment, or my continuing to involve myself in them. This does not mean that they soon go away, just that I am willing to work on not allowing them to control me. I am so very grateful to the Buddha-Dharma, through Rev. Master Jiyu, for providing that perspective and for providing a Path where that perspective could become real for me, rather than simply some ideal, or belief, or something nice that I have read about.

#### *Notes*

- [1.](#) Jiyu-Kennett, Rev. Master, *Roar of the Tigress, The Oral Teachings of Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett: Western Woman and Zen Master*, Volume I (Mt Shasta, CA: Shasta Abbey Press, 2000) p. 130.
- [2.](#) Jiyu-Kennett, Rev. Master, *Roar of the Tigress, The Oral Teachings of Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett: Western Woman and Zen Master*, Volume 2 (Mt Shasta, CA: Shasta Abbey Press, 2005) p.14.

## Confusion: Causes and Cures

Rev. Master Oswin Hollenbeck

—Shasta Abbey, CA—USA—

*When I was the Prior at the Eugene Buddhist Priory several people asked me about a sense of confusion regarding their meditation practice. These are some thoughts I had at the time, revised slightly for inclusion in this issue of the Journal.*

First, accept that confusion is present. Confusion is a state of mind just like anger, grief, fear, worry, etc. It has its causes and fundamentally is a cloud obscuring our true nature. Acceptance of the confusion is the first step in relinquishing it. If we do not acknowledge its presence, how can we let it go? Just follow the introductory meditation instruction: don't push away, don't hang onto. These are, of course, the negative and positive poles of craving and attachment: at one end, "I don't want," and on the other, "I want to keep" (or, "I want more"). Don't resist confusion and don't indulge it. Accept it simply as a passing state of mind. (A popular bumper sticker in the U.S. expresses it succinctly: "Don't believe everything you think.")

In so doing we 'cleanse karma'— we change the habits, the neural pathways, of mind and heart. Like weakening any other engrained habit, sitting still with confusion eventually wears out its energy—it dissipates. Cultivating strong faith and devotion assures us that we will not be left with nothing, a negative emptiness—what we need to know will remain.

Second, endeavor to accept that there will be times when we do not know, and that's OK. When speaking at Rev. Master Jiyu's 10th anniversary memorial at Shasta Abbey, one of the senior monks related two interactions with Rev. Master Jiyu regarding knowledge that had a significant impact on his training and his relationship with her. The first was when she replied, "I don't know" to a question he had asked. So, if even great Zen masters don't know everything, perhaps there's room for others like us who may not be all-knowing either. The second was her response (to another question), "Well, you know, [Reverend], there are two kinds of questions: those that have answers and those that don't." Some things in life do not have simple solutions, remedies, or explanations. Can we learn to accept and live with that?

Third, give your attention to what your body and mind are doing in this moment. Follow the basic principle of every-minute meditation: use a simple physical activity to ground yourself and focus the mind.<sup>1</sup> If need be, break up complex activities into smaller components: now I park the car near the curb; now I get out and lock it; now I place the keys in my pocket or purse; now I approach the house; now I climb the front steps; now I stand on the porch; now I ring the doorbell... Please note: don't deliberately think thoughts such as "I am climbing stairs"; just give your mind's energy or attention to the doing itself, to the physical sensation of movement. Concentration is a key component of meditating, and this is one way that we cultivate it. The more we do it, the more control we have over our mind and the choices we make. We are training the mind just as an athlete trains his

or her body for sports, or as a musician spends hours practicing musical compositions and scales. And they will tell you that at some point one learns to “just play.” If you think about it too much, you won’t make the basketball goal or play the instrument as fast as your eyes read the music.

Fourth, for confusion arising over larger issues such as, “What or how am I doing in my practice,” again, bring oneself back to the present moment and reflect: “What do I need to do right now? Wash the dishes? Make a phone call? Drive the children to school? Prepare lunch? Download the day’s email?” What is immediately before us that needs to be done? Usually the answer is obvious, which demonstrates the wisdom inherent in everyday life. We can usually trust our common sense to lead us, provided we remain mindful of the precepts and what we’re doing. The intellect serves the heart of awakening, it’s not something separate, nor is it something to be despised or thrown away. Rev. Master Jiyyu used to emphasize the importance of utilizing our minds by good-humoredly commenting, though with some exasperation, “So-and-so is going around with their brains in a sack today.” In learning mindfulness and trusting ourselves in the small acts of daily life, we develop confidence in our ability to do spiritual practice, for fundamentally these are not two distinct or separate activities.

Willingness is an excellent antidote to confusion, particularly if we are stubborn or prone to doubt. Probably the most valuable teaching I received while training as a monk was being asked to do something that I felt I wasn’t

capable of. The confidence was placed in me wholeheartedly: I was expected to run with the task, without excuses, doubts, or objections. These tasks ranged from the insignificant such as firing the boiler to greater responsibilities such as running a priory. And lo and behold, I could do it. We all have the Buddha nature and can learn to live from that place beyond the opposites, beyond “can” and “can’t.” Our Buddha nature is not something separate from the ordinary mind or the activities it engages in: we can perceive when it’s time to put another log on the fire, or open a window for ventilation, or empty the ash drawer. We learn from our experience. Although karmic consequence always accords with our intention, we can view ‘mistakes’ as simply course corrections. A popular adage goes, “Good judgment is based on experience, and experience is based on poor judgment.” Everything is teaching us if we are open to it.

Attachment to ideals can cause confusion. We need to be careful to not set up ideals with which we then measure ourselves—or others. Tending toward idealism myself, it’s easy for me to believe or hold the view that there is one right answer or solution and distress myself (and others around me) trying to find or achieve it. I learned this mental outlook early on in school and home where anything less than perfect was not good enough. In cultivating accurate perception, it’s essential to let go of “should” and “must.” Our morning office scripture *Sandokai* cautions, “Set up not your own standards.” Great Master Dōgen teaches us to develop the kaleidoscopic mind, not the binary one of computers and discriminatory minds with their “either/or” options, such as

“good/bad.” This flexible, ever-changing, multi-faceted heart-mind is one of compassion, kindness, and patience—and the source of wisdom.

Expectations cause confusion, too. We would be wise not to set our course in practice by expecting particular results or striving to attain certain goals. We of course all do this—but it’s another mental habit to set down. Rev. Master Jiyu was told in Japan, first, “Don’t expect too much,” then, “Expect very little,” and finally, “Don’t expect anything.” This is Dōgen’s goal of goallessness and the reason behind Sawaki Kōdō-roshi’s maxim, “Zazen [meditation] is good for nothing.” The point to learn from these short teaching phrases is to stop grasping at ends, for the grasping mind itself is the source of suffering.

Perseverance eventually leads to clarity. We dive into training right where we are, and we do the best we can until we receive or encounter feedback (karmic consequence) that we have overlooked or misunderstood an important instruction or teaching, or that there is a more skillful way to approach a particular aspect. For instance, when we first learn to meditate, we may count the breaths in order to concentrate the mind. However, in serene reflection counting breaths is not something we continue once we’ve learned to concentrate. Having a living teacher to point such things out or to help us with perspective is invaluable.

Observable results of serene reflection, or ‘just sitting,’ can often only be discovered in retrospect, and sometimes

only from a vantage point significantly down the road. The explanation and instructions are simple enough. The difficulty is meditating regularly, day in and day out, well or sick, happy or sad, feeling inspired or not. There are no secrets in this process. Each of us has already been given the complete instructions on how to open the treasure house. See Dōgen's *Rules for Meditation* if you need a refresher.<sup>2</sup>

Remembering Dōgen's teaching "training is enlightenment" can be helpful, too: We focus on the process of learning/training in this moment, the only place where we can make choices and affect the future, rather than dream or fantasize about some mysterious state that we may someday stumble into. We also do not dwell in guilt or worry about the past. Rev. Master Jiyu once said, "Whatever you think enlightenment is, it's not." Worrying or speculating about the state of our training usually squanders our time, and learning not to do such things is a part of practice, too.

So, "Don't judge your own training." This teaching was given to my generation of novice monks countless times. Particularly in the beginning years, each of us is rarely the best judge of our own progress, just as a child learning to read is not the best appraiser of his or her progress. Go for refuge to a teacher whom you have confidence in and believe what she or he says. If they indicate you're doing fine, trust that and get on with things. Don't waste further time by stewing on confusion. Confusion dissipates by our not believing it, by carrying on regardless. Although it is



advisable to retain some humility and ask for advice from time to time—none of us is infallible.

In contemplative practice, whether as monastic or home-dweller, the body-mind learns to trust something greater and deeper and more intuitive than the intellectual mind-brain or the emotional ‘heart’ of feelings. That “something” is the heart-mind (*shin* in Japanese) or ‘Buddha nature’ as Rev. Master Jiyu often termed it. These are positive, affirming ways to describe ‘It.’ Other contemporary Zen masters have sometimes chosen to express it by calling it what it’s not, for example, “the ‘don’t know’ mind.” By continuing our meditation and relinquishing the mind’s predilection for knowing (deliberate thought), we can learn to hear and heed the still, small voice within.

Commitment and faith anchor us in the midst of the waves of confusion. We carry on and persevere, placing our faith (trust, confidence) in our teacher, the teaching, and our fellow practitioners. The undivided Treasure House manifests as the Three Refuges for our benefit—to help us find our way and keep going, providing ample evidence and assurance that this path indeed yields fruit.



It’s said that too much reading can be a cause of confusion, and I think there is a lot of truth in that assessment.

For awakening to our true nature, the Serene Reflection Meditation tradition does not place primary emphasis on the study of scriptures and commentaries. The Sixth Chinese Ancestor Hui Neng (Daikan Eno) was illiterate, and this form of Zen Buddhism is sometimes called “peasant zen” in Japan. Both Japanese Sōtō Zen founders, Dōgen and Keizan, caution sternly in their writings about the danger of erudition and scholasticism. Keizan highlights the issue with his chapter in the *Denkōroku* on the Second Indian Ancestor, Ananda. This monk disciple was the Buddha’s chief attendant and memorized all the Buddha’s talks, but his awakening was delayed 20 years because of his attachment to his intellect.<sup>3</sup> The teachings of the *Shurangama Scripture and Mantra* are also addressed specifically to Ananda, whose neglect of practice landed him in a precarious situation.<sup>4</sup>

If you’ve ever spent considerable time at one of our monasteries, you learn fairly soon that there’s not a lot of emphasis on intellectual study. The contemplative life in our tradition is composed of formal seated meditation, physical labor, ceremonial, and study. The study, though, is usually done via the recitation of scriptures in ceremonies, the master’s lectures on scriptures and writings (the latter usually themselves commentaries on scriptures), and for novices and lay practitioners, classes on different practical aspects of the training. Learning in the Meditation (Zen) traditions is experiential rather than intellectual. That’s why when monks ‘graduate,’ they are given a teaching certificate rather than an academic degree. This emphasis is not to

decried the intellect, only to help it find its true purpose in the scheme of spiritual development. Rev. Master Jiyu often used the analogy of a computer and its operator to portray the relationship of brain and heart (Buddha nature): the brain is a wonderful computer, very useful for analyzing and storing data and presenting options, but it is the heart, the operator, who makes the decisions.

We in the West tend to be too intellectual. Rev. Master Daizui in *Buddhism from Within* humorously called himself a “recovering intellectual,”<sup>5</sup> and I lean in that direction myself. The times when my practice has been the most fruitful have been when life required my full attention and energy, without much, if any, time for reading. Our society and educational system strongly condition us to rely upon the mind rather than the whole being. Buddhist meditation harmonizes body and mind, or body/mind and heart. One reason temples and monasteries are often located in beautiful natural settings is so that we can be closer to the basic elements of existence and engage in a reality not engineered or fabricated by humans. Spending a considerable amount of time in physical labor—“chop wood, carry water”—connects us to life in a concrete, bodily, simple way. I myself find that I can work with my mind—computer, reading, writing, etc.—for only so long, and then I need to take a break and do something physical—rake leaves, pick up branches, put things away, etc.—there’s always some need just waiting to support moving meditation!

Please don't misunderstand me. Reading can be useful and sometimes necessary. If you tend to read a lot of Dharma books, simply reducing the amount may make a significant impact on your practice. Instead, put that time and energy into non-verbal activity.

Dharma writings are seeds. Plant them well, according to the instructions, in good soil, with the right amount of light and warmth, and at the right time you will likely see growth, flowering, and fruition—provided you provide adequate water, meditation (both formal and informal types). And don't plant too many in one spot or more than you can reasonably take care of.

There's no magic in any of this, although allow for some mystery (we don't ripen the fruit). It is how our universe operates according to natural laws or principles, one of which is cause and effect. As with plants, so with spirit. An Eightfold Path hymn we sing for Buddha's Enlightenment encourages us, "Keep thou thy mind as a garden." What good advice!

I've specifically addressed Dharma writings here, but it's also essential to look at everything one takes into one's mind via magazines, newspapers, radio, television, internet, and social media. Pause and reflect honestly, "Do I really need to know or learn about this?" Reflecting on the Precepts can be helpful in such situations, as well heeding the admonition of many great masters down the centuries: "Do not waste time." I cannot recommend enough Rev. Master

Daizui's article "*Spiritual Simplicity*" in which he offers an overview of right livelihood and recommends ways to keep one's heart and mind uncluttered by superfluous 'stuff.'<sup>6</sup> With impermanence/change confronting us especially in these times, think deeply on what we are we doing with this precious human birth.



In sum, training with confusion requires acceptance of one's present situation, diminishing its power of mental habit, understanding its causes, and gradually changing what you put into your mind: cultivate positive mental habit—good karma or merit. This process could be seen as a form of sange: "full and open confession, true conviction, and earnest endeavor," as Dōgen writes in the *Shushogi*.<sup>7</sup> It assuredly leads to the Treasure House.

May we all grow together in harmonizing body, speech, and mind so that the Buddha nature shines brightly and benefits all.

#### *Notes*

1. Please note that this "every-minute meditation (or zazen)" is not the same as 'mindfulness' frequently taught nowadays. 'Every-minute meditation' is what we also call 'working meditation,' as it is the mind of meditation (zazen/serene reflection meditation) applied to physical activity. For further clarification see Rev. Daizui MacPhillamy, "Every-minute Meditation," entitled "Right Mindfulness" in *A Perspective on the Eightfold Path* (Order of Buddhist Contemplatives, 2001) pp. 10-13.  
<http://obcon.org/dharma/buddhism/the-eightfold-path/#7> and in

- Rev. Master P.T.N.H. Jiyu-Kennett and Members of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives, *Serene Reflection Meditation*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed., (Mount Shasta, Calif: Shasta Abbey Press, 2016) pp. 47-50.  
<http://shastaabbey.org/pdf/SRM.pdf>
2. Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett and Members of the OBC, *Serene Reflection Meditation*, pp. 1-3 (see link above).
3. Rev. Hubert Nearman, trans. (Shasta Abbey Press, 2nd ed., 2001) pp. 11-18. <http://shastaabbey.org/pdf/bookDenk02.pdf>
4. *The Surangama Sutra*—A New Translation with Excerpts from the Commentary by the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua, trans. and pub. by Buddhist Text Translation Society (Ukiah, Calif: 2009) pp. xiv, xviii, 5-13.
5. Rev. Master Daizui MacPhillamy, *Buddhism from Within: An Intuitive Introduction to Buddhism* (Order of Buddhist Contemplatives/Shasta Abbey Press, 2001).
6. <http://journal.obcon.org/articles/spiritual-simplicity/>
7. Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett, trans. & comp., *Zen is Eternal Life*, 4th ed. (Shasta Abbey Press, 1999) p. 96.  
<http://shastaabbey.org/pdf/bookZel.pdf>

## What is real, what is true?

Rev. Baldwin Schreurs

—*Dharmatoevlucht, Apeldoorn–Netherlands*—

*This article was originally published in Dutch in the Dharmatoevlucht November 2016 newsletter*

Two words about which we are often confused and thereby cause suffering for ourselves and others, are ‘real’ and ‘true’. We often don’t notice that we take them to be synonymous; what is real is true. But is this conclusion a correct one?

What is real? It is the experience I have now as thoughts, emotions and bodily and sensory sensations. And although, for example, my current thought with its corresponding emotion may have to do with what has happened in the past, or will occur in the future, what is real is the fact that I experience a thought and emotion now. That thought will intertwine with other thoughts and emotions to create a story in which an image is embedded. That image can be a self-image, saying something about myself, how I see myself or my past or future, my life, my work etc. Or it can say something about another person or persons, or about a situation, or the world in general. Our self-image or world view always carries some judgement. And we all too often presume that this image or view is correct, that it is true simply because it has my thoughts, emotions and/or bodily

or sensory sensations as its basis. But are we correct to assume this?

How often have we experienced that the way we think about ourselves or others is influenced by, for example, having had a good night's sleep or not, by being in a happy mood or by feeling somewhat depressed because of the gloomy wet weather. Or by having had a wonderful meal, or being tired and hungry. Or on being in love or in a difficult relationship. How easily our moods can be affected by the endless different circumstances in which we live, and how easily can the image we have of ourselves, of others or of the world, change accordingly. And every time we think that the image, our view, is true. But something that is true cannot later on, when circumstances have changed, become another truth. That which is true is unchanging and always true.

There is a lot of confusion about truth. Sometimes you hear people say that everybody has their own truth, as if truth is something relative. But nobody truly believes this. Most people, if not all, regard their own truth as always just a bit more true than somebody else's. And where more than one truth 'reigns', chances for conflict will be present. At the source of almost every conflict lies the belief that our truth is the only real truth. Most of the violence in this world, whether it is political, social or religious, comes forth from the adherence to the belief in one's own truth. And of course we also see this over and over again within our own lives. We sometimes even start battling with ourselves because we take the self-image we carry with us to be true, no matter that it doesn't correspond with the reality of what we are.



What we experience is real, as experience, but let us not conclude that the image or view arising out of that experience is necessarily true. It is also not necessarily untrue. The image is simply an image, a view is nothing more than a view, arising from real experiences. The image or view is itself, as an experience at that moment, real but nothing more than that.

Is there anything in this world that is true, not in the sense of ‘relative truth,’ but as an unchanging and timeless truth? Buddhism answers this question positively: there is truth that is not dependent on any image or view. It is also not dependent on what is real (i.e. our experience) but nevertheless is accessible. What we experience as real is itself a Dharma door to Truth which is ‘unlocked’ when we fully allow our experiences to be what they are without grasping any of the images or views that arise from them. And truly, it doesn’t matter what experiences we have, whether they are nice or not, pleasant or unpleasant. Each judgement is in itself again a view: not ‘true’ and not ‘not true.’ So why cling to it?

In this letting be what is real— and every experience is only real in this moment, here and now— we touch a deeper truth that always is, was and will be present. It is a truth completely devoid of any image or view. We can name it with words like Timeless Being, True Self, Buddha Nature or God, but before we know it, these words will again spark off images that we will consider to be true and therefore cling to them, thus losing the truth instantly. The truth too can only be touched at one time and place: here and now.

One could describe meditation as being fully with the current experience and letting go of every image or view that arises out of that experience. I sometimes like to compare it, if I may use an image here to indicate the imageless, to looking into a very large and deep pond. The first thing we often see is our own reflection and that of all the surrounding objects. However, when we stop focusing on the reflection and look through it with a more relaxed gaze, we see what is real: the water, the fish that swim in it, and perhaps even the subtle movement of the water itself. But we can soften our focus even more and look still deeper in the pond. Slowly we shall ‘see’ more and more depth, spaciousness and silence.

When we look deeply with an ever softening gaze into this moment of our being, past all images and past all thoughts, emotions and sensory impressions, we gradually discover a comparable depth, spaciousness and silence in it in which all experience manifests, without ever losing its own inherent peace and quietude. It is this imageless truth that is the bedrock of each of us.

## Imperfect grief

Alex Reed

—Hexham, Northumberland—UK—

*this world of dew  
is yes, a world of dew  
and yet....<sup>1</sup>*

I recently went to buy a new rug for my flat. This flat is the home that I shared with Jan, my wife of thirty-five years, until her recent death after a long illness. As part of the process of trying to adjust to life on my own, I'd started to make small changes to the place, and I wondered if a rug might brighten the living room. I gazed at the selection of beautiful rugs in the department store, unable to choose, like a child overwhelmed by an adult decision. I left the shop feeling defeated, and decided to forget about rug-buying for a while.

Later I discussed this experience with a friend, who commented, "*Well, I suppose you don't know what you like anymore—your frames of reference have all changed, including the kind of person you thought you were when Jan was alive, and the kind of things you both liked.*" This observation felt accurate to me, resonating with my sense that something within me was being fundamentally shifted by grief. I felt, and still feel, that I'm no longer quite 'the same person' as I was when Jan was alive.<sup>2</sup>

Even friends who know me well might be surprised to hear me say this, as I think I have generally given the impression of ‘coping well’. And, overall, this is probably true. However, grief tends to be felt most strongly in private moments, and it’s also difficult to predict how it will show itself from one day to the next. Joan Didion’s book, *The Year of Magical Thinking*, details her responses during the months following the sudden death of her husband. She describes how she gave a surface impression of managing life effectively, of ‘getting things done’, while her internal experience was often akin to a kind of madness; grief had swept away all her previous certainties:

...the period that followed, the weeks and then months that cut loose any fixed idea I had ever had about death, about illness, about probability and luck, about good fortune and bad, about marriage and children and memory, about grief, about the ways in which people do and do not deal with the fact that life ends, about the shallowness of sanity, about life itself.<sup>3</sup>

Joan Didion’s husband died very suddenly, and an unexpected loss of this sort is possibly more traumatizing for those who grieve than when someone has suffered long-term illness. But I have found that even when death has been approaching for some time, this ‘shock’ element is still present to a surprising extent. This perhaps speaks of the mind’s capacity to insulate itself from the reality of things,

but anticipated loss can also feel like a crisis when it hits; emotionally, psychologically, and, at times, physically.

A question that friends have occasionally asked me is whether Zen practice has helped in dealing with this crisis? Both Jan and I had been interested in Buddhism for many years and we maintained a regular meditation practice. Over time, we developed a close association with Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey, and formed dear friendships amongst the monastic and lay sangha. There is no doubt in my mind that these relationships helped Jan to face illness and death with an almost startling degree of acceptance and grace. The concern within Buddhism over questions of birth and death runs counter to the death-denying tendencies within our culture, and the monks who visited Jan were able to speak about dying with us both in an open and straightforward manner. This seemed immensely calming to Jan as she faced her life's ending.

For my own part, I would say that there have been times when my practice has helped in navigating the grief I have subsequently experienced, but also times when it has seemed inadequate. I suspect that religion is often found wanting in the face of grief, even by the most devout. C.S. Lewis, a committed Christian, wrote, '*...don't come talking to me about the consolations of religion or I shall suspect you don't understand.*'<sup>4</sup>

This is echoed by Guy Newland, a practising Buddhist, following the death of his wife. Newland discusses the

Buddhist teaching on impermanence and the relationship between attachment and suffering. He is dismissive of the idea that an understanding of these doctrines might somehow render us immune from grief, “*Let’s not fool ourselves. Meditation on impermanence does not magically make us invulnerable or transhuman*”.<sup>5</sup> To be human is to love, since we are intimacy-seeking creatures, and to love, of course, is to suffer, sooner or later.

As training intensifies and matures, it is possible that relationships become wider and more inclusive - less ‘personal’. Love and compassion may no longer be directed quite so exclusively towards a lover, partner, children or friends, but might perhaps fan outwards, towards all beings. But this doesn’t mean that the deeply personal love we feel for one another is simply a product of the unawakened mind. And if someone tried to persuade me otherwise, I’d be tempted to echo the words spoken by Miles Davis to a young Chet Baker, when Baker asked to play his trumpet at the legendary Birdland nightclub, “*Come back when you’ve lived a little!*”<sup>6</sup> I feel that my life has been enriched immeasurably through my ‘attachment’ (such a cold word) to Jan, and grief is the price that has to be paid. I would not wish it otherwise.

So the ways in which Zen has been helpful to me so far have not been so much in relation to the ‘consolations’ of belief or faith, but as a practice. And anyway, as Rev. Master Hakuun Barnhard has observed, “*Buddhism is not a system of beliefs...it is a system of tools that uncover beliefs...*”<sup>7</sup>

Despite the wide array of beliefs about grief, the various models and theories, the different ideas about ‘stages’ and progression, the cultural narratives about how grieving should be done, the advice from compassionate friends, despite all of this, we each need to feel our way through this mysterious landscape, step-by-step, as the path bends and turns. Musing on the unfathomable nature of grief prompted me to write this short poem:

### **deep river**

the friends that say, *it's early yet*,  
your picture on the fireplace, smiling

*it takes a year*,  
your reading specs still on the table

*it takes two years*,  
your folded clothes still on the shelves

*it takes four years*,  
faint trace of you, within the wool

there is a river that runs within –  
vast, uncharted, rising

My experience is that the practice of meditation can be helpful in navigating this deep river of grief. Sitting in meditation allows me to focus on ‘what is’, rather than becoming over-preoccupied with the ‘right way’ to grieve,

or become consumed by anxieties over how long all this might go on for. Zazen also helps in creating moments of accepting what is before me without trying to repress or cover over the anguish. This may sound rather austere, but meditation also invites me into a more compassionate position towards myself. For instance, acceptance is all well and good, but, for me at least, some balance is needed between acceptance and distraction. We have to get by, and as Didion observed in the quote cited earlier, grief also shows us how paper-thin the veneer of what we take to be ‘sanity’ can be. Distraction gets bad press at times!

Maintaining daily meditation practice can be challenging when life is particularly difficult. The desire to protect oneself by turning away from ‘what is’ can be powerful. There may be fear that sitting still with grief will simply be a kind of self-torment. I was fortunate to have been practicing for long enough to have developed a degree of confidence that the sitting would be in some way helpful, even if this is difficult to properly articulate; that it might be clarifying, and help me connect with something that feels like ‘home’.

There are other ways in which looking at ‘what is’, rather than what ‘ought to be’, is useful. I suspect that most of us are oppressed by ideas of failure. I remember Jan once saying of her progressively deteriorating health, *‘I’m not even dying properly!’* And more recently I have often thought, *‘I’m not even grieving properly!’* This is particularly strong in those moments when I feel relieved to



be moving towards a future of some sort, however uncertain—when I find myself appreciating the hard fact that I am now free to begin a new life. And because grief is both a private and a public phenomenon, there is also the concern over what others might think. In those moments when I laugh with friends, or go out to enjoy myself, I fear being seen as shallow and disloyal to Jan’s memory. But actual grief, is, like actual life, imperfect. It doesn’t operate in line with received ideas about what ought to be. Regular sitting helps to see these thoughts and beliefs about how ‘it should be’ more clearly, so that they lose some of their hidden power. Practice returns us to the actuality of our experience of grief, mysterious and imperfect as it is. I feel that the best I can do is constantly take readings of the ways in which the river of grief flows within me, and try and calibrate myself in relation to that constantly shifting process. Zazen seems a ‘good tool’ for taking such readings.

In 2011 Jan wrote a short article for this Journal about her experience of retiring from work due to ill health. She wrote:

...The processes of reflection and meditation are not just steps to an end, where something is ‘achieved’ and finished with, but continual ways of being that have no end.<sup>[8](#)</sup>

We might say the same of the processes of reflection and meditation on the mystery of grief.

*With thanks to Rev. Master Berwyn Watson, Bob Adshead, Linda France and Jenny Rookes for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this article.*

#### *Notes*

- [1.](#) This famous haiku was written by Issa Kobayashi following the death of his one-year old daughter in 1818. The translation here is from Patricia Donegan's *Haiku Mind*. (Boston: Shambala, 2008) p. 21.
- [2.](#) The concept of 'anatta'—that there is no permanent self—is core to Buddhism, of course. From this perspective there is no 'self' that has been altered by grief. And yet...
- [3.](#) Didion, Joan. *The Year of Magical Thinking*. (London: Harper Perennial, 2006) p. 7.
- [4.](#) Lewis, C.S. *A Grief Observed*: Readers Edition. (London: Faber, 2015) p. 21.
- [5.](#) Newland, Guy. *A Buddhist Grief Observed*. (Boston Shambala, 2016) p. 33.
- [6.](#) From the 2016 Chet Baker biopic, *Born to be Blue*.
- [7.](#) Rev. Master Hakuun Barnhard (Dharma Talk, June Session 2007 at Throssel Hole) *Through Darkness, Things Are Bright*. Available on Throssel Hole CD.
- [8.](#) Reed, Jan. *Retiring from Work*. The Journal of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives, Spring 2011, p. 29.

## A Bodhisattva's Perspective on Social Relations

Rev. Kyōsei Kempinsky

—*Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey, Northumberland-UK*—

This has been a turbulent period in our history and there have been extraordinary changes in 2016 and 2017. We are all affected in how we engage or don't engage in the society in which we live. It's very easy to be caught up or swept along with what society is going through, what each one of us is going through. When things are not to our liking we tend to form an alliance with people who prop up our self-centred beliefs and desires, which then creates a hardness of mind especially towards those whose opinions and life styles differ from our own.

Instead of being swayed by the comings and goings not just from outside but internally as well, we can stop for a moment; pause, sit and somehow our connection with something which is much deeper and broader is present and alive. I've heard some teachers describe it as if one is living in a bubble and on the odd occasion the bubble bursts and it is as if one is waking up and everything seems more expansive, more broad and we connect on a deeper level with all things great and small, sentient and insentient—and

then we go back into our little world creating more bubbles as fears govern the choices which are made.

Our interactions with everyone and everything are very important indeed and we are responsible for them, whether beneficial or harmful. The other day I came across Great Master Dōgen's chapter on *Bodaisatta-Shishobo* translated as *Four Elements of a Bodhisattva's Social Relations*.<sup>1</sup>

The four elements are free giving, kind speech, helpful conduct and cooperation. When we practice any of the four elements they all intermingle with each other. Through our effort these can manifest—not in a big way but in small ways in our daily life.

Family life and community life are not so different in the sense of living together, cooperating with each other whether with our parents, children, neighbours or living a monastic life. Our needs are basically the same: food, shelter, medicine and a wholesome livelihood. We all share the same planet and wish to find peace, happiness, and a way to respect each other no matter where we live or what sort of background we have come from.

We can practice the four elements of a Bodhisattva's social relations today; it is within our reach. Dōgen says:

When we can give up even one speck of dust for free giving, though it is our own act we will quietly rejoice in it, because we will have already received

the authentic transmission of one of the virtues of the buddhas, and because for the first time we will be practicing one of the methods of a bodhisattva.”<sup>1</sup>

(This method of a Bodhisattva is the first of the Paramitas, dana, translated as generosity.)

There are numerous ways we can bring the four elements of a Bodhisattva’s social relations into our daily life, simple things that can be easily overlooked, such as offering to make a hot drink for someone without wanting anything in return, refraining from praising someone for one’s own selfish motive, being glad for someone who is excelling in their work and feeling empathy with someone who isn’t.

Before travelling to the U.S. to stay at Shasta Abbey I went on retreat for a while in the small seaside town of Cromarty. On some days, depending on the weather and when the tide was out, I would go down to the beach and pick up debris that had been washed up and place it in a council refuse bin. It felt good to be doing this and there was no sense of ‘Oh, look how wonderful I am doing this deed’; I was just picking up what needed to be picked up. This is another way to express helpful conduct and cooperation. One of the things we practice in our Abbeys and temples is washing the plastic food bags so that they can be re-used. This is helping the environment and many other commodities are also recycled.

Sometimes life can be complicated and when there are misunderstandings it is best to find a way to communicate which is helpful, such as kind speech which comes from compassion. All of this does take practice and there is nothing like going to sit quietly, letting things be as they are within. Dōgen goes on to say “What is hard to change is the mind of living beings. By starting with a gift we begin to change the mental state of living beings.”<sup>2</sup>

So it always starts with each one of us doing the inner work and doing the best we can do in our practice and in so doing we make a difference to ourselves and others. There are numerous opportunities available and gradually, as the four elements of a Bodhisattva’s social relations are brought forth, the benefits extend in all directions. As Rev. Master Jiyu used to say: ‘if we look with the eyes of Buddha, we will see the heart of Buddha.’

*Notes:*

- <sup>1</sup> Eihei Dōgen. *Shōbōgenzō*, trans. Nishijima and Cross, Vol. 3, Section 45, *Bodaisatta-Shishobo*, (London: Windell Publications, 1997)
- <sup>2</sup> *ibid* p. 31.

## Fish and Ball

Roger Kahn OBC

—Berkeley, CA–USA—

*This first appeared in the Berkeley Buddhist Priory Newsletter  
October–December 2016 [slight edit]*

Many years ago, at the Shasta Abbey Gift Shop, I saw a fish with a ball in its throat. It was a pendant one could wear around one's neck. I thought, "*Why would anyone want one of these? Why would the Abbey have this in its store? This fish can neither spit it out, nor swallow it, and the ball can be hot as well. What could be more horrible than this?*" Just the thought made me uneasy. Once, I told someone about the fish and ball, and she became so upset that she started crying.

For a long time now, I have been trying to find one of those fish pendants to own. The thought of that also makes me uneasy. What is it about this image? Why is it so compelling? Why would I want anything to do with this? What does this have to do with me? Are we stuck with a burning ball in our throats that we can't spit out or swallow? Really?

Recently a sibling opened her flood gates and let me have it for a really long time. It lasted a really long time because I didn't try to stop her. Whatever she said, I heard. She went on and on, and I listened on and on. Some of the complaints were applicable to me and lots of it didn't apply to me. I understood that I could not change her experience of the situation. What she said, she believed as the truth. Rather than argue with her truth, I just listened. When she was finally done, I sympathized with her and agreed it would be nice if everyone helped out like she thought they should. I had heard a lot of frustration and knew there was definitely a lack of peace within the situation.

As I listened, I knew that I had to accept her rant. It was the ball in my throat. I knew I wasn't going to get to spit or swallow. I also understood that whatever help she might receive probably wouldn't solve the situation. There was not going to be a simple "spitting out or swallowing" of this one. Do we really have to live with a red hot ball stuck in our throats?

I don't think that the ball is always a problem. It is not always hot and inflamed. I don't think I always need to spit it out or swallow it, and most of the time I don't even know it's there. But it is. Isn't the ball our karma?

*"To become one with our karma"*. What a lofty thought. How blissful it sounds. Well maybe it is, but the answer is that the fish and the ball must become one. Actually, maybe



the fish and the ball have always been one, and that there has never been a need to swallow or spit it out.

We all have known peace, and we all have tried to get away from the way things are. My karma is in my throat and I need the faith to allow It to make Its presence known to me. I need to deal with It or It burns more and more: *“I’d love to get rid of It, why me?”* No! *“Thank you for helping me know what I need to do, or not do.”*

I think that the fish and ball must be similar to the man who sits upon the beast of self and plays his flute like never before. He has become one with his Karma to the point that he is no longer led around by the beast. He and the beast are one and have always been one.

What could be worse than a fish with a ball in his throat? It would be a fish who didn’t want the ball in his throat. We don’t get to spit or swallow the ball. But, we do have the opportunity to train ourselves so we can learn and be grateful. We can do what we can do and we can accept the Truth. We can become one with the ball in our throats and swim freely.

# NEWS OF THE ORDER

---

## Europe

### Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey

—Northumberland, England—UK—

**Monastic news and visitors:** We were joined for our winter monastic retreat, in a quiet and mild-weathered December, by Rev. Aiden from Turning Wheel Buddhist Temple and Rev. Leoma from Norwich Zen Buddhist Priory. Rev. Lambert returned from his year at Shasta Abbey and settled back into the community; it's good to have him back with us. Rev. Kyōsei has left for a nine month stay at Shasta and arrived in time for a heavy fall of snow.

At one of the monastic teas in January, Rev. Master Daishin named as Masters Rev. Master Roland and Rev. Master Berwyn. This good news was followed a few days later by a Head Novice Dharma Ceremony for Rev. Sanshin as he finished his term. He answered questions on his chosen piece of teaching from the *Diamond Sutra*;

All great Bodhisattvas should give rise to purity of mind in this way; they should give rise to a mind that is not based on form, and they should give rise to a mind that is not based on sound, smell, taste, touch or thought. They should give rise to a mind that is not based on anything.

We were delighted to welcome more monastic visitors in January; Rev. Master Fuden came from Dharmazuflucht in Germany, Rev. Master Hakuun from her new temple in the Netherlands and Rev. Master Favian from Portobello.

In February, Rev. Jishin ended her time as Prior at Reading Buddhist Priory and returned to the community here; it's good to welcome her back. Rev. Gareth left to take her place at Reading and begin his stay as Prior. We enjoyed a farewell meal with him and send all our good wishes to him in his new role.

In early February, we welcomed a new postulant to the community. John Leonard, from the Republic of Ireland, has been coming to Throssel for over 20 years.

A few weeks later saw another new postulant entering. Willem Dijker is 20 years old, son of Renee Brons, a longstanding practitioner of the OBC who lives in Utrecht in the Netherlands.. We wish them both well as they begin their monastic life.



*John (left) and Willem*

**Retreats:** We celebrated the turning of the year with our popular New Year Retreat, led this year by Rev. Master Roland, with Rev. Master Daishin as Celebrant for the ceremony on New Year's Eve and for the festival for Rev. Master Jiyu's birthday on January 1<sup>st</sup>.

We hold festivals most months and lately have celebrated the Buddha's Renunciation with Rev. Chandra as Celebrant, and the Buddha's Death with Rev. Master Hugh as Celebrant as part

of a four day Intensive Meditation Retreat. We also had our first Introductory Retreat of the year in February with a small group of newcomers finding out about our practice and life at the monastery.

***Cemetery project:*** Following two funerals last Autumn in wet weather, we recognised it was time to make a proper pathway down to the cemetery to enable safe and dignified access for funeral processions. This involved cutting down one tree, clearing a way through and laying a wide pathway. We hired someone local to do this work. The photo below shows its passage through the trees.



***Garden Project:*** Our public garden here was planted many years ago with a leylandii hedge border. Recently it has become so dense that it has become increasingly unmanageable and quite a job to trim safely. This is being felled by a local gardener and the work has already opened up the garden. We look forward to completion of the project when in due course a new boundary will be put in place.



*Felling work in progress*

***Hermitage borehole:*** Our Hermitage cottage in Wales has no mains water, the only supply being from a small stream which runs down the hill through the property grounds. As the cottage has no mains electricity, incoming water has been slowly filtered mechanically through three progressively finer filters which reduced the flow from the drinking water tap to at best a small trickle. Upstream, this water flows through Forestry Commission land and following an increase in their activities behind the hermitage which resulted in run-off into the stream, the water quality deteriorated further. We have recently had a borehole dug which, with a pump system, can provide a much welcomed reliable clean water supply for monks staying there.

*—Rev. Alina*

## De Dharmatoevlucht

—Apeldoorn–The Netherlands—

***Update on the relocation of the temple:*** As mentioned in the previous journal, De Dharmatoevlucht is in the process of acquiring an old fire station building that has been put up for sale by the local city council. The building is situated close by and very suitable for conversion to a Buddhist temple. A few weeks ago we were informed by the council that some ground clearing needs to be done before the building can be sold to us. When gas heating was installed in the fifties of the last century, the oil tank was left sitting in the grounds next to the building with still plenty of oil in it. Unfortunately, because of corrosion, oil has leaked and penetrated the soil, slowly drifting into the garden of the neighbours.

It might now take another 6 to 7 months before a provisional purchase contract can be signed. As we need to leave the current premises by the end of September, a small group of sangha members will start looking for a small house for a rental period of 8 to 10 months from September onwards.

Our architect will in the meantime continue finalizing the technical drawings of the inside and outside of the building. As soon as they are ready we will publish them on our website. We hope to have more exact estimates for the remodelling work from several builders by the beginning of the summer so that we can come to a final decision if this project is achievable by the autumn. Our small Dutch congregation, together with several English friends, have given (and pledged) around 82.000 Euros in donations and loans so far and we have good hopes to reach our goal of raising 125.000 Euros.



*Altar at De Dharmatoevlucht*

***Festivals & Retreats:*** Several festival celebrations and weekend retreats have taken place in the temple these last few months. Eight people joined the New Year retreat which is always a bit challenging as the general public in this country are allowed to set off fireworks on the last day of the year. Formal meditation can sometimes feel like sitting still in the midst of what at times sounds like a war zone. However, it never spoils the fun of ending the year with some quiet meditation and making a big trifle pudding on New Year's Eve. This activity has become a tradition in our temple and this year's trifle again looked pretty spectacular, if only for a very short while as we ate it that same evening!



*—Rev. Baldwin*

## Norwich Zen Buddhist Priory

—Norwich-UK—

***Third Anniversary:*** We celebrated the Priory's third anniversary on 6th November and it seemed very apt that this day was also the 20th anniversary of the death of Rev. Master Jiyu. We held a festival ceremony to express our gratitude for her life and teaching — it is because of her steadfast life of training that we have this Priory where we can train together. The Dharma talk focussed on Rev. Master Jiyu's teaching on 'The Perfection of Zen'. Afterwards, we enjoyed having a bring-and-share lunch together.



*Third anniversary celebration*

***Cambridge day retreat:*** Three weeks before our anniversary celebrations, there had been an impressive gathering of the East Anglian Sangha at our annual retreat in Cambridge. This valuable opportunity for the Cambridge and Norwich Sanghas to meet up and practise together for the day seems to be greatly appreciated. The Dharma talk was on the topic of training with fear, what this means for us as we sit and as we encounter



challenges in our lives. Thank you to the members of the Cambridge Meditation Group who organised the retreat and ensured that it ran smoothly, as well as to those Norwich Sangha members who offered lifts to Cambridge on the day.

***Visit from Rev. Alicia:*** It was a pleasure to welcome Rev. Alicia to the Priory for a brief visit, 6th - 7th February, as she journeyed back from a retreat in Norfolk. Some years ago, Rev. Alicia spent a month in Norwich, on a ‘pilot project’, so that the local congregation could try out having a priory in their area and explore how it might work in practice. So, it was especially fitting to be able to show her how that initial seed had flowered into the Priory that we have today.



*Rev. Leoma with Rev. Alicia*

***Thanks:*** I had to be away from the Priory at various times during 2016 and I am very grateful to those people who enabled the Priory to carry on functioning in my absence. My thanks too go to the people who make offerings of practical help, whether around the house and in the garden or with various office and administrative tasks— all of these help me enormously with the

day-to-day running of the Priory. Also much appreciated recently have been donations of soup and other food, as well as some items of garden furniture.

—*Rev. Leoma*

## The Place of Peace Dharma House

—*Aberystwyth, Wales-UK*—

Our year began with the usual New Year Ceremony. January was a mostly quiet month; a time to rest, reflect upon the call of training, and to sort through the office files, ensuring all is in order.

In December we gathered to celebrate the Buddha's Enlightenment and were joined by a first time guest from Llandrindod Wells.

On January 8th Heather Walters, a long-time supporter and Sangha member of The Place of Peace, gave birth to her first child, Ben. We wish the family every happiness.

In February we welcomed guests from Talybont and Huddersfield, who came for both group and private retreat time. We look forward to seeing those yet to come.

Gratitude is offered to friends of the temple, Ceri and Gordon Jones, who invited Rev. Master Myōhō to join them in their home for mince pies and fruit punch during December, their kindness and thoughtfulness is a gift. We thank all those who sent greetings and donations over the festive season, your offerings were appreciated. These included a pack of beautiful cards, sent by Moira Pagan. They show one of her begging bowl paintings which expresses the life of faith with visual clarity.

Thank you to everyone who helps to support this little temple.

—*Rev. Master Myōhō*

## Sitting Buddha Hermitage

—Cromford, Derbyshire—UK—

All is well at the Hermitage, which continues to offer introductory classes, meditation evenings, day retreats and individual retreat accommodation.

I celebrated the New Year with the community and retreat guests at Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey and was glad for the mild weather that made the travelling much easier than it usually is at that time of year.

In February I was invited to attend a weekend retreat in Sheringham, Norfolk organized by the International Zen Association, founded by Master Taisen Deshimaru. I much appreciated the opportunity to practice with and make the acquaintance of all on the retreat, especially Zen Teacher Mokuho Guy Mercier, who had come over from France to lead the retreat.

On the same trip to Norfolk I enjoyed a visit to Rev. Leoma at Norwich Buddhist Priory, staying overnight and meeting some of the congregation there. I spent a month with the Norwich group some eight or nine years ago when the possibility of a priory was being explored so I was particularly happy to visit what is now a flourishing temple.

With gratitude to everyone who contributes to the life and practice at Sitting Buddha Hermitage.

—Rev. Alicia

## Sōtō Zen Riga

—Riga—Latvia—

This winter we varied the schedule for a four day Rohatsu Retreat from December 1-4, and the changes worked out well. This was a non-residential retreat which ran from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm. We prepared simple breakfasts and medicine meals, and had a formal meal with bowl sets at lunchtime. Two long (45 minute)

independent outdoor walking meditation periods were introduced to allow Lilly the Chihuahua to have her usual walks and be still during formal meditation periods.

At the end of December we had a small informal gathering to celebrate the winter holiday, and had tea and decorated pine cones – not as big as Shasta Abbey pine cones, but very fine pine cones nevertheless.



*Attendees in the Rohatsu Retreat from left to right are: Martin Melkins; Rev. Bridin and Lilly; Normund Brods; and Alex Benetreau. Mara Bodniece attended as well and took the photo.*

The third editing of the Latvian translation of Rev. Master Daizui's *Buddhism from Within* is still in progress. The first involved my editing and discussing changes with Madara Heideman, the translator. The second editing was done on this version by the publisher. We are now on the third editing which involves Madara and I making small changes in the publishers' version and also double checking for accuracy. I think that all this tweaking is worthwhile, because the book reads better with each go. The most difficult thing has been maintaining the informal

tone in Latvian. This translation process has reminded me just how good a book this is and I appreciate even more deeply Rev. Master Daizui's offering in writing it. It has been useful to have translated sections of *Buddhism from Within* for our Thursday evening Dharma discussions.

We wish to grow our library and would be grateful if anyone has any books of our tradition they no longer need and can afford to mail them to us. (Some here can read English well.) Such an offering would be much appreciated. (Our full address is at the back of the journal in [Temple addresses](#).)

—Rev. Bridin

## Turning Wheel Buddhist Temple

—East Midlands—UK—

***Towards a long-term home for the temple:*** We have been looking for some time for another rented property that would give us slightly better facilities at a reasonable rent, but without success. Whilst a better rented house would be good, however, the longer term goal for the temple is to buy a property. This is partly so that we could adapt it to work better as a temple, but also because as tenants we could be asked to move from our current location at short notice.

We think that we are reaching a point where buying a property may be a realistic possibility, and we are just starting to look into different options, including looking at non-domestic properties as well as regular houses. We are very much in a “feasibility study” phase at the moment, and the temple trustees are discussing the practical steps that we could take to explore this a bit further. These include contacting estate agents, looking into mortgages and researching possible grants. Hopefully we will have more details to share in the coming months.

***Opening and Dedication of the Arnold Zendo:*** One of the Nottingham group members has recently set up a meditation hall

in her house, which is in Arnold, in the north of Nottingham. The first meeting at the new Arnold Zendo was in January, and we took the opportunity to have a Ceremony of Opening and Dedication for the new meditation hall.

After a social bring-and-share meal, we started the meeting with a meditation period. There were a dozen of us there altogether, and we just about fitted into the zendo, as you can see from the photo below.



The meditation period was then followed by the ceremony, which started with an incense offering and three bows. We all then processed around the hall and offered incense at the altar as we recited together the *Scripture of Great Wisdom* and the *Litany of the Great Compassionate One*, with flower petals raining down upon us. Rev. Aiden then read a dedication verse for the new zendo:

Today the Sangha gathers here in order to dedicate the Arnold Zendo as a place of Buddhist meditation and practice.

We offer our gratitude to all who have passed on the teaching from the time of Shakyamuni Buddha to the

present day, and to all who have made this training place possible.

We reaffirm our own commitment to practice, as we meet together in this hall in the stillness of meditation and in joyful celebration.

Let us offer the merit of this zendo to all beings as we recite together the Names of the Ten Buddhas.

Following the recitation of the *Names of the Ten Buddhas*, we recited the *Invocation for the Removal of Disasters*, skilfully accompanied by percussion instruments, and ended with an offertory and three bows.

We then celebrated the opening of the new zendo with glasses of juice and slices of cake; see photo below.



The Nottingham group will now be meeting at the Arnold Zendo on the first Monday of each month, with other Monday evening meetings continuing to be in the city centre. For full details of meetings, please see the calendar on the group's website ([notts-serenereflection.org.uk](http://notts-serenereflection.org.uk)).

—Rev. Aiden

---

## The Americas

### Shasta Abbey

—Mt. Shasta, California—USA—

**Weather:** Snow began falling in mid-December and covered the ground during much of December, January and into early February, when the rains began. We've had the good fortune to escape the damage that this winter's storms have brought to many places in California, only losing power briefly once or twice.



*Mt. Shasta in deep snow*

**Monastic term:** We began the spring monastic training term on February 2. Rev. Trahearn Platt entered the meditation hall to lead all trainees as Head Novice, with Rev. Vera Giordano as Head Novice's Assistant and Rev. Allard Kieres as Head Novice's Advisor. We offer congratulations and best wishes to these monks on taking the next steps in their training.





*Rev. Master Meian Elbert with Head Novice Rev. Trahearn Platt*

***Memorials, house blessings and funeral:*** We observed the one-year anniversary of the death of Rev. Master Hubert Nearman with a memorial ceremony on the morning of February 2.

Rev. Master Jishō Perry was the celebrant at a November memorial ceremony for Christine Marilyn Reeves, the mother of lay minister Susan Place, who died earlier in the month at the age of 90. Christine had been a social worker who wished happiness for all, so Susan chose to include the *Dedication of Merit* and *May All Beings Be Happy* in the service in recognition of that wish. Mary Ann Larson, who had assisted Susan and her husband Kirk Yarnell as Christine's primary caregiver for many years, attended the service and joined us for tea afterwards. Susan shared photos and recollections, including that Christine had been the only working mom among Susan's childhood circle of friends.

Rev. Enya Sapp was the celebrant at a house blessing ceremony for the home of Cate Lewis in January. Rev. Master Daishin Yalon and Rev. Valeria Allison were also present for the occasion, and Cate's home received the name, Dharma Cloud House.

Two dozen friends, family members and monks attended a memorial ceremony for the late lay minister Gene Cleaver in February, a year after his death, with Rev. Master Kōdō Kay as the celebrant. We're grateful to Gene's wife Ellen for this opportunity to offer our respects to a dear friend of our community and congregation.

On February 28, Rev. Master Meikō Jones was the celebrant for the funeral of Herbert Thomas Dye, known as Herb, who died on January 5 in Washington State at the age of 76. Five couples from Herb's neighborhood made the trip from Washington to attend the service. In recognition of Herb's service in the Air Force, an Honor Guard from a local veterans' organization presented an American flag to Herb's wife Ruth. Herb had been a lay minister of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives from the early days of the lay ministry. Having lived in Mt. Shasta for some years in the past, he kept his spiritual connection to the Abbey and asked that his funeral be held here. We offer our condolences to Ruth and to Herb's daughters Tasha and Kira, his son Blair, his step-daughter Polly, and his grandchildren.

***Retreats:*** Recent Introductory Retreats have been attracting large numbers of people wishing to experience our practice, and the November retreat was no exception. Twenty-five first-time visitors joined several returning retreatants and lay residents over the weekend of November 18-20. Their thoughtful questions and discussions showed sincere interest in our practice, and we've been glad to see that some have already registered for future retreats.

***Monastic Events:*** December is the month when we celebrate the Great Enlightenment of Shakyamuni Buddha. The monastic community sat in meditation for our annual weeklong retreat ending with the Abbess's Dharma Ceremony at midnight on December 8. The Friends of Shasta Abbey spent a day later in the month helping us adorn temple altars and buildings with

festive lights and seasonal decorations of jewel trees. Congregation members expressed their generosity at the Ceremony of Offering and Gratitude, passing gifts to the temple hand-to-hand before placing them on the altar, so that all those in attendance might join in the offering. More than a dozen people braved snow and ice to join us for a joyful ceremony of music and inspirational readings from *The Light of Asia* on the Eve of the Festival of the Buddha's Enlightenment. We were glad to welcome twenty-four retreat guests to spend three days celebrating the New Year with the monastic community and sharing the opportunity to experience the spiritual dimension of the traditional year-end holiday.

The monastery was closed for the month of January for a period of reduced activity, and we'd like to thank all our congregation and friends for these annual periods of retreat and renewal.

Rev. Master Meian offered an Abbess's Dharma discussion for local congregation and lay residents on Saturday, February 25. More than twenty people participated in a session of questions and answers on the Dharma and training.

***Serene Reflection Meditation Book:*** We now have a new edition of *Serene Reflection Meditation*, which is available through Lulu.com, a print-on-demand publisher. Link here: [Serene Reflection Meditation](#)

It has been revised and updated and contains most of the old articles and some new ones as well. Articles include teachings on how to bring the Dharma into all aspects of our lives and how we can live in harmony with ourselves and all living beings.

***Meditation Groups:*** Rev. Master Daishin Yalon and Rev. Allard Kieres visited the Bear River Meditation Group in December. The visit included a talk and discussion on generosity and gratitude. The two monks were present for the group's

Ceremony of Offering and Gratitude, when more than a dozen group members presented gifts to our temple.

Rev. Vivian Grunenfelder spent ten days leading an intensive practice period for the Bear River Group from January 15-24, including Dharma talks and discussions, a half-day meditation retreat, and on most days a schedule of morning meditation and morning service/evening meditation and vespers. The retreat centered on the theme of Love and how to include this aspect of human life into our Buddhist practice, exploring such questions as: Is it possible to cultivate equal, unconditional love for all beings? How can we love without attachment? Rev. Vivian gave Dharma talks on the subject at two evening meetings of the group, followed by lively discussions. This is the second year that the group has offered this intensive practice period, and all found it to be very helpful for deepening and enriching training.

Monks' visits to the Chico Serene Reflection Meditation Group resumed in February with a visit by Rev. Margaret Clyde, the newest group chaplain. Rev. Margaret gave a talk on "Bowing" followed by a fruitful discussion on this essential aspect of Buddhist practice. She also enjoyed socializing with the group over a delicious potluck supper. Visits by Rev. Margaret and Rev. Masters Scholastica Hicks and Serena Seidner will continue monthly, with talks and discussion on topics chosen by the group.

***Interfaith Prayer Service:*** Rev. Masters Meian Elbert, Shikō Rom, and Kōdō Kay and Revs. Helen Cummings and Margaret participated in "An Interfaith Service of Prayers for the Nation" at St. Barnabas Episcopal Church in Mt. Shasta on the national holiday of Presidents' Day on February 20. Rev. Helen accompanied the monks and lay minister Laurie Ottens as we offered the chanting of *The Metta Sutra*. Rev. Helen also gave a reading of the *Dedication of Merit*. Offerings of prayers and scripture readings from the Muslim, Jewish, Baha'i, Protestant and Roman Catholic faiths were interspersed with patriotic poems, songs and hymns including "I Vow to Thee, My Country,"

familiar to us from Rev. Master Jiyu's adaptation. We all agreed that it had been uplifting to join together in reliance upon our faith at a time of change.

***Travels and Visits:*** Rev. Lambert Tuffrey departed in late November on his way home to Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey. We enjoyed Rev. Lambert's company for a year as well as being grateful for his work in the Extern Sacristy and his photos of the summer work project at Fugen Hermitage. We welcomed Rev. Kyōsei Kempinsky, also of Throssel, who arrived in mid-December, and we are enjoying spending this time with her. Our long-time Dharma friend Rev. Jisen Coghlan of Boise, Idaho joined us for the December monastic retreat. We wished farewell to Rev. Valeria Allison, who returned to Dragon Flower Mountain monastery in Lytton, British Columbia after a visit of several months, during which she stepped in as Chief Cook for a time. We wish to express our gratitude to all who enrich our practice by offering their time and the example of their training to us.

Rev. Allard traveled to the Portland Buddhist Priory in January to assist Rev. Leon Kackman, a Reed College alumnus, in offering a weekend retreat at the priory for Reed students investigating possible career choices by "shadowing" members of various professions. Five students signed up for the Exploring Buddhist Monasticism retreat, where they received meditation instruction and participated in a typical retreat schedule with the two monks and lay minister Gary Fear. Rev. Leon kindly drove Rev. Allard home and visited us for a week. He told us at evening tea that he thought the participants had been interested in our practice and that he'd consider offering it again next January.

***New Cat:*** An orange-and-white cat had been spotted on our property for some months. He always ran from us until in late December at the onset of heavy snow and low temperatures, he decided to stop running and ask for help. He called to us from between two buildings, where we offered him food and a warm bed; after a few days we brought him in and had him checked at

the vet's, where we learned that he's a roughly 4-year-old neutered male in good health. Rev. Master Serena Seidner adopted him, and Toby is the newest feline resident of the Bodhidharma Hall.



*Toby enjoys his new home*

—Rev. Margaret

## Columbia Zen Buddhist Priory

—Columbia, South Carolina—USA—

Being the only OBC temple on the East Coast of the US, far from other OBC temples, we don't get a lot of visitors, so it was with delight that we received a visit from Rev. Lambert, a monk of Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey. He was on his way home from a year long stay at Shasta Abbey, which included visits to other North American temples. He stayed with us for about a week in early December and joined us for our Enlightenment Day retreat. He helped us with some continued work to make our building less susceptible to run-off flooding. We are grateful for his visit and help. If others who are connected with the OBC find themselves in our area, you are most welcome to visit.

We are also grateful for the continued work day and other support of our congregation, as well as all the offerings we

receive, including the regular fulfilling of our online begging bowl requests.

We continue to have our regular morning and evening meditation and services, emphasizing our Wednesday evening and Sunday morning services and festivals. We also have monthly Saturday morning work days and quarterly retreats. Anyone within a “convenient” distance is most welcome to join us. For those with no previous contact with the OBC, we have orientations to our practice on Fridays at 6 pm. Please see the Orientation page of our web site:

<http://columbiazen.org/coming-to-the-priory/orientation/>

—Rev. Master Rokuzan

## Eugene Buddhist Priory

—Eugene, Oregon—USA—



*Hummingbird at the Priory this winter*

**Winter Ceremonies:** On December 12th we celebrated the Buddha’s Enlightenment at our Enlightenment Day Festival. Earlier in the week, we sang invocations and did recitations as an offering to Shakyamuni Buddha and to show gratitude for His teaching. The festival was followed with a potluck meal.

On New Year's Eve we celebrated with a traditional Buddhist ceremony and social tea to see in the New Year. There was a drop-in open house on New Year's Day in the afternoon to offer congregation members the opportunity to do bows in our meditation hall—a traditional practice in the Buddhist world on New Year's—and to share an informal tea.

The Priory closed on January 2nd for three weeks, and I used that time for a period of rest and reflection.

***Visitors:*** In mid-January, Rev. Leon, Prior at Portland Buddhist Priory, and Rev. Allard of Shasta Abbey stopped by on their way down to Shasta. It was enjoyable to see them both, and we engaged in a lively discussion about what we as priests can offer and how to take part in bridging the widening political divide in the United States.

***Service to the Eugene Community:*** At our last community meeting in 2016, we decided to explore making an offering of service to the Eugene community. This decision came partly from a wish to take part in a positive activity of support in light of the negativity and “name-calling” from both sides during the presidential election.

A group of those interested met in early February to discuss possible directions for contributing to the community. The following three opportunities for service were highlighted:

Food for Lane County, volunteering at their central office, in “The Dining Room” which serves meals at no charge, or working in the garden that grows fresh vegetables and fruits for the meals they provide.

Community Supported Shelters, offers temporary housing for up to 85 homeless people and aims to find training, employment and/or more permanent housing for residents. There are many different types of volunteer work—from office work to counseling to clean-up—through this organization.

Ann's Heart Women's Shelter, a new transitional housing unit for homeless women jointly supported by Ebbert Memorial United Methodist Church and St. Vincent de Paul.



Various members of the sangha offered to gather further information on each of the above and the community service “team” will meet again in the near future.

***Around the Priory Grounds:*** I had imagined that there would be no entry on the grounds in this newsletter, as my intention was to take a break from my focus on the property and to spend more quiet time inside this winter. Instead, we had a severe ice storm on December 16th—expectation trips me up again—that did significant damage to our grounds with the loss of uncountable trees. Except for minor damage to several structures, the buildings were spared.

I decided not to begin clean up until we reopened in late January so that I could have a retreat period, and now we are in the throes of cleaning up the storm damage and, at the same time, looking at fire danger and other concerns. There was a section of our property with a significant number of dead Douglas fir and with the storm damage on top of that, it became a tangle of ground cover (mostly poison oak and black berry bushes), fallen branches and dead trees. With the advice of a forester who walked through the Priory property with me, the decision was made to remove most of the trees and to replant the area in the fall with cedar and Ponderosa pine, as well as some native deciduous trees. It is rather a shock, and disheartening, to see the bare land. Yet when I revisit the decision, I still end with “this needed doing.”

Nancy Fletcher’s back fence and garden, as well as her roof, were severely damaged in the ice storm. The Buddha continues to sit serenely in meditation.



—Rev. Oriana

## Lions Gate Buddhist Priory

—Lytton, British Columbia—Canada—

After a number of successful retreats here in 2016, we held our final one of the year on the first weekend of November. This coincided with a memorial service on Sunday, November 6 which marked the 20th Anniversary of the death of Rev. Master Jiyu, first Abbess of Shasta Abbey and Founder of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives. Twelve people attended the ceremony and expressed their gratitude for her life of teaching and training.

In early October we were visited by Gerry Blonski and his family. Gerry has a successful architectural practice in the Lower Mainland, and he has agreed to design some buildings for our Priory at a very reasonable cost. The planning is in its very early stages, and we will keep people posted as things progress.

On October 22 Rev. Master Kōten, along with lay ministers Michele Feist and Meredith Midtdal, participated in an Interfaith conference, organised by the Vancouver Multifaith Action Society and hosted by the Church of Latter Day Saints in Surrey. The theme of the conference was “Reflecting on Love and Compassion.” The conference was well attended, and

representatives from ten different faith traditions spoke and answered questions.

Rev. Master Kōten visited the Edmonton Buddhist Meditation Group for two weeks in early November. During his stay he offered Dharma Talks, a retreat, and private spiritual counselling to the group members. He is grateful for all the kind offerings of food and accommodations while there.

We have had a fairly severe winter this season, with December and January temperatures regularly dipping to -20 C (-5 F). We've also had more snow than usual, which has sometimes made it a challenge getting up our very steep, mile-long driveway in our vehicle.

Our first big snowfall came just a few days before the beginning of our week-long monastic retreat (Rohatsu), celebrating Shakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment. We were very grateful to have this period in the silence of early winter to go deeply within and reflect. The retreat ended with the Buddha's Enlightenment Ceremony.



*Kanzeon statue at Lions Gate Buddhist Priory this winter*

We were honoured to be invited by the Lytton First Nations (LFN) to their annual Elders' Dinner in December at the Memorial Hall on the LFN reserve in Lytton. About 300 people attended, and we were served a wonderful meal by grade 12 students from Kumsheen School. We were also given many lovely gifts.

We held a meditation vigil on New Year's Eve, followed by the New Year's Eve ceremony during which we gave thanks to the blessings of the old year and toasted in the new one. Afterwards we enjoyed snacks and treats and rang the big bell 108 times.

In the early hours of Sunday, January 8, our friend and companion Simhananda Cat died peacefully at the age of 17 years. She had a long and often difficult life, having lost her left leg in an accident eight years ago. We held a funeral service for her later that day. We will miss her.

On Sunday January 15 we attended the annual World Religions Day at the Anglican Parish Hall in Lytton. This was the 11th year this event has been held there.

In mid-January we welcomed back Rev. Valeria, who had been away at Shasta Abbey for six months. It is really good to have her back.

Rev. Master Aurelian and Rev. Valeria attended the annual Lytton Chamber of Commerce dinner in Lytton in January, where Rev. Master Aurelian was asked to offer the blessing for the meal. It was good to have a meal with the many people who work so hard on behalf of the community.

In February Rev. Master Kōten and Rev. Master Aurelian performed funeral ceremonies for two people in Vancouver. Allison Lambert, aged 23, died tragically in a car accident in Thailand, and David Ingram, aged 67, died suddenly in his home in Vancouver.

As I write this, there is a hint of spring in the air. The days are getting longer, and we are looking forward to milder weather

and the return of the flowers, birds, and new growth of spring after a long winter.

—Rev. Master Aurelian

## Wallowa Buddhist Temple

—Joseph, Oregon—USA—

This winter has brought relentless snowfall and accumulation, possibly the heaviest in fifty years, and included periods of extreme low temperatures. In addition to our own shoveling to keep paths and the long driveway clear, we are very grateful for the offerings made by our neighbors and congregation allowing us to contract plow and tractor operators for snow removal and graveling of the drive from time to time. We have been using a roof rake to remove as much snow as possible, and had a local roofing company come to clear an ice dam which caused leaking in the upper roof of the main temple building. Fortunately we had laid in a good supply of firewood along our driveway, and a neighbor has been helping us keep the wood store by the temple building filled.

***Retreat Guests:*** Despite these wintry conditions, six hardy guests have made their way here for individual retreats. One woman proposed a “sewing retreat,” bringing her own portable machine and dedicating her work periods to creating drapes for angled windows in the main temple building. The finished drapes, a light sea-green color, look beautiful in the loft and help gentle the glare from the snow outside.

***Rummage Sale:*** In early December, Rev. Clairissa and a number of the congregation and friends of the temple organized a rummage sale at an indoor holiday flea market. Many people donated quality items for this temple fundraiser which helps us meet our operating costs, and shoppers clearly enjoyed rummaging for bargains and treasures, and having this chance to connect with the monks and each other.

**Ceremonies:** On New Year's Eve, the weather permitted us to celebrate our yearly festival. Rev. Meidō revolved the *Scripture of Great Wisdom* and we enjoyed our celebratory juice together, then each of those in attendance rang the temple bell with great reverence and joy. On January 22<sup>nd</sup>, Rev. Meidō offered the Precepts to Dexter, a giant, loving golden retriever who was close to death, and whose mother Rev. Meidō had known well when the temple was located in Lostine.

On January 29<sup>th</sup>, which happened to fall on our Sunday morning retreat day, Rev. Meidō was celebrant for a memorial remembering Linda Lucas-Schatz on the third anniversary of her death, following which Helmut Schatz shared with the congregation his experience of training together with his wife Linda for the many years of their marriage and through the process of her passing.

**Monks' Renewal Retreat:** The temple closed for the month of February for the monks' renewal retreat. We deeply appreciate all the offerings made to support us during this time of going within and resting which so enriches us in our practice – produce and prepared meals, snow removal, wood stacking, monetary donations, and sincere good wishes. We are also grateful for the work of the power and phone company employees who hiked up our icy driveway during a dramatically inclement period to reconnect our damaged lines after a large sheet of ice and snow came down off the upper roof, straining and snapping them.

**Individual Retreats:** One of the temple's main purposes is to offer a place where both monks and congregation from 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**

### **Shasta Abbey**

Rev. Master Meian Elbert, Abbess  
3724 Summit Drive  
Mt. Shasta, CA 96067-9102  
Ph: (530) 926-4208 [Fax: -0428]  
[shastaabbey@shastaabbey.org](mailto:shastaabbey@shastaabbey.org)  
[www.shastaabbey.org](http://www.shastaabbey.org)

### **Berkeley Buddhist Priory**

Rev. Master Kinrei Bassis  
1358 Marin Ave.  
Albany, CA 94706  
Ph: (510) 528-1876 [Fax: -2139]  
[prior@berkeleybuddhistpriory.org](mailto:prior@berkeleybuddhistpriory.org)  
[www.berkeleybuddhistpriory.org](http://www.berkeleybuddhistpriory.org)

### **Columbia Zen Buddhist Priory**

Rev. Master Rokuzan Kroenke  
426 Arrowwood Road  
Columbia, SC 29210-7508  
Ph: (803) 772-7552  
[www.columbiazen.org](http://www.columbiazen.org)

### **Eugene Buddhist Priory**

Rev. Oriana LaChance  
85415 Teague Loop  
Eugene, OR 97405-9536  
Ph: (541) 344-7377  
[info@eugenebuddhistpriory.org](mailto:info@eugenebuddhistpriory.org)  
[www.eugenebuddhistpriory.org](http://www.eugenebuddhistpriory.org)

### **Idaho Panhandle area and Sandpoint Meditation Group**

Rev. Master Zensho Roberson  
P. O. Box 74  
Saint Maries, ID 83861  
Ph: (208) 245-4950  
[RevZenshoR@gmail.com](mailto:RevZenshoR@gmail.com)

### **Pine Mountain Buddhist Temple**

Rev. Master Phoebe van Woerden  
941 Lockwood Valley Road  
Maricopa, CA 93252  
Ph: (254) 241-6102  
[pmbt@pinemtnbuddhisttemple.org](mailto:pmbt@pinemtnbuddhisttemple.org)  
[www.pinemtnbuddhisttemple.org](http://www.pinemtnbuddhisttemple.org)

### **Portland Buddhist Priory**

Rev. Leon Kackman  
3642 SE Milwaukie Avenue  
Portland, OR 97202  
Ph: (503) 238-1123  
[prior1@portlandbuddhistpriory.org](mailto:prior1@portlandbuddhistpriory.org)  
[www.portlandbuddhistpriory.org](http://www.portlandbuddhistpriory.org)

### **Wallowa Buddhist Temple**

Rev. Master Meidō Tuttle  
62916 Hurricane Creek Road  
Joseph, OR 97846  
Ph: (541) 432-6129  
[temple@wallowabuddhisttemple.org](mailto:temple@wallowabuddhisttemple.org)  
[www.wallowabuddhisttemple.org](http://www.wallowabuddhisttemple.org)

## **CANADA**

### **Lions Gate Buddhist Priory**

Rev. Master Kōten Benson  
P. O. Box 701  
Lytton, B.C. V0K 1Z0  
Ph: 250-455-0344  
[lionsgatebuddhistpriory@lyttonbc.net](mailto:lionsgatebuddhistpriory@lyttonbc.net)  
[www.lionsgatebuddhistpriory.ca](http://www.lionsgatebuddhistpriory.ca)

### **Affiliated Meditation Groups**

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

**ID:** Sandpoint

**MT:** Whitefish

**CANADA:** Edmonton, AB

## TEMPLES OF THE ORDER—EUROPE

### UK

#### **Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey**

Rev. Master Daishin Morgan,  
Abbot

Carrshield, HEXHAM  
Northumberland NE47 8AL

Ph: 01434 345 204

gd@throssel.org.uk

[www.throssel.org.uk](http://www.throssel.org.uk)

#### **Dragon Bell Temple**

Rev. Master Myfanwy McCorry

Mill Farm Cottage, East Week

South Zeal, Okehampton

EX20 2QB

01647 231 682

dragonbelltemple@gmail.com

[www.dragonbelltemple.org.uk](http://www.dragonbelltemple.org.uk)

#### **Great Ocean Dharma Refuge**

Rev. Master Mokugen Kublicki

Penwern

Felindre Farchog

CRYMYCH, Pembrokeshire

SA41 3XF

Ph: 01239 891 360

#### **Norwich Zen Buddhist Priory**

Rev. Leoma Hague

NORWICH,

Ph: 01603 457933

info@norwichzen.org.uk

[www.norwichzen.org.uk](http://www.norwichzen.org.uk)

#### **The Place of Peace Dharma House**

Rev. Master Myōhō Harris

P. O. Box 207

ABERYSTWYTH

SY23 1WY

Ph: 01970 625402

[www.placeofpeacewales.org](http://www.placeofpeacewales.org)

#### **Portobello Buddhist Priory**

Rev. Master Favian Straughan

27 Brighton Place, Portobello

EDINBURGH EH15 1LL

Ph: 0131 669 9622

favian.straughan@homecall.co.uk

[www.portobellobuddhist.org.uk](http://www.portobellobuddhist.org.uk)

#### **Reading Buddhist Priory**

176 Cressingham Road

READING RG2 7LW

Ph/Fax: 0118 986 0750

rpriory@yahoo.co.uk

[www.readingbuddhistpriory.org.uk](http://www.readingbuddhistpriory.org.uk)

#### **Rochdale Zen Retreat**

Rev. Master Peter Bonati

The Briars, Grange Lane

Hutton

PRESTON

PR4 5JE

Ph: 01772 612 112

#### **Sitting Buddha Hermitage**

Rev. Alicia Rowe

CROMFORD

Derbyshire

Ph: 01629 821813.

alicia@fieldofmerit.org

[www.sittingbuddhaheritage.fieldofmerit.org](http://www.sittingbuddhaheritage.fieldofmerit.org)

#### **Telford Buddhist Priory**

49 The Rock

TELFORD TF3 5BH

Ph/Fax: 01952 615 574

[www.tbpriory.org.uk](http://www.tbpriory.org.uk)

#### **Turning Wheel Buddhist Temple**

Rev. Aiden Hall,

51 Lamborne Road, Leicester

LE2 6HQ

0116 210 3870

[www.turningwheel.org.uk](http://www.turningwheel.org.uk)

#### *Affiliated Meditation Groups*

UK: Aberdeen, Aberfeldy,  
Birmingham, Cambridge,  
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,  
Teesside



## GERMANY

### **Dharmazuflucht Schwarzwald**

Rev. Master Fuden Nessi  
Wonnenbach 4  
77793 Gutach  
Phone: +49 (0)7833 - 96 56 408  
[www.dharmazuflucht.info](http://www.dharmazuflucht.info)

## LATVIA

### **Sōtō Zen Riga**

Rev. Bridin Rusins  
Baznicas Street 13-29  
RIGA LV1010  
Latvia  
phone: 001215 666 5634  
[www.sotozenriga.lv](http://www.sotozenriga.lv)  
email: elgarusins@gmail .com

## THE NETHERLANDS

### **De Dharmatoevlucht (Dharma Refuge)**

Rev. Baldwin Schreurs  
De Heze 51  
7335 BB, APELDOORN  
Ph: +31 55 542 0038  
contact@dharmatoevlucht.nl  
[www.dharmatoevlucht.nl](http://www.dharmatoevlucht.nl)

### **Wolk-en-Water Hermitage**

Rev. Master Hakuun Barnhard  
Kerkeweg 81, 8484 KB Langelille  
The Netherlands.  
Phone: 0031 561 475 306  
<https://www.wolkenwater.nl/en/>

*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. The main offices of the OBC are at Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey in England and Shasta Abbey in the US.

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.

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

The Journal of the OBC is administered through the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives Activities Trust (reg. No 1105634 in the UK), and the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives, a non-profit corporation, in the USA.

Information on the OBC generally is available on the website: <http://obcon.org/>

To subscribe to the OBC Journal newsletter for a quarterly update on when the Journal is available to download go to: <http://journal.obcon.org/e-newsletter-sign-up/>