



The Journal  
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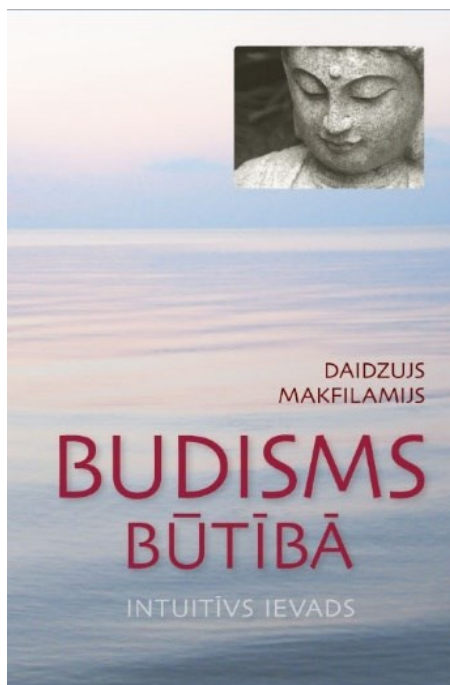
*Serving Members and Friends  
of the Order Worldwide*

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*Kanzeon riding the dragon. Photograph of a lacquer panel recently donated to Great Ocean Dharma Refuge.*

## The Vessel and Its Contents

Rev. Master Haryo Young

*This is based on a transcription of a talk given at the Lay Ministers' retreat at Shasta Abbey in 2017.*

[Rev. Master Haryo asks] “Would someone get me some water, please?” [A glass of water is brought]. “Hmm... I asked for just water, not a glass as well. Please give me just the water – in my hand.” (Water is poured into Rev. Master Haryo’s open hand, spilling onto the floor). “Oh dear, we are losing most of it, let me give you some back.” [Most is gone, there is little to pass back. After a quick cleaning up, the talk continues.]

Now that I’ve got your attention, the point I was trying to make is that even the purest of water needs a vessel to transport it. I’ve often heard people say “I’m spiritual but not religious”, and that they aren’t interested in the form, or formality. If Rev. Master Jiyu’s teacher had lived elsewhere, rather than at Soji-ji, where they had been evolving a form over hundreds of years, would she have met him? Would she have been able to pass on the teaching that she has? It’s a question.

Forms aid in the perpetuation and transmission of what the form is about, what the form is pointing to; the contents of the vessel, which is the important thing. Everyone has forms, things we do or don't do depending on our culture. We stop at a stop light – that's a form. We have hairstyles, or lack thereof, and that's a form. Fashion is a form. We can't escape forms. And as human beings we like forms. We appreciate stability. We don't like things changing underneath our feet. We tend to like to know what's ahead; we don't like surprises. We don't like to feel out of place; we like to fit in, not stick out. Forms – how we do certain things that are familiar and that we can come back to with others – help that aspect of our humanity.

Forms also interact with our human nature in positive ways – music can inspire us and draw things out of us that we might otherwise unknowingly keep under wraps. Forms can have inspiring beauty; this cup I'm holding has lotuses on it that may remind us of the liquid contents, but we don't drink the cup. Yet it helps with the transmission of what is inside.

Form can reflect the processes that are going on within us when we practice. The Jukai ceremonies are a good example of that. *Sange* in particular is a very powerful ceremony given the concentration of the mind that happens with the procession and reciting the mantras. We have put aside guilt, judgement, dwelling on the past, worrying about the future; we are just there in the present with the mantra. And if conditions are ripe, the *kwatz* [a loud cry] can blow

away the last bit of self involved in the process. The ceremony of Following where the Precepts Lead shows how to keep going through what comes in life, whether it be an easy road or a rocky climb.

So forms have a role. They are not an end in themselves, but are a skilful means. They point to something beyond themselves; something with which they are inextricably mixed. But there has to be a balance, that's part of the skill of skill in means. The form itself is not magical. The Buddha cautioned against rites and rituals: but what he spoke against was not the rituals themselves, but the belief that just going through the motions could bring about purification without the effort within oneself to purify one's heart and mind. For us what matters is *how* we do something more than *what* we do.

Within meditation we don't do something mindlessly or distractedly, everything being a form of meditation. There's no job that's lower than another; everything is the work of a Buddha, although we tend to rate those people who appear to be more productive than we are as doing better training. But productivity can be an obsession, an expression of attachment, especially if it's something we're good at; a distraction from looking at something within that needs looking at, and a vehicle for self.

One of the things that happens in a monastery is that someone who's good at something, or might have professional experience of it, is probably initially not put in

a position where they can draw on that experience, just because of the potential for it becoming a further expression of self. So you may end up stumbling through things that you wish you didn't have to do. Rev. Master Jiyu used to say that a monastery should never be too efficient! Which points to the fact that we're not here for efficiency; we're here to work on something; we're here to work on ourselves. And I've seen over the years a few people who were really good at something get distracted by it, and go off, continuing to be really good at it, but no longer as a monk.

So the Sōtō way is just meditating throughout the day. There's no real fundamental difference between sitting on your cushion or walking, or sweeping, or figuring out your income tax: it's not limited to simple things. It's just simply doing what needs to be done.

We don't give a person a formal koan, so there's not that sort of focus that you bring yourself back to. Our koan is what's getting in the way of just doing what needs to be done, what gets in the way of just walking; such as your doubts, your criticisms of other people – that's the natural koan. Which can become quite extreme. And it's not uncommon in the life of a meditator to come to a point where those sorts of things that get in the way can take on quite a powerful and obstructive appearance: 'Should I continue on?' 'What's this all about?' 'This isn't getting me anywhere.' It's usually some form of doubt, or criticism of oneself or others. And that's the koan naturally arising in a more serious form.



Those are moments of great opportunity because they represent part of your mind, if you like, that you're experiencing and that you can let go of and find what's on the other side of that letting go. It can be very challenging, and I'd say from my experience it's at best 50/50 that people accept that challenge, because it is so challenging: there's no solution. I'm told in some Temples they might beat you if you do the right thing; beat you if you do the wrong thing: what do you do? We don't rely on that sort of artifice. We find that daily life will eventually present us with challenges: 'OK, I'm supposed to let go of this 'whatever', aren't I, if I'm going to continue meditating?' But it seems so real or good or promising ... But meditation is really absolute when it comes to letting go; especially on the cushion, when there isn't anything practical you're supposed to be doing. Active meditation is a little more complicated, but one can still have that sense of not clinging to personal preference – what one wants – but just listening to what do I do next? Getting out of the way.

As far as the vessel and its contents are concerned, Dharma is there, but I view it more as that which is visible and painted on the inner wall of the vessel – that which is in the realm of the known and expressible. But that which is expressed as knowable Dharma comes from a more fundamental place of understanding. Insight is ultimately the contents of the vessel. The highest purpose of our practice is insight into ourselves – in the beginning, in the middle, and in the end. Insight that leads to change; and change that leads

to deeper insight. All of this is a movement towards a deepening insight into ourselves.

For each of us, there's always another step to take; something more to cease grasping after, or some aspect of self to cease identifying with. And the Dharma offers teaching at every step to help us forward, no matter where we are on the path. It's been called, "The Heavenly Medicine That Cures All Ills".

The Buddha lived for a long time, and was able to address the human condition over and over again in many ways and from many angles. For the self that suffers, there's teaching on how to make life more peaceful, so that the self doesn't suffer so much; and we don't cause so much suffering for others. But if we want to go further than self – the self being problematic to begin with because it is in a position of ultimate isolation and separation – there is that which bids and guides us beyond the self.

For those who do evil, there is the teaching of good, which is a next step. For those who do good, and want to go beyond it, there is the teaching that points to the transcendence of both good and evil.

There's implied movement towards something, which naturally we tend to imagine as some sort of experience. And we might call it enlightenment, nirvana, liberation, experiencing the Truth; these are all these phrases and words

that talk about this imagined thing that there's an assumed movement towards.

So we imagine ourselves experiencing something. And in doing that we simultaneously (usually unconsciously) hold on to this self that's going to experience it. So we maintain this 'self and other' relationship: we have the 'experiencer' that has a natural 'of course it's true' reality, because it feels so true. This experiencer wants some experience other than what it's got, something that it imagines is the purpose of all this.

But it's difficult to become one with something which you hold off as an 'other', which you separate from yourself. So, even if done with great faith and sincerity, it's best not to lock yourself into the idea of an experiencer who's waiting for a new experience. Because what happens is more along the lines of the experiencer changing, not the experience. There's nothing wrong with our raw, basic human experience.

If you say 'I want to become one with the truth'—however you characterise or personify that inner lack or something missing, or that something calling, or that not enough-ness of the present moment, or there must be more than this—holding yourself in relation to that which you long for or anticipate can impede anything along these lines from happening.

But the longing may allow for lesser things to fall away; lesser desires; lesser longings. So it can serve a purpose. But ultimately zazen allows nothing to be clung to, even longing. Or even hope. That might sound ‘what? Can’t have hope?’ No, let go of it too. It sounds scary, and it’s hard to let go of it, but that can be an impediment. Hope can imply I want something other than what I’ve got now. And I’m hoping for it, and longing for it. It implies there’s something fundamentally wrong, something we don’t have. And hope just feeds that illusion, that mistake.

So phrases like ‘becoming one with the Truth’ are actually misleading. As long as there is a ‘you’ in the equation, the Truth will elude you. There will be that separation of Heaven and Earth that’s referred to in the *Rules for Meditation*.

But if you let the ‘you’ fall away, as indeed we do in meditation by just letting go of everything, which includes the idea of a self – or includes even the idea of falling away – then there’s no equation to be solved, there’s just True Being, which is without lack. And that’s about all you can say about it. If you give it any characteristics, that just causes it to disappear and become a thing; or a transient experience; or a transient piece of knowledge.

But this True Being embraces both self and other as they and all other things arise and pass within it; nothing is discarded; and nothing need be discarded.

In the Far East I've been told – I've never been there – that some monastics view meditation as just too hard a practice, so their practice might be chanting, which of course is a path. But from our perspective – no, it's not too hard. I think they sell themselves short. But I think we sell ourselves short if we dismiss ideas such as Enlightenment, liberation, nirvana, etc. as beyond us, or philosophical concepts unrelated to daily life. I've even heard monks say – 'I'm not interested in any of this mystical stuff!' I would say – don't sell yourself short! It's not that far away!

What the Buddha was pointing to was a deep insight into ourselves, beyond just how to make life easier, less full of suffering. You can waken as well as anyone, if you're just willing to carry on the fundamentals of the practice, which include just returning to the mind of meditation, letting go of extraneous thoughts, and doing what needs to be done, and following your heart as it voices the path of the Precepts to you throughout the normal activities of daily life – it's not rocket science. It's just a matter of committing to listening and saying yes.

But don't do it in an experience-seeking way. Our common flaw is experience seeking; and deriving the meaning and value of life from our experience. Just do it for its own sake. Training for training's sake is what we say. Not as a goal-oriented effort. Don't hunt for experience, because any experience has to be let go of. The phrase 'enlightenment experience' is actually misleading. At best

‘enlightenment’ is the last thing you let go of, before you don’t need anything. And there’s no lack.

I think in the *Surangama Sutra* there’s one Buddhist explanation of how the Universe was created, and it’s clear it’s not talking about how the planets were formed and all that: it’s talking about how our perceived world around us has come into being, and it starts off with: ‘Thinking creates the thinker’ – and then the game is on, as Sherlock Holmes would say!

To me, realisation has to do with insight into the nature of our minds: our minds creating and profoundly affecting much of what exists in our world. It’s seeing the birthing of the opposites occurring within our minds, and this created world spewing forth and interacting with everyone else’s created world. Truth and delusion are but one pair of opposites that we become entangled with. But when we see this process of creation within ourselves – truly see it, by being still enough to really see it – and know the value of desisting from that process, then I feel we are actually appreciating what the Buddha was ultimately pointing to. I see this as the essence of what the vessel of form contains, and what the skilful means of form helps to transmit.

For me the Truth that matters is insight into the way things arise within us; insight into their transitory and ephemeral nature. And seeing this breaks the seeming absoluteness of the reality of the world around us. That reality is seen through. Indeed the first line of the

*Dhammapada* talks about all the mental phenomena having mind as their forerunner; they have mind as their chief; they are mind-made.

Although one sees – knows – the transient nature of the reality of things, things don't go away. Appearances don't go away. One's just free from the tyranny of their seeming reality, and the reality of the self that can't escape from the opposites that are bound to cause suffering if we can't see through them – if we can't find a way to sit still, and just see them arise and pass.

Practice still exists, but it is practice for its own sake, and the seeming paradox between the teachings of 'fundamentally enlightened from the first' and the necessity of 'ongoing practice' is resolved. Practical reality and karmic consequence still exist; the feeling of self still exists; but the reality of all of it, including of oneself, is provisional, if you like. It's just accepted as the world of appearances; and just how things are. But one knows something else, as if in a dream when you realise you're dreaming, you know that there is (and isn't) more to it than meets the eye. And you awaken to the fact that you don't have to be a swirling thought-cloud. You've put something down. You've seen the house-builder; the creator of worlds. You don't seek truth, or call something delusion; and you return to a place you fundamentally never left. And you've transmuted the ordinary mind into the Buddha mind.

There's the whole alchemical process of trying to transmute lead into gold; transmute something base into something special. I must wonder if that's code for transmuting the ordinary human mind – the value of which we tend not to appreciate, and kick around in all kinds of ways – into seeing it's actually the Buddha Mind. We see it in a completely different way; it's transmuted into something different, not because it's changed, but because we understand it is something different than what we thought it was in the first place.

It is without lack, and yet there's no accomplishment that it can hold up; no truth gained to hold up. There's more a falling-away of falseness rather than the gaining of something we can call truth – a falling away of falseness with nothing needed to replace it. A release from need in the deepest part of us.

So you could say in the end there's nothing in the vessel! That is, nothing you can point to. Except perhaps the primordial immaculacy, purity, innocence that existed before the first thought ever appeared, and the process of knowing and obscuring began.



## Remembering Three Friends

and

### In Gratitude for the Sangha

In the last issue of the Journal we learned from the Throssel news of the deaths of three of the UK's long-time lay sangha within just nine weeks: Brenda Birchenhough, Vajira Bailey and Pat Oldham. Our deepest sympathies go to all who were close to them. Funeral and memorial services were offered for each, bringing together family and friends, monks and lay sangha and people from different aspects and times of their lives.

All three had practised for decades at Throssel and / or their local temples and meditation groups and had served as lay ministers, introducing numerous people to meditation and our way of practice. They demonstrated active faith and commitment, sustained over time, sometimes in the face of adversity. In so doing they inspired and encouraged others around them to continue with their practice. They are much missed.



*Brenda Birchenhough*

Brenda lived in Lancashire and had been a regular and supportive member of Throssel since the early 1980s, coming to retreats and festivals. She started the Lancaster group with Paul Taylor and helped to start the Preston Group and was a kind and supportive presence there. She was given a brown Kesa in recognition of her training in 2000. She died aged 87 on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2018.

***Rev. Master Leandra:*** Brenda became part of my life when I first arrived at Throssel in the 1980s. When we overlapped at the monastery I could not help but notice she was there. She was so alive and present at all times, yet not in any sense demanding attention, rather not daunted by others seeing her for who she was.

When she was about to become a lay minister and was struggling to make her lay minister's robe she phoned me hoping I could help by talking her through the process, step-by-step. We gave up defeated and she found a more satisfactory instructor but her misplaced confidence in me sealed the friendship deal.

What really allowed our spiritual friendship to blossom was the six weeks we spent together at Shasta in the 1990s during my 6 month stay there. Her nickname for me was the "head honcho" and she would often come to me in puzzlement after tea with a monk when her jokes seemed to fall flat and she wondered if she had been speaking out of turn or inappropriately. I suggested that it was most likely that her particular brand of humour was for the American monks like a foreign language, but that did not deter her from continuing to make jokes!

In the 2000s even though her health was deteriorating she was a frequent visitor at Throssel and we began to work together on her fear of dying. It was a time of mutual learning. Her determination to delve into her fear and find the truth of living and dying was inspiring. Brenda never did anything by halves.

***Paul Taylor:*** Brenda Birchenough was a very long-standing member of the OBC sangha since the mid 1970s. She was of enormous help to the emerging Throssel monastic community in its early years – a staunch provider and procurer of furniture, garden equipment, in fact *anything* that could be carried up in her van (and she was a rather swift van driver!). You didn't forget Brenda: she was instantly

recognisable and her enthusiasm for supporting practice was infectious. A founding member of and an important influence on both Lancaster and Preston Serene Reflection Meditation Groups, she became a lay minister and later was given a brown Kesa, reflecting her contribution. Her partner and good friend in her later life, Kate Shirra-Gibb, also became a lay minister, sharing together with Brenda many interests and enthusiasms. Brenda had been an inspiring school teacher and later supported women as a voluntary counsellor.

Brenda encouraged many trainees including myself to engage seriously with Zen practice, and was such a familiar face to many sangha members, lay and monastic, for so many years. She also spent some time at Shasta Abbey. Brenda was warm, straight-talking, friendly, sympathetic, down-to-earth, and had a very hearty laugh. These qualities immediately rubbed off on people. She was always keen on authenticity. Though mobility and other health issues affected her ability to participate as she got older, she was still a regular visitor to Throssel, where many will have met her. She was well-supported by her family. I found Brenda to be a real person, warts and all, who touched so many of our lives in so many different ways. She'll be remembered with great affection, love, warmth and respect by all of us who knew her, and we really miss her.



*Dorothy Vajira Bailey*

Vajira met Rev. Master Jiyu in 1970 and remained devoted to her and her teaching for the rest of her life. She founded and then, for many years, hosted the Birmingham Meditation Group. She is remembered with fondness and gratitude for her unstinting generosity in support of the wider Buddhist community in Birmingham, having close links with the Theravada and Tibetan traditions. She died on 22<sup>nd</sup> August, aged 89 years.

***Karen Richards with reflections from David Richards:***

On a sunny evening, in August 1981, my husband David and I walked into a large Victorian house in Barclay Road, Smethwick and our lives changed forever. They changed for two reasons; the first was that we were both ripe for change, spiritually. The second was that the owner of the

house was the force of nature known as Vajira Bailey. With characteristic generosity, Vajira (Vaj to her many friends) opened her doors, each week, so that those who wished could meditate there. David and I had been searching for a Buddhist practice that resonated with us and as David later commented, when he left that night he knew that he had found it. I felt it too.

Vajira first received the Precepts from The Ven. Mahastavira Sangharakshita of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order. He had given her her Buddhist name and he certainly knew her well. Vajira is a Sanskrit word that means both thunderbolt and diamond. She possessed the properties of both and in training, as in her life generally, Vajira was forceful, resilient and bright.

Although what we learned under Vajira's guidance was unequivocally Serene Reflection as taught by the OBC – making the transition from our weekly group meetings in Birmingham to our first visit to Throssel, three years later, seamless – Vajira's practice was all encompassing and embraced different forms and traditions.

The house itself had been blessed by the Karmapa in the 1970s and in the same year had provided suitable lodgings for the Venerable Dr. Rewata Dhamma when he first arrived in England to develop a Theravada Buddhist Centre in Birmingham. The many Buddhist teachers and lay devotees, of various traditions, including Rev. Master Jiyu who had stayed and practised there had left a notably still atmosphere in the house. It was a good place to train.

In the 1990s, Vajira gave much support to the Venerable Dr. Rewata Dhamma, in the setting up of the Buddhist Peace

Pagoda, in Ladywood, later becoming one of its patrons. The attendance of both lay and monastic practitioners from different traditions, at her funeral, was testament to her influence and the esteem in which she was held. This said, there was no doubt who she viewed as her teacher. She had met Rev. Master Jiyu many years before and in everything Vajira said and did, one could feel the deep connection that she had with Rev. Master as a tangible presence.

Some time before her health began to fail and she left her home in Barclay Road to enter residential care, I was moved to phone her and thank her for all she had done for us. I'm so glad that I did. The phone call was brief, the words inadequate but the gratitude remains. Thank you, dear friend, I'm so glad we met.

***Vajira speaks of Rev. Master Jiyu:***

*[Vajira attended the memorial ceremony for Rev. Master Jiyu at Throssel on 29th December 1996, 8 weeks after her death. This is an extract from a piece she wrote after this:]*

“I first met her [Rev. Master Jiyu] in the late spring of 1970 when she came to Birmingham to conduct a weekend retreat. I had met quite a number of Buddhist teachers by then but this was my first encounter with a Zen Roshi. I did not know what to expect as she stood there on my doorstep. Little did I realise it was a meeting that would revolutionize my life.

From the start she made us train with great energy. Her words were down to earth and very much to the point, like a washing in the cool, clear waters of reason. By the end of the weekend something had changed.

She continued her whirlwind tour of England, finishing up in Northumberland where she remained for quite some time before returning to California and the setting up of Shasta Abbey. During her time in the UK. I trained with her as often as I could.

She was a prime mover. With her deep realization – the fruit of her sincere training – she inspired trust, confidence and affection in all her trainees. It has often been said, “Zen masters point the way”. Her whole life was devoted to just that, to the nth degree. ... She showed me how to live and, as with all her trainees, gave me unwavering support and kindness which took many forms, sometimes very uncomfortable.

At the [memorial] ceremony of the 29th December, I stood with the others listening to the moving words, “Her Dharma Eye was as bright as the moon and her Light of Wisdom lit the darkness of those in delusion.”... and marvelled at the flowering of her practice and, because of her, our inheritance. She truly had the Wheel within her hand and truly held the Lotus.

She gave us her greatest gift, her life, for which I, for one, shall be eternally grateful.”

—*Vajira Bailey*





*Pat Oldham*

Pat began training in the late 1980s and served as a lay minister from the beginning of the 90s until resigning as her health declined. She attended Throssel retreats regularly and also visited Shasta Abbey. She was a pillar of the Harrogate group until it wound up, when she offered all the gongs, meditation equipment and scripture books to the Leeds group and became a supportive presence there. Pat died on September 6<sup>th</sup>, aged 85.

***Nic Haughton:***

I first met Pat on our way to a meditation meeting in Leeds – my introduction to that group. She looked after me and helped show me the ropes. Pat had very clear ideas about sitting and Zen ritual and was very knowledgeable about Zen teachings. On our journeys together to and from Leeds

meetings, we had many deep discussions about Zen teachings and their meaning, about some of her practice journey and of its central importance for her in her life and about how it was developing for me.

As I became more familiar with the practice, I became more relaxed and more questioning, an aspect of me which she found difficult I think and was sometimes impatient about – quite rightly too. And an impatient Pat is a thing to be feared...!

We were not an obvious fit as friends, with our very different approaches to almost everything, but I think we became good friends, both in our shared practice but also personally sharing family stories.

I have many fond memories of Pat. She was a complex person with very deep running waters; at times prickly and cross and at others, witty and fun loving. She had great integrity and was a good friend. I bow to you Pat.

***Treasa Cassidy, Andy Watson and Fred Schofield:***

Andy and Treasa first met Pat in the 1990s and would regularly travel from Leeds to Harrogate to the weekly meditation group and Day Retreats. It was obvious when meeting her that she took being a Lay Minister seriously and was very committed to practising the Buddhist way.

We have fond memories of Pat. Andy remembers the many ways she helped to nurture and guide him in clear and direct ways – often with a sigh as well as humour, whilst allowing the teachings to unfold.

As Pat's health began to deteriorate and her circumstances changed, she eventually went into care homes

in Harrogate and finally Ripon. What was so apparent when Andy, Fred and myself would visit was how her practice was continuing. We would often have a cuppa, chat, sit together and sing/recite scriptures especially *The Litany of the Great Compassionate One* (a favourite of hers).

On hearing Pat was close to dying and that she might not make it through the night, Fred and Treasa visited that evening and sat together in meditation and sang *Evening Office (Vespers)*. She appeared comfortable and at ease. Fred felt she was doing what she needed to do in the very process of dying. We were told she died peacefully early next morning.

We bow to Pat in gratitude and love.

### ***Gratitude for the Sangha:***

These moving remembrances of the lives and practice of these three trainees reveal some of the many ways training is unfolding in individual lives across the Order. Some of our sangha, like Vajira, have been practicing since the earliest days when Rev. Master Jiyu founded the Order, along with others who are newly engaging with our tradition today. There are also trainees sustaining practice alone in many countries across the world where the Order has no official presence, with some keeping in touch online.

Through the commitment of each individual to their practice, supporting each other and training together in meditation groups and Temple sanghas, or largely on their

own, the lay sangha has, alongside the monastic communities, grown and matured in practice, providing a sangha refuge and support for thousands. The significance and contribution of such training is impossible to measure.

—*Editor*

## The Power of Words

Paul Taylor

—Lancaster—UK—

*The following article is based on a spoken contribution in a Holocaust Memorial Day Interfaith Service / Event at Lancaster Priory in January 2018. It has been slightly edited, and a post-script added. The title, 'The Power of Words', was the UK national theme for this day.*

It rightly makes us pause in trying to say anything that attempts to honour the memory of the Holocaust – whatever we say seems so small, within an immensity. But, nevertheless, it is still important to try.

One crucial angle Buddhism would invite us to explore in helping to prevent such a thing happening again, would be to start close to home, with ourselves. How our inner life affects how we express ourselves in the world and, equally, how we communicate in the world impresses itself on our inner life<sup>1</sup>. Each reflects the other. Regarding today's theme, 'The Power of Words', Buddhism would suggest that to know and be in harmony with reality, we need to speak in a

way that resonates with what is real, and not in a way that is estranged from it. Whilst words can illuminate, equally they can obscure.

Right Speech is an important aspect of the well-known formulation of the Path of Buddhist Practice taught by the Buddha, called The Noble Eightfold Path<sup>2</sup>. Right Speech would involve:

Speaking the truth – which would include not deceiving, and not saying contradictory things at different times, merely for our personal convenience or expediency.

Not speaking callously – which would include not brow-beating, and not undermining. The Buddha said, ‘A word spoken in wrath can be the sharpest sword’<sup>3</sup>.

Not slandering or spreading tales. The *Pali* word for this means ‘breaking up of fellowship’<sup>4</sup>. This would include speech that stirs up an unreasoning fear of ‘the other’, and speech that dehumanises, incites or promotes dissension.

Not speaking idly or just for the sake of speaking – which would include refraining from frivolous or trivial talk, and gossip. As the Buddha said: ‘Better than a thousand meaningless statements is one meaningful word, which, having been heard, brings peace’<sup>5</sup> (but maybe here one should also note that being good-humoured may not be at all trivial or frivolous.)

*The Dhammapada* counsels that the miniscule drip, drip, drip effect of ignoring such advice in our actions, will

eventually fill a whole vessel<sup>6</sup>. It will colour how we see our world.

An early Sutta<sup>7</sup> explains that Right Speech is speech that, “.. is spoken at the right time...in truth... affectionately, ... beneficially... [and] with a mind of goodwill”. Maybe one could also add, ‘is spoken in the right way’, so that someone can best hear and take in what is said<sup>8</sup>.

It has been pointed out that practising Right Speech necessarily goes hand in hand with what might be called ‘right listening’, and that in Mahayana Buddhism the name of the Bodhisattva of Great Compassion<sup>9</sup>, Avalokiteshvara, means hearer [or regarder] of the cries of the world. For many Buddhists this Bodhisattva<sup>10</sup> personifies the compassionate aspect of all existence that embraces and permeates *all* circumstances, no matter how extreme. And for us, this would include our being open to really hearing what we may not want to hear.

Right Speech helps us realise our kindred spirit, fellowship and common identity with *all* beings, with *all* being, whilst at the same time completely recognising and respecting difference. But not unreasonably or baselessly fearing difference. Such an unreasoning fear is what leads to prejudice, demonisation and victimisation. Sadly, as Buddhists, we too are not immune to this. We all need to remain alert. When fear is here Buddhism invites us, as best we can, to remain still and open within a deeper trust, to see what is needed, and not let fear drive what we say (and do).

Paradoxically, it is said in Zen that, throughout his long teaching career the Buddha never spoke a single word. One way in which we might appreciate this saying here today is in the sense that the Buddha ‘spoke’ and taught through the way he lived, through his demeanour, and all the ways he responded, directly, fittingly, to each situation present, undistracted by self-concerns, intimately conveying what is deeper than words.

What is it that *we* ‘speak’ through our lives and words? May we all, simply, be aware of this.

### *Postscript*

The origin of the saying ‘the Buddha never spoke a single word’ is the *Lankavatara Sutra*. In it Mahamati quotes the Buddha saying:

From the night I attained perfect enlightenment until the night I enter nirvana, between the two, I do not speak, nor have I spoken, nor will I speak a single word, for not speaking is how a buddha speaks’... The Buddha told Mahamati, ‘It is because of the two truths that I make such a statement as this. And which two? They are the truth that depends on personal realization and the ever-present truth’.<sup>11</sup> And later in the same sutra the Buddha says, ‘Mahamati, if someone says what is taught by a tathagata is dependent on language, they speak falsely. The Dharma transcends language. Therefore, Mahamati,



neither I or any other buddha or bodhisattva speaks a single word or responds with a single word. And why not? Because the Dharma transcends language...<sup>12</sup>

What resonates for me in this is that ultimate truth cannot be captured or limited by words<sup>13</sup>, and that if we are not careful, focusing too much on words can lure us into getting caught up in trying to fix, analyse and divide what is ultimately not so.

There are many Zen koan stories in which the most profound truth is transmitted other than through language and words. For example, Great Master Dōgen in his *Shōbōgenzō* reflects comprehensively on the story of the layperson Tōba, awakened by the sound of the valley stream, and on that of Meditation Master Kyōgen Chikan, awakened by the sound of a tile hitting bamboo<sup>14</sup>. And Thich Nhat Hanh comments in a similar vein,

If we listen out of the silence of our mind, every bird's song and every whistling of the pine trees in the wind will speak to us.... If we listen carefully we will hear the Buddha teaching the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path<sup>15</sup>.

We should also note that words can and do resonate deeply and truly when they are called forth as a fitting response to the intimacy and entirety of a particular situation. And further, given the particular context of the spoken contribution on which this article is based, it is very

important to note that this saying does not imply that the Buddha was silent, or that one should be silent, when a particular situation required his speaking up, or requires our speaking up.

The power of what we say, and of what we ‘say’ wordlessly, of how we hear and respond to what the world ‘says’ in all its varied ways, in words and not in words, has incredibly deep and boundless resonance. May we exercise this power with utmost respect and attentiveness within the all-encompassing spaciousness and practice of meditation.

### Notes

With thanks for the helpful comments and suggestions received.

1. See Rev. Daizui MacPhillamy. *Buddhism from Within*, (Mt. Shasta, CA: Shasta Abbey Press 2003) Chapter 3, p37.
2. See, for example, MacPhillamy, *Buddhism from Within*, pp 37-40, Thera Piyadassi, *The Buddha’s Ancient Path*, (London: Penguin Random House (Rider) 1864) p127-141, and, Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Heart of the Buddha’s Teaching*, (London: Penguin Random House (Rider) 1998).
3. Paul Carus. *Gospel of the Buddha*, (Chicago, IL: Open Court Publishing 1894) in Jack Kornfield (ed.) *Teachings of the Buddha* (Boulder, CA: Shambala Publications, 1996) p86.
4. See *The Buddha’s Ancient Path*, p138.
5. *The Dhammapada*, trans. Gil Fronsdal, (Boulder, CA: Shambala Publications 2005) from the chapter entitled ‘Thousands’, p27.
6. *The Dhammapada*, from the chapter entitled ‘Evil’, p32.
7. The *Vaca Sutta* in the *Anguttara Nikaya*, translated by Thannissaro Bhikku (accessed 28/1/18) <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an05/an05.198.than.html>
8. *Buddhism from Within*, p39.

9. See *The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching*, Thich Nhat Hanh, Rider 1998, pp 86-89
10. Avalokiteshvara (Skt.) is also known as Kuan-Yin in China, Kanzeon in Japan, and Chenrezig in Tibet.
11. *The Lankavatara Sutra*, trans. Red Pine, (Berkeley, CA; Counterpoint 2012) p175.
12. *The Lankavatara Sutra*, p219.
13. Someone helpfully commented that, nor too, can our practice or our immediate experience be captured or limited by words.
- 14 Great Master Dōgen. *Shōbōgenzō*, trans. Rev. Hubert Nearman, (Mt. Shasta, CA: Shasta Abbey Press 2007) pp 66-69 (downloadable from <https://www.shastaabbey.org/pdf/shoboAll.pdf>) in the chapter *Keisei Shanshoku*, ‘*The Rippling of the Valley Stream, the Contour of a Mountain*’, pp 65-77.

Tōba composed a poem (p66) about the experience which he presented to Meditation Master Jōsō:

The valley stream is indeed the eloquent tongue of Buddha:  
 The mountain's contour is not other than that of the body of Buddha.  
 With the coming of night, I heard the eighty-four thousand songs,  
 But with the rising of the sun, how am I ever to offer them to you?

The translator tells us that the ‘trigger or catalyst for this experience when the disciple is spiritually open and ready for the kenshō to occur’ is not its cause but is an integral part of the kenshō process (p65). Great Master Dōgen draws our attention to a coming together, perhaps of the continuing reverberations of [Meditation Master] Jōsō's penetrating comment to Toba the previous day, which he had not yet directly understood, with the sounds of the valley stream rippling through the night (pp 67-68). Importantly too, Dōgen tells us that Jōsō's comment itself came in response to Tōba's heartfelt question, and also hints at Tōba's longstanding, committed practice from which this heartfelt question arose. Later he asks, ‘In short, was it layman Tōba who awakened to the Way or was it the landscape that awakened to the Way...?’ (p68).

15. *The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching*, pp 92-93.

## How all Things Enfold to Bring you Home

Asha George

—*Sacramento, CA–USA*—

The window opened to sunlight, birds chirping, blue skies, the ability to really taste food and an opening to curiosity and interest in the world around. I remember thinking with awe, “you mean for most people this is their common experience of life?” I had reluctantly arrived at this window, under duress from the therapist and psychiatrist who recognized the signs, and through the green and cream-colored curtains of Prozac. This was the advent of my journeys in and out of the valley of depression.

Since as early as aged ten, I remember I struggled with the question of what is the purpose of life in general, and then my life – and how extraordinary it was that the world moved as if there was no death. Maybe those with a proclivity to depression have this question come up often. The early morning prayers of the muezzin from the mosque outside my bedroom window and the elaborate rituals of the Syrian Orthodox church only deepened my questions and my feeling of being an outsider to what seemed common knowledge to others. My incessant questions were silenced

as the answers given did not make sense. Over time, these unanswered questions turned my life into a grey movie. The many open doors that beckoned suggested quick endings to the suffering, though none of these were satisfactory either.

In hindsight I see that our common language is that of suffering and it ranges from longing through unsatisfactoriness, through depression or anxiety all the way to serious afflictions of the mind. Some are faced with it daily, some through experiences that have not been fully digested but then hidden away, some are faced with it when their own solutions fail, or the generally acceptable solutions around them do not work, some when the brevity of life is thrust upon them and some by sheer chance of their genetic inheritance. There also comes a deep shame and secrecy that envelopes those of us who cannot go along with the societal/religious answers presented to us; our puzzle piece does not fit and we think of it as our own unique failing.

The therapist's office was the first place that I could safely look at all the pieces. As part of my graduate education, students were required to be in therapy. It was here that I started the work towards recognizing and unravelling the repository of childhood traumas, cultural, family, and gender expectations that were presented as the answers to life. In short, the 'Tyranny of the Shoulds' that was part of the major religions that I was exposed to in the years growing up and those that I embraced as having the answers that I was seeking. Over time and with various forms of therapy, large portions of this would be uncovered,

jettisoned, let go of, resigned, and accepted. And some remained like stones in a stream, casting their shadows deep or shallow.

Simultaneously, I discovered Christian mysticism, the desert fathers and mothers, Anthony De Mello, Swami Abhishiktananda, and Thomas Merton. These were unusual people who had responded to their questions with their own unique answers; they are hidden in plain sight in all religious traditions. We are often led to venerate them rather than emulate them.

It was in my last year of graduate school that I was given the book *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*. It was not my first exposure to Buddhism. At Middle school when we studied all world religions, I distinctly remember hearing about the Buddha and the Eightfold path. Strangely I recall more about his ascetic practices and less on the Eightfold path, and stranger still I do not recall anything about meditation from these lessons. After reading *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* for several months, one night I had a dream, of sitting in an Indian tea shop, with mud floors, narrow long tables and benches and I look up to see Rev. Suzuki, sitting there with unshaved face and ill-fitting jacket. Feeling awkward but still driven to ask my question, I ask What is Zen? And he gazed at me kindly, with curiosity and I woke up. Following this I started to seek someone who would teach me how to meditate and I was grateful to find a teacher who taught me how to sit up straight in front of the Buddhas.

With meditation, the help of my teacher, the structure of a temple practice with the sangha, and dharma talks, with question and answer periods and reading books, I discovered a way closer to my heart's call. Some moments had piercing clarity, like when I heard an OBC monk state in a dharma talk, "you are whole, there is nothing outside of you that you need to complete you," or reading the *Shushogi* where you meet the minds of those who were able to direct you towards the answer about the question of life and death. I have learned from hearing and watching the sangha that when speech and actions do not match, I am no longer dismayed, but continue to listen and seek to realize in my everyday life the union of action and heart-held beliefs.

The unfurling and the unravelling of the entanglements continue. Meditation, like a kind and benevolent force, like the great ocean, accepts, cleanses, embraces. Not just on the cushion, but at many points during the day, especially when insistence, perfectionism and not being good enough ramble around. The unruly mind flares, fusses, infuses with thoughts and emotions, smoulders, fumes, and sometimes lays ashes that just becomes part of everyday life. Everything has helped towards this: the meditation, the medication, the therapy, singing scriptures, the incense, all weaving together, and nothing is wasted. The sharp blade of self-judgement turns to water, returning to the Ocean of Compassion that keeps calling. All this seeking has led to the temple of my own heart, towards the expression of the Unborn that is both unique and universal.

## Training Wheels

Christina Perske

—Chico, CA–USA—

One summer morning I was on my usual drive to work. It is a scenic trip that takes about 35 minutes and winds downhill on a narrow two lane road. It descends from 3000 feet of elevation, lush with pines and cedars, to the bottom of the hill where deer brush, grey pine and chaparral line the canyon of Rock Creek.

Leaving my driveway that day I turned left, rounded a bend and was slowed to a crawl by the vehicle ahead; a small, red pickup truck of fifties vintage. Patiently, I followed at a respectful distance, thinking surely the driver would turn off soon. However, this didn't happen. Instead, the little truck continued at a snail's pace, well below the 35 mph speed limit, and I was beginning to worry about being late for work.

I inched up, and followed more closely, hoping to make my presence known, expecting the driver to use one of the many turnouts on the curvy road. I could not pass due to double yellow lines and no visibility, but the truck only went



slower and slower, and the slower it went the more I fumed. Gradually, I worked this into a steam of anger until my car's interior was echoing with loud words of resentment toward this "inconsiderate" driver ahead who was taking liberties with my life, yes, MY LIFE! How dare this person block my way, drive under the speed limit and be so rude as to ignore my need to pass?

After all, I was now quite visible; practically riding his bumper.

This situation continued for a few miles, then somehow, in the midst of my diatribe a bit of curiosity emerged. As if at a distance, I observed myself engaging with the anger and noticed how intense it was. I tried to stop it by telling myself that it wasn't good for me, a Buddhist, to be whipping up a froth of rage, but it didn't seem to matter. Compassion, kindness, serenity? No way! Instead, firmly in place, was my rampant ego which was getting some kind of weird charge from this tantrum.

It was not the first time that my anger had been unleashed at other drivers on my way to work. It happened that either vehicles were too slow and blocked my progress or they were too fast and pushy, making me fear for my life before I could find a wide spot to get out of the way. No matter what the circumstances my response was always to vent the feelings of anger out loud in the privacy of my car. Strangely, even after many years of Buddhist practice I had never questioned this. It had simply become a habit, a knee

jerk reaction to frustration with which I unthinkingly engaged while being blind to the damage it caused.

Being angry and being on auto pilot had occurred so many times before that I was surprised when a thought crossed my mind; a partial quote from the Zen Master Bankei, “You are angry because you want to be angry...”<sup>1</sup>. Briefly, I felt a bit of sadness and a twinge of remorse, then something else caught my attention.

Ahead, the road followed a rise and there at the top, laid out before me was the valley. The rolling hills were covered with the golden grass of summer, and scattered over the terrain were blue oaks, trunks grayish and their foliage a mosaic of dark green. Over all was the vivid blue dome of the sky and the coastal range, a hazy purple in the distance, stretched along the horizon. I couldn’t help but be caught by the beauty of the scene, and was reminded of a verse that had become a favorite over the years and though I was still angry, I was moved to recite it out loud:

The universe is as the boundless sky.  
As lotus blossoms above unclean water  
Pure and beyond the world is the Buddha nature  
Of the trainee.<sup>2</sup>

In seconds my anger evaporated. I felt a great peace flow into me and my mind was quieted. I was suffused with a kind of wordless joy, a feeling of well-being that seemed

all-encompassing. This swept over me and lasted a few moments.

I was stunned; in awe. What had just happened? What had stopped the anger? What had aided my half-hearted attempts to control my rage? Was it reciting the verse that had done it? These questions were an attempt to apply reason to the profound experience that I had just had. The contrast between the anger and the utter peace that enveloped me was too huge to ignore or pass off as coincidence. However, as the weeks and months have passed by I have realized that perhaps I will never fully understand what happened, only that there was a shift inside me and something beyond my ego-ridden self had come forth, had intervened.

Because of this powerful experience I have been able to deepen my practice, and have become conscious of something I couldn't see before: that engaging in anger is engaging in suffering. When I was truly honest with myself I could see that my automatic angry response was there in diverse situations. For instance, if I felt ignored, insulted or treated unfairly, I might not say anything to reveal it, but anger was there, creating a dark attitude, a negativity that filtered into my life and my relationships in subtle ways.

Anger can be a big emotion that generates a lot of energy and takes a lot of our attention. Often, in the midst of this karmic whirlwind we fall prey to losing control and do or say things we regret and are ashamed of; like shouting inside our cars at other motorists. We may think it's not

damaging because no one hears it. However, we, ourselves hear it and are harmed. Unwittingly we are indulging in suffering: anger is suffering itself.

At such times it becomes difficult to soften toward ourselves and look beneath the anger to what is also there: hurt feelings, sadness and fear. It can seem that the Buddha nature is a myth at these times. In our angst we forget that the Great Compassionate One is always present, and that even if we are in the midst of an anger attack, that compassion can find us.

When we can look at what is happening in ourselves through the lens of compassion, it becomes possible to accept the vulnerability that is there. I covered up my hurt feelings with anger because if I experienced the hurt I considered myself weak, and would be disgusted by it. It was difficult to admit that while being stuck behind the little red truck I was actually fearful and hurt; frightened of being late, of not meeting expectations; and hurt because my desired goals were being blocked. In my case it was humbling to admit that I, too, am susceptible to such feelings.

Ordinary life provides many opportunities to receive the teachings of the Dharma over and over again in different ways. As *The Scripture of Great Wisdom* tells us, we are “going on, always going on, always becoming Buddha”.<sup>3</sup> I know this is true because when I am driving to town and a slow driver is ahead, or if a fast one is riding my bumper I can still get irritated, but after awakening to my anger and

it's deeper meanings I am not so attached to it. My reflex to get angry is not as strong as before, not as automatic. There has been a step forward in training, something I feel grateful for.

What often comes to mind when I'm tempted to get angry at other drivers is the little red truck. I am reminded of my vulnerability to the hurt and sadness that comes when the world does not respond to my personal needs and wants. I am reminded of my humanity, and am more able to respond to my suffering with compassion instead of ignorance. Nowadays I don't think of my car as just a car, I think of it as my set of training wheels.

#### Notes

1. Haskel, Peter Yoshito Hakeda. Ed Bankei *Zen: Translations from the Record of Bankei*. (New York: Grove Press. 1984) Part I: Sermons p.32.
2. The Pali Canon, p.296. The verse is Buddha's response to a disciple who challenged his claim to the Buddha nature. Buddha's retort was unequivocal "Yes, I am the Buddha" In Chinese the verse is called *Chao riming sansei jing* and is found in *Taishodaizokyo* (the Chinese canon). Two additional translations are offered here:  
"Although located in the world, (one's mind) is in the emptiness, Just as the lotus flower (though growing in muddy water) does not touch the water's surface, my mind is so pure and clean that it Transcends the (material world) Now I pay homage to the Ultimate Venerable One (the Buddha)."  
And:  
"We live in the world as if in the sky  
Just as the lotus blossom is not wetted by the water that surrounds it,  
The mind is immaculate and beyond the dust.  
Let us bow to the highest Lord."  
3. *The Scripture of Great Wisdom*. (The ending phrase). Taken from *The Monastic Office*, p.33.

## Bodhisattvas of Daily Life

Catherine Kigerl

—Kingston, Washington –US—

Sometimes unexpectedly, and perhaps in times of need, extraordinary individuals may appear in our lives. Such an individual showed up in my life recently and helped make it possible for my husband and I to attend a retreat at Shasta Abbey in California.

In June of 2018 my husband and I were en route to the Abbey to attend Reverend Master Daishin's *Pali Canon Retreat*. Prior to leaving Washington State, there had been a problem with a loose belt in the engine compartment of our trusty old Buick. It was tightened prior to our setting off and all looked safe so off we went. Traffic was heavy that Saturday and the going was slow all the way from northwest of Seattle to Eugene, Oregon. The squeal of the belt loosening again became apparent as we entered Ashland, Oregon. Of a sudden we heard a loud "Clunk!" and the steering wheel became labored. We were right in town and the place was filled with tourists but my husband managed to get the car up the road to a space in the city park. Checking

under the hood, the belt was found to be as loose as an old snakeskin. But we didn't have the right socket to tighten it. So into town we went to find a car parts store. Since it was Sunday, the one mechanic's shop we knew of was closed and the car parts store my husband remembered was no longer there.

At the end of the last street of shops we happened upon a fly-fishing store. Inside, we told the friendly man at the counter, whom I'll call Fred, about our dilemma. Fred immediately and quite naturally began to look up auto parts stores on his computer. (My husband and I do not own iphones or ipads and our cell phones do not access the Internet. I no longer travel with a laptop. So we were relying upon old-fashioned help here.) We were in luck. There was a store about four blocks away. After a hike back through the town and through the park to the car, it turned out the socket was a bit off. So back to the store my husband went while I stayed with the car and called AAA in case the worst happened and we'd need the car towed to a mechanic.

My husband stopped at the fly fishing shop again just to tell the joke about the wrong socket to our new friend. Fred was just getting off work so offered to not only drive my husband back to the store but back to our car too. He had a sense that he should stick around while my husband tried to tighten the belt again. It was soon discovered that the bolts holding the power steering box in place were missing. That was the clunk we'd heard earlier. "This is a major job. You'll need to have it towed to a mechanic," Fred said. Then he

quickly followed-up with the name of a trusted mechanic whose shop was open on Sundays and which was next door to a hotel where we could stay while the car was worked on. He called both places up and confirmed.

While AAA was on its way, he gave us his phone number and told us to call him if we needed anything else. I couldn't tell him enough times how grateful we were for his help. He replied, "My mother in heaven would have wanted me to help."

We had been traveling with a bin of fresh lettuce from the garden back home, a gift I'd intended to offer to Shasta Abbey. But my intuition told me to give it to Fred instead. When I handed it to him he hesitated. Then he shook his head bashfully and smiled, "Well, my four kids at home just happen to love lettuce." He told us he was a carpenter by profession but the work had slowed significantly due to manufactured cabinet use. He worked at the fly fishing shop to make up for lost income. As for fly fishing, he loved it for the joy of seeing the fish jump for the lure. Yet, he didn't eat fish. He used special rubber lures that did not hook the fish's mouth allowing Fred to gently pull the lure out and throw the fish back.

As he drove off, we bowed to this Bodhisattva or Good Samaritan as Fred may have preferred to be called.

The mechanic later told us we were lucky the problem had happened in town and not on the freeway as it was a



freak break. Although the mechanic's work took the whole of the next day, we were able to safely join the retreat at Shasta Abbey two days in.

Bodhisattvas do exist in this busy, self-sufficient world we now live in. Whether a person is low tech or high tech, help may suddenly step forward just to show us example.

When one Master was asked, "When will humans stop being so inhumane to each other?" The answer given was, "When mankind becomes kind man." I will add, and when womankind becomes kind woman.

One person can certainly set the right example for us all.

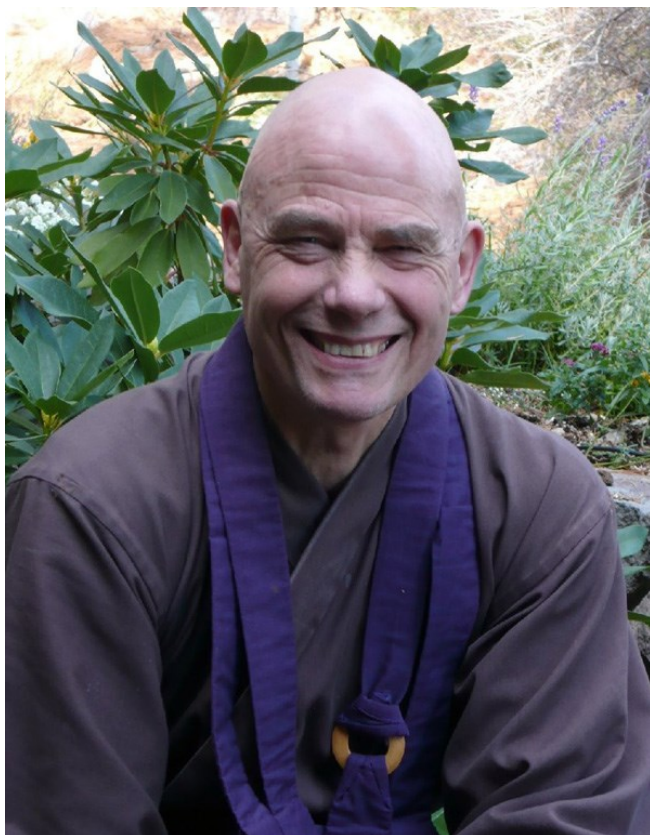
# News of the Order

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## USA and Canada

In Memoriam

Rev. Master Chosei Swann



*Rev. Master Chosei*

Rev. Master Chosei, who was ordained in 1974, died peacefully in the company of fellow monks on October 29 aged 71, following an illness of many years' duration.

Rev. Master Chosei was a senior monk and teacher at the monastery, having been ordained by the Abbey's founder, Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett, in 1974. He was born in New Zealand and first studied Zen Buddhism in England where he studied at Cambridge University, subsequently moving first to Canada and then to the US.

At the Abbey, Rev. Master Chosei developed carpentry and construction skills and helped with building the early structures there—the kitchen-dining hall, the ceremony hall, and the meditation hall. He subsequently moved with his wife Zuiko to Kannon Dell, an Abbey property near Weed, where they raised their two children, Aaron Christopher and Susanna. During this time he formed a contracting business, Cathedral Homebuilders, and built many homes in the Mount Shasta/Weed area. He continued to oversee construction of major monastery buildings, in particular the guest house and a large maintenance building.

He resumed active life at the monastery in 1994. He was named a Master of the Order in 2010, and he served as Meditation Hall Director at Shasta Abbey. In addition, he played a large part in building a monks' residence hall and several smaller offices, renovating many older buildings on the property, and rebuilding the cloister.

Rev. Master Meian performed the private funeral ceremony, assisted by other monks. Afterwards the monastic community, together with Rev. Master Chosei's lay friends, meditated with his body in the Buddha Hall before we carried him in procession through the cloister to the gate, to be driven to a local funeral home by Rev. Master Meian and Rev. Allard Kieres.

More than a dozen monks and congregation attended the cremation on November 13; and over 90 joined us for the funeral ceremony celebrated by Rev. Master Meian on November 13, including Rev. Master Chosei's son, daughter, son-in-law and two of his grandchildren. We are grateful to all who joined with us in saying goodbye to our old friend in the Dharma.

## Other News from Shasta Abbey

—Mt. Shasta, California—USA—

**Wildfires in California:** We continue to offer merit to those affected by the destructive wildfires that have been burning this summer and autumn, and we wish to express our gratitude to the firefighters and all the others who offer their help to others during these disasters.

**Summer Meditation Retreat:** In late August, Rev. Masters Meikō Jones and Scholastica Hicks led a week-long meditation retreat on Great Master Dōgen: Scholar, Mystic, Author, Teacher, Poet, during which they offered reflections on Dōgen’s words of wisdom from the *Shōbōgenzō* and lesser-known writings to show how they can inspire us in our formal meditation and daily life practice. The retreat was well-attended, and guests found it helpful in clarifying their understanding of Dōgen’s writings.

**New Lay Minister:** On August 20, Rev. Master Meian Elbert and Rev. Master Oswin Hollenbeck on behalf of Rev. Master Haryo Young, presented Kathe Waterbury with her lay minister’s vestments and certificate. We are delighted to have Kathe join our community of lay ministers, and we wish her every success in her continued training.



Rev. Vivian, Rev Master Meian, Kathe and Rev. Master Oswin

***Lotus Blossom:*** We are also sad to report the death of our beloved young cat, Lotus Blossom, who died a few minutes after being struck by a car on the road in front of the monastery. Reverend Master Kōdō Kay, with whom Lotus had lived since her arrival in May of 2017, was present at her death and was the celebrant for her funeral the following day.



*Lotus*

—*Rev. Margaret*

## Wallowa Buddhist Temple

—*Joseph, Oregon—USA—*

This autumn brought an abundance of orchard and garden produce to the Wallowa Buddhist Temple, kindly offered by congregation, friends, and neighbors sharing the bounty of a fine harvest season. While blessed this year with no nearby wildland fires, we continue to offer merit for friends, family, and sangha who have been affected by the extreme fire season elsewhere in the country. Here, our work continues to clear our little forest of excess fuel to keep the temple grounds as safe as possible in case of wildfire. Also, thanks to the generous loan of a powerful log

splitter and the help of regular volunteers, we have gotten most of our firewood stacked and ready before the snows of winter.

***Ceremonies:*** On September 23<sup>rd</sup>, Rev. Master Meidō was celebrant for our yearly Feeding of the Hungry Ghosts Ceremony, held for the first time in our new outdoor ceremony grounds created last year just outside the meditation hall. Not long after, we offered a farewell blessing for friends of the temple and their nine year old daughter who are setting out for Mexico to start their great adventure travelling the ocean while living on their new sailboat home.

On August 24<sup>th</sup>, long-time congregation member Harold Black's wife Linda passed away after a sudden illness. On September 16<sup>th</sup>, a small private memorial ceremony was held at the temple. Then on October 27<sup>th</sup>, the monks were part of a larger memorial Celebration of Life potluck organized by local sangha and friends of Harold and Linda, held at the Grange hall just down the road from the temple. Earlier that afternoon the temple's meditation hall was open to any who wished to come and sit quietly with Linda's ashes, as many did.

***Retreat Guests:*** We were pleased to welcome many guests who came for individual retreats this fall, including long-time Sangha member Supriti Bharna from Vancouver, Canada. Another of the guests, Allison Rossman, had just completed a transformative pilgrimage walking the Pacific Crest Trail starting at the southern border with Mexico and finishing at the northern border with Canada. We were grateful to lay minister Helmut Schatz from Walla Walla, WA, who came for eight days in November to help the monks in a number of ways.

***Individual Retreats:*** One of the Wallowa Buddhist 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

# News of the Order

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## Europe

### Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey

—Northumberland, England—UK—

**Monastic Visits:** After his summer tour of temples, Rev. Master Haryo departed again in late September for another ten-day temple tour, this time visiting Rochdale Zen Retreat, Great Ocean Dharma Refuge and Telford Priory. We are deeply grateful for Rev. Master Haryo for helping to maintain and strengthen links between the temples through his work as Head of the Order.

It was a pleasure to have Rev. Master Fuden join us for a ten-day stay in September from Dharmazuflucht temple in Germany; many of you will know him from his years here especially as Cook, Guestmaster and running retreats. We enjoyed having him with us.





We welcomed Rev. Master Mugo back to Throssel in September too. After a few years being based in Cumbria, she has returned to start an open-ended period of residency at the monastery, it's good to have her with us again.

Rev. Master Myōhō came for a visit in October from her temple in Aberystwyth, The Place of Peace Dharma House. We enjoyed spending the week with her.

At the end of November, Rev. Vivian of Shasta Abbey arrived here for a six month stay and is settling in. We are so pleased to be able to have her here and look forward to training with her again; she came for a six month stay some years ago.

**August Sesshin:** One of our major retreats of the year, the August sesshin this year was attended by mostly long-term practitioners with a small number of new trainees. It was led by Rev. Master Leandra with theme 'Our universality as human beings' which included reflecting on our vows as bodhisattvas. She gave four talks during sitting periods which can be listened to on the website by clicking here: [August Sesshin talks link](#). Dharma interviews were offered to retreatants, and one afternoon, we held a Renewing of The Precepts Ceremony.

**Segaki:** The Feeding the Hungry Ghosts retreat has long been one of our most well-attended sesshins. This year saw the largest group we have had at Throssel for several years. Rev. Master Hugh and Rev. Wilfrid led the retreat, giving Dharma talks and offering teaching at the teas and questions. During this week of meditation, which culminates in the Festival of Feeding the Hungry Ghosts, we remember those who have died and express our wish that all beings be released from suffering. The photo below shows the ceremony altar, laden with all kinds of food and drink which represents an invitation for all beings to partake in the wholesome goodness that is the Buddha's teaching. The hanging in front was used for the first time this year; a beautiful offering from Stephanie Perks, who delicately embroidered the dragons and patterns.



***Lay Ministry Retreat:*** Our Lay Ministers retreat this year was re-scheduled from March when the wintry weather forced us to postpone the event. During this long weekend Sept. 13 - 16, much fruitful discussion took place, partly springing from lectures given by Rev. Master Haryo and Rev. Master Saïdo and partly from the opportunity for those who see each other rarely to speak together about their training and issues they meet in the course of their practice with others.

***Founders Weekend:*** Founders weekend was led by Rev. Elinore, with Rev. Master Mugō joining her for the Friday tea, offering her contribution as she had trained with Rev. Master Jiyu. Rev. Elinore gave a talk and tea on Saturday and on Sunday, Rev. Master Haryo was celebrant for the festival ceremony and joined the retreatants and festival guests after for a tea and questions.

***Buddha's Enlightenment Festival:*** Rev. Lambert was Celebrant for our Buddha's Enlightenment Festival this year as part of a weekend retreat. He spoke during the weekend about the

narratives we often perpetuate about ourselves during meditation and after the festival gave a talk on the story of the Enlightenment of Shakyamuni, pointing to aspects of the Buddha's experience which, through practice, we can know to be true for ourselves.



*The altar after the ceremony with the offerings of lit tea lights on trays.*

***Interfaith Day:*** Rev. Master Berwyn and Rev. Kyōsei took part in an Interfaith day for local schools. This event was held at St John's Chapel Primary School with several small rural primary schools joining together. The theme was festivals and ceremonies. Rev. Master Berwyn and Rev. Kyōsei focussed on Wesak and set up a small altar so the children could ladle water over a baby Buddha statue.

***Redecorating the Dining Hall:*** Our dining hall has been in need of a facelift for some time. Last repainted in 2002, the walls have been given a fresh colour scheme, whilst the altar has been given a new backdrop in a more central position. The photo here shows Rev. Master Willard preparing the ceiling by filling in cracks before sandpapering.



*The finished altar setting in the dining hall*

***Guest Cottage Renovation:*** We have converted the fourth room in the Guest Cottage into a double bedroom. Workers from a local building firm installed two windows and a small bathroom and we decorated and furnished the room. Though not quite finished, we were glad to be able to offer this extra accommodation for our Segaki Retreat when rooms were oversubscribed.



*Work in progress on our new bedroom*

—Rev. Alina

## Dharmazuflucht Schwarzwald

—Gutach (Black Forest)—Germany—

This autumn, we had the great pleasure of welcoming Rev. Master Saïdo from Telford Buddhist Priory in the UK, who came to our Segaki retreat and stayed on for a little while afterwards. At the end of the retreat, he gave a Dharma-talk on the *Scripture of Great Wisdom*, which all those present deeply appreciated. Later on that day, we had the annual general meeting of the German equivalent of our charitable Trust.



When I first came to Germany in 2004, Rev. Master Saïdo drove me down by car from Throssel to Southern Germany and helped me to establish myself in our first, rented place here. We are still deeply grateful to Rev. Master Saïdo for his kind and generous help.



*Segaki Altar*





Earlier on in autumn, I went to Britain for five weeks, visiting at first the main European monastery of our Order, Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey in Northumberland. At the end of my stay there, Rev. Master Peter very kindly came up from Rochdale Zen Retreat and drove both Rev. Master Haryo and myself down to Great Ocean Dharma Refuge, after we had spent a night at his own temple near Preston. I then stayed several weeks with Rev. Master Mokugen and Rev. Caitlin in their temple in Wales. Before flying back to Germany, I spent another two nights at Rev. Master Peter's temple. It was very good spending a bit of time with Rev. Master Haryo, Rev. Master Daishin, Rev. Master Mokugen and all my other fellow monks. A big thank you especially also to Rev. Master Peter for his very generous help with getting me from one temple to another.

On the 9th of November, we celebrated Founder's Day as well as Rev. Clementia's 10th Ordination Anniversary. I am very grateful for Rev. Clementia's help with the running of our temple and for her steady training over the years. All good wishes to her for the years to come in her monk's life!

Thanks to Lay Minister Paul Taylor, who visited us this summer, we were able to have the German Dharma-booklet *Unsere Wahre Zuflucht (Our True Refuge)* reprinted. The booklet contains 23 chapters on fundamental aspects of training, and is based on talks given at the Dharmazuflucht over the last few years. It is available from our temple on request. Paul has been visiting us every year since we have been here, and it is always a treat for us to have him here in summer.

Lately, we have been having more local people come to our temple than in the past. It is particularly encouraging that some of them are now sometimes able to come to our evening meditations after their work.

As always, we warmly invite anyone who is already familiar with our practise to come and train alongside us, even outside of the scheduled retreat-times.

—Rev. Master Fuden

## Great Ocean Dharma Refuge

—Pembrokeshire, Wales—UK—

This summer, in addition to the always appreciated lay retreatants, we were fortunate to welcome several monks for visits or periods of quiet retreat. We offer our thanks to Reverend Master Daishin, Reverend Master Myōhō, Reverend Master Fuden and Reverend Master Olwen for their bright presence and offering. Reverend Master Daishin kindly brought with him a small headstone that he had lettered for our late dearly beloved dog Dewi. The stone not only reminds us of impermanence, but also of the precious interconnectedness of all beings and how we are all each other's beneficiaries.

In late September we enjoyed a visit from Reverend Master Haryo on his tour of U.K. temples and priories. We are deeply grateful for the depth of training and stability that he shares with



us all, in addition always offering practical help around the temple.

We especially remember Reverend Master Chosei and Vajira Bailey who died in recent months. We held memorials in remembrance and gratitude for their life and inspiring example of training, helping the many people they had contact with.



Our thanks also go to Stan and Maggi Kublicki who donated two beautiful Kanzeon lacquer panels, one shown here in the glowing light of the zendo; and we thank all those whose generosity continues to support this temple.

For more information about retreat and training opportunities at Great Ocean we welcome you as always to phone or write.

—*Rev. Master Mokugen*

## The Place of Peace Dharma House

—*Aberystwyth, Wales-UK*—

In early September Engo Scott and his wife Philippa, who live in Toronto, visited us for two days. Engo is a former monk; he and Rev. Master Myōhō were novices together at Shasta Abbey in the 1970s, and it was very good to see him, and to sit together again.



*Engo Scott visits from Canada*

Later in September Rev. Masters Haryo, Fuden and Peter spent a morning here. It is always a pleasure to have monks in the temple.

Moira Pagan, who trains with Rev. Master Myōhō, came for a private retreat. Moira now lives in Australia, and it was a joy to have this precious time together.



*Rev. Master Myōhō with Moira Pagan*

In October Rev. Master Myōhō visited Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey for a week, and is grateful for being made so welcome. It was good to be with monks and lay guests whom she had not seen for some time. David Barlass kindly drove her part of the way, which helped make a long journey less demanding. Whilst there she was able to spend some time with Heather Walters, who although she lives in the North East, trains at The Place of Peace.

Later in October we enjoyed another monk visit, when Rev. Saïdo spent a day at the temple. He came for a trustees meeting and there was plenty of time to catch up with someone who is a valued friend.

On November 6th we celebrated Founders Day with meditation and a Ceremony of gratitude for Reverend Master Jiyu-Kennett, who so generously passed this practice, with its wonderful ceremonies, on to us.

On Remembrance Day gratitude was offered to all who have helped give us a country where we have the freedom to

practice Buddhism. We expressed the wish for all beings to be at peace with themselves, and for that peace to fill the world. At 12.30pm, joining in with Big Ben, churches and cathedrals throughout the land, our temple bell became one of the many ‘Bells of Peace’ which, in our case, rang out a joyful 108 times.

Now, as the nights draw in, and the year is nearly over, we settle down for the winter, which offers quieter time for reflection and taking stock. We thank everyone who helps to support the life of faith that is the heart of our temple.

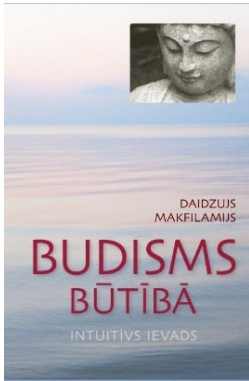
—Rev. Master Myōhō

### Sōtō Zen Riga

—Riga-Latvia—

The temple is very pleased to announce the publication of Rev. Master Daizui MacPhillamy’s *Buddhism from Within* in Latvian! The title in Latvian is *Budisms Būtība* (Buddhism in its Essence). It was released for sale on October 24th 2018. The translation process was lengthy – almost 3 years – due to making the translation readable and accurate. Many drafts and revisions were involved. The publisher helped with this process and it now seems that the time we spent on details was worthwhile.

There has been a lot of positive feedback on the translation which was done by Madara Heidemane, a Philology student who was practicing here at the temple. Pretty early on she saw I was having difficulty with regaining my Latvian and offered to help. She was undaunted when shown a full book and got to work. Her generous offer gave me the incentive to find a way to get *Buddhism from Within* published. So now 700 copies of *Budisms Būtība* are circulating in Latvia.



Advance copies of the text were provided to 8 people so that their reviews of the book could be included in the printed copy. All reviewers touched on Buddhism in some form – some practiced at the temple, others I hardly knew. The idea was for a casual reader in a bookstore to see at a glance that other Latvians had read the book and see what they made of it. One of these reviews in translation is included below: (By Krista Vāvere.)

*This book will be a valuable friend in considering what kind of life we want to live, and then in trying to really live it. Just as it asks us to make an effort and accept mistakes - and to try yet again - it also gives us an understandable explanation on how to walk the way of life with awareness and diligence, regardless of whether you call yourself a Buddhist or want to become “just good folks.”*

To help publicize the book, an informational event was organized at the National Library. Over 60 people attended, some known to Sōtō Zen, many completely new. The program consisted of talks by Rev. Bridin and Ilmars Latkovskis, who teaches under “Via Integralis”, which combines a Christian mysticism with Zen. Additionally, four readings from the book were offered. The readers were diverse in their experience with Buddhism. Each picked a paragraph from the book that particularly interested them, and spoke as to why they chose that section. The topics were varied and included: “Is Buddhism a religion?”; “meditation as including compassion”, “cosmic ideas in Buddhism”, and “letting go of attachments”. Vegan pirogies, apple bread and green tea were served to add a friendly note.

On September 1, 2018, Rev. Bridin performed a Buddhist wedding ceremony in a Latvian tradition for the above mentioned translator, Madara, and her now husband, Kristaps Bormanis.

Kristaps has also donated his time to the temple by helping to manage and renew the [sotozenriga.lv](http://sotozenriga.lv) website. Their wedding was set outdoors, in traditional Latvian form, under a sacred oak tree, on the banks of the Daugava River. The wedding was quite beautiful uniting both spiritual and cultural lives.

—*Rev. Bridin*

### Sitting Buddha Hermitage

—*Cromford, Derbyshire-UK*—

On Friday 21st September I flew to The Netherlands to stay for a week with Rev. Master Hakuun at Wolk en Water Hermitage in Langelille in Friesland. A very beautiful part of the country with many nature reserves, Langelille is also not far from the sea, and each day we went on delightful walks with Channa, Rev. Hakuun's dog.

The day after I arrived we drove to Apeldoorn, about an hour away, to visit Rev. Master Baldwin at De Dharmatoevlucht. It was great to spend time with my fellow monks, both of whom I trained with as a novice at Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey, and to see their temples and a little bit of Dutch life.

On 13th October Rev. Master Aiden and I took part in the wedding of John Ferris and Gerda Kuklik-Cousins at St. Peter's Church in Nottingham. John is a longstanding member of the Nottingham SRM Group, and he and Gerda were married by the Reverend Christopher Harrison, with a Buddhist blessing given by Rev. Aiden and myself and, as Gerda was brought up in the Lutheran tradition, a Lutheran blessing was given by the Reverend Paulina Hlawiczka. I wish John and Gerda every happiness as they start a new life together in their 80's.

—*Rev. Master Alicia*

## Turning Wheel Buddhist Temple

—East Midlands—UK—

***Memorial for those who died in the helicopter crash in Leicester:*** Readers in the UK will probably have heard about the helicopter crash at the football stadium in Leicester in late October. Five people died in this accident, including the owner of Leicester City football club. The accident has had a major impact on people in the city, and it seemed appropriate to hold a memorial ceremony for all those who lost their lives. We held the memorial at our next meeting, and a photo of the memorial altar, with images of those who died, is below.



*The Memorial Altar*

A member of the local lay Sangha also left a message of condolence, including a nice Buddha image, at the stadium on our behalf, and contributed to the online Book of Condolences.

A new, old gong: In early November, James Gore-Langton from the Huddersfield group visited the temple for a couple of days, and brought with him a beautiful Japanese gong with a long and varied history. The Huddersfield group meet at a Friends Meeting House in Wooldale, and a member of the Quaker congregation there had rescued the gong from neglect — it had apparently even been used as a coal scuttle at some point! The gong was restored, and given a stand and a lovely oak striker, and was kept at the Meeting House. The gentleman who rescued it died a few years ago, and the Quaker meeting were wanting to make a bit more space, and asked James if he knew of anyone who could make use of it. James mentioned this at the Regional Sangha meeting in Leeds in July, and Rev. Aiden expressed interest in giving it a home at Turning Wheel Buddhist Temple.



*James striking the new, old gong*

The gong is a very similar design to the one in the Ceremony Hall at Throssel, and is about a foot in diameter. It was



apparently made in 1805, and has an inscription around the rim, which we are yet to have translated. It has a very beautiful tone, and we are very grateful to receive such a wonderful donation. Whilst James was visiting we (re-)dedicated the gong to Buddhist practice, and as part of the dedication we offered our gratitude to all those, known and unknown, who were part of the chain of events that has led to this beautiful gong finding a home at our temple.

—*Rev. Master Aiden*

## Wolk-en-Water Hermitage

—*Langelille–The Netherlands*—

It was a joy to be joined by Rev. Master Haryo and Rev. Kanshin for a week in September. Both made many repairs that do make a difference to our daily life. We much appreciated their quiet and energetic presence, and the lay trainees were grateful to be able to meet both Rev. Master Haryo and Rev. Kanshin. One of our regular meditators was so taken by the monastic presence that she now intends to do a retreat in Throssel. Thank you both for coming.

Rev. Master Alicia also came in September and it was a pleasure to share some quiet sitting and show the region and share dog walks.

Rev. Master Baldwin drove Rev. Vivian up in November who enjoyed a bit of hermitage-life before travelling on to the Throssel community.

The garage roof has been replaced – so we no longer need to put buckets under holes! (see photograph). Also the carport roof is now renewed and some of the lay trainees have helped cleaning and painting the carport; and they also built a vegetable garden for next year.



Although we remain “small-scale”, the activities here are well attended. This joined meditation practice brings us all much joy.

—*Rev. Master Hakuun*

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**MT:** Whitefish

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*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/>*