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Meditation Hall at Redding

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The Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana:

An Appreciation (Part One)

Rev. Master Berwyn Watson

—*Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey, UK*—

The *Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana* is one of those works that has had a profound effect on Mahayana teaching in China and Japan and on the Cha'n and Zen Schools, including our own lineage of Sōtō Zen. Many of its teachings underlie what we understand to be the 'doctrines' of Sōtō Zen: these include faith in the underlying Buddha nature of all beings, and a completely non-judgemental analysis of 'ignorance' – a way of explaining why we make mistakes that does not divide into good and bad. Furthermore, the teaching on awakening that is central to Sōtō Zen and Dōgen: that enlightenment is simply realising there was never any division from the beginning, is already there in this very early sixth century Chinese commentary. Take this passage for example:

Because of not truly realising oneness with Suchness, there emerges an unenlightened mind and, consequently, its thoughts. These thoughts do not

have any validity to be substantiated; therefore they are not independent of original enlightenment. It is like the case of a man who has lost his way: he is confused because of [his wrong sense of] direction. If he is freed from direction altogether, then there will be no such thing as going astray. It is the same with men: because of [the notion of] enlightenment, they are confused. But if they are freed from [the fixed notion of] enlightenment, then there will be no such thing as non-enlightenment.¹

This is not different from Great Master Dōgen's teaching in *Shushōgi*: "All you have to do is realise that birth and death, as such, should not be avoided and they will cease to exist for then, if you can understand that birth and death are Nirvana itself, there is not only no necessity to avoid them but also nothing to search for that is called Nirvana."²

I would like to offer an appreciation of the *Awakening of Faith* that brings out what for me is the real heart of this commentary. There are a few academic introductions that are useful in showing how the *Awakening* relates to other Scriptures, such as *The Lankavatara Sutra*, but I'd like to offer something here that shows how it is relevant today and brings out its devotional and practice-based intention, rather than seeing it as an example of early Buddhist philosophy.

Rather than doing a detailed commentary on the *Awakening* I'd like to pick out a few of the main themes:

What is faith and what do we take refuge in when we practise the Mahayana?

What is the relationship between delusion and awakening, and how can we account for ignorance?

How does our understanding of what awakening is express itself in practice, for example in the way we do meditation?

What is Faith and what do we take Refuge in when we Practice the Mahayana?

The *Awakening* begins with a ‘Prayer of Homage’ which both sets out the author’s intention, but most importantly tells us where this teaching comes from:

I take refuge in [the Buddha] who pervades all ten directions.

Whose actions are supreme, who is omniscient,

Whose form is unhindered and unimpeded –

The One of Great Compassion, who saves the world.

And I take refuge in the intrinsic reality and characteristics of his body,

The ocean of suchness – the dharma nature –

And the store of countless merits.

And I take refuge in those who practice in accordance

with what is real.

I wish to have sentient beings

Eliminate doubts and abandon wrongly held views

And give rise to correct Mahayana Faith

Leaving the buddha-lineage uninterrupted.³

This is a form of taking refuge in the Three Treasures of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, but the ‘dharma nature’ is something much wider than the spoken or written teachings of the Buddha. There is a double meaning of ‘dharma’⁴. Dharma can both be a guide intended to prevent people falling into delusion, and reality itself.

In the introductory verses the dharma nature is seen as “the ocean of suchness”. Suchness (Chinese ‘zhenru’) is an important word: in the translation used here it is rendered as “reality as it truly is without any conceptual overlay”. The original Sanskrit is ‘tathāta’, and is closely related to ‘Tathāgata’ one of the names of the Buddha meaning ‘thus come one’ – the Buddha appearing in the world to save beings. Tathāgatagarbha is often translated as Buddha nature.

The dharma nature is reality seen correctly – non-duality – and this leads to what ‘faith in the Mahayana’ meant for the author. It is faith in the true nature of beings and existence – not faith in the teachings of what later came to be seen as the Mahayana school, but faith *in what is*.

The term Mahayana, often translated as Great Vehicle, can be confusing. In some early Buddhist texts it was used in contrast to the term ‘Hinayana’ (translated as lesser vehicle) in a way that was somewhat polemical. Some of the traditions of Buddhism were labelled as lesser vehicle because they didn’t follow the new emphasis on the bodhisattva, beginning around 100 BC.⁵

The author of the *Awakening* had no intention of using the term Mahayana in a critical way. It’s clear that the term ‘Maha’ or great, is used to reflect the boundless good qualities of the dharma nature. The aim is not to encourage support of a particular school of Buddhism but to awaken a faith in the nature of existence:

There are three meanings. What are they? The first is that Mahayana’s intrinsic reality is great because the suchness of all dharmas is uniform, neither increasing nor decreasing.

The second is that its characteristics are great because the *tathatagarba* is replete with countless merits.

The third is that its functions are great because it is the producer of all good causes and effects.⁶

If you have read any other Mahayana Sutras like *The Lotus Sutra*, you’ll realise that they are full of superlatives. For example we often sing *The immeasurable life of the Tathagata* at memorials, which is a chapter of *The Lotus Sutra*. ‘Immeasurable’ can also be translated as ‘eternal’. And what’s being pointed out is not just that the life of the

Buddha continues, but that it cannot be measured or conceived of. Scriptures and commentaries push at the limits of what can be imagined. I believe the purpose of all of these is to undermine our normal way of dividing things up and point to what is unlimited. What we take refuge in is not just the historical Buddha and his teachings as recorded, but reality that cannot be measured. As the *Awakening* puts it: “the dharma nature is extensive and vast and it pervades all sentient beings. This is because is it uniform and non-dual, cannot be conceived in terms of distinctions between this and that, and is ultimately quiescent”. ⁷

Uchiyama Roshi wrote a commentary on Great Master Dōgen’s chapter of the *Shōbōgenzō* called *Maka Hannya Haramitsu*. This chapter of *Shōbōgenzō* is Dōgen’s version of the *Scripture of Great Wisdom*. And it starts with a title which means ‘Great Wisdom Sutra’. ‘Maka’ is the Japanese version of Maha which can mean great or superior, but in this context Kōshō Uchiyama calls it “Buddha dharma beyond comparison”. He goes on to say:

The Refuge as the Dharma is ‘the reality of life’ for each of us: “The Dharma is the mind of living beings” [quoted from the *Awakening of Faith*]. This use of the word mind isn’t like a separate brain, but it can be understood as the mind of all living beings, or one-mind...mind is life that includes all beings.⁸

To summarize we can say that the Refuge is reality itself seen as ‘Suchness’ – which cannot be defined by

words, because any attempt to do so would limit it. But the Refuge is not just a blank emptiness – it is ‘great’, ‘Maha’ in having the qualities of producing good causes and effects; it is also ‘Maha’ or great in the sense of being incomparable and inexhaustible.

How does our actual practice of zazen fit with this sense of the Refuge? In zazen we do not aim at a particular state of mind, or try to purify our minds by rejecting some thoughts and encouraging others. We ground ourselves and sit within whatever arises, not seeing it as good or bad. At times we do have a valid sense that things are going ‘deeper’, but we are encouraged to just keep sitting; we don’t cling to the idea that may arise: “this is it, I’ve found it!” The point is often made by teachers that the aim is not to achieve something, but that the open heart-mind is itself the Buddha mind. When we do zazen we are ‘sitting-buddha’, not a separate being aiming at an image of what we think buddha is.

I find it helpful to consider that one description of our practice is translated as ‘serene reflection’ or ‘silent illumination.’ Rev. Master Kōten wrote a very helpful article on this, available on the OBC website: [2](#)

This term was formulated by the 11th Century Chinese Master Wanshi Shogaku. ‘Serene reflection’ is a translation of two Chinese characters, mo (J: moku) and chao (J: sho). The first character, mo, has an element in it that means black or darkness, making the whole character signify “dark, secret, silent,

serene, profound” and also “to close the lips, to become silent”. The second character, chao, has an element meaning “the brightness of the sun”. The whole character translates as “to reflect light, to shine on, to illumine or enlighten”, as well as “to reflect upon, to look upon, to have insight into”. The whole term thus becomes “serene reflection”, “silent illumination” or “luminescent darkness”.

It’s quite common for people to get disheartened when nothing obvious happens in meditation, especially during intensive retreats. But often the problem is more with a person’s expectations. They imagine some definite ‘thing’ will appear and make everything easier. But the point is to give up such expectations and keep sitting. For me this sometimes feels like ‘trusting the silence’. It can become very quiet in meditation, and the temptation can be to fill up the silence. But when I keep sitting, I have a subtle sense that the silence is not just an absence, but an opening up into something vaster. The silence itself becomes limitless. I believe that this is what is being pointed at when we talk of ‘silent illumination’ – the silence and the illumination are not two different things. This fits with the description of the Refuge as a dharma-nature that cannot be defined, but is still very much ‘present’.

The Refuge cannot be a thing fitting a definition, for that would restrict it, but seen in this context this is not a limitation at all. It is still ‘Maha’ –‘great’: able to support and maintain us in the most difficult times.

What is the relationship between Delusion and Awakening, and how can we account for Ignorance?

Stillness and activity are not separate

In talking about any kind of religious teaching, it is easy to come up with metaphors that end up in some kind of duality. We can say that we aim for stillness within the turbulence of life, for example. That has a level of truth to it, but it becomes awkward if we separate the difficult emotional times from the quieter times and say one is better than the other. We can end up avoiding one and grasping onto the other. The remarkable thing about the *Awakening* is that from the beginning it includes apparent opposites, such as stillness and change, within one unified whole.

Within suchness or dharma-nature there is both stillness and activity:

The first is the gateway of the mind as suchness. The second is the gateway of the mind as arising and ceasing. Each of these two gateways contains all dharmas. Why? Because these two gateways are not separate from one another.^{[10](#)}

This is the kernel of the *Awakening*. What appears to be in opposition: stillness and movement, wisdom and ignorance, were never opposed to each other. Many of the

metaphors used later (such as the Ocean apparently disturbed by the wind of ignorance) are just different ways of saying the same thing.

The mind as suchness is precisely the dharmagate reality, which is the overarching characteristic of the unified dharma realm. That is to say, the nature of the mind neither arises nor ceases.¹¹

Following on from this it is said that “It is solely due to false thoughts that there are distinctions between every dharma.”

The arising-and-ceasing mind exists because it is based on the tathāgatagarbha. That is to say, non-arising and non-ceasing combine with arising and ceasing and they are neither the same nor different. This is called the ‘*alaya* consciousness’.¹³ As the collector and producer of all dharma, this consciousness has two senses. What are they?

The first is awakening

The second is non awakening.¹²

The bottom line is that ‘suchness’ is the basis of all, including the mind seen as suchness and the mind seen as arising and passing, but the *alaya* consciousness is associated with the mind of changeableness. It is important to remember the aim is not to say that one ‘mind’ is better than another, but always that they are two aspects of the same thing. We are moving towards an explanation of why we seem to exist in confusion much of the time whilst

simultaneously being within ‘suchness’ – also known as Buddha nature.

Awakening means that the intrinsic reality of the mind [as suchness] is free from conceiving. To be free from the characteristics of conceiving is to be identical to the realm of space: it is to be all-pervasive.¹⁴

Awakening and non-awakening are not separate

Awakening and non-awakening are both the same and different, and there are a series of analogies to try and explain this:

The characteristic of sameness can be compared to various kinds of pottery vessels, which all share the intrinsic characteristic of being [composed of] atoms. In the same way, various kinds of illusion of karmic action, whether untainted or ignorant, all share the intrinsic characteristic of being [composed of] suchness.

On the basis of this idea of suchness, a sutra therefore says that all sentient beings have always constantly abided in and entered nirvana.¹⁵

All action is of the nature of suchness in that all pots are made of clay, but there are differences because of the ways in which people grasp hold of different illusions and create different kinds of suffering.

This last sentence may be familiar. This is the basis of

the Sōtō Zen teaching of ‘original enlightenment’ (Jap. *Hongaku Shiho*). The nature of our minds is ‘awakened’: it is like space, in that space (as conceived at the time) makes room for everything – there are inherently no obstructions. But if this is true, why do we often make serious mistakes?

This is precisely the basis of the Kōan that Dōgen struggled with and delineated in his *Rules for Meditation*, which begins “Why are training and enlightenment differentiated since the truth is universal?” If we are of the nature of enlightenment, do we need to train at all? Dōgen was very aware that such a version of original enlightenment, popular in the Tendai School which he trained in as a teenager, had its problems. It could lead to a form of ‘naturalism’ in which it is assumed that because a person is inherently enlightened, everything they do is just fine. Considering the violence of the times and the disputes between Buddhist sects that occasionally broke out into violence too, it was clear in early 13th century Japan that there was plenty of unenlightened action leading to real suffering.

The author of the *Awakening* clearly did advocate serious practice. The six paramitas must be practised as well as the meditation of ‘stopping and seeing’ (*Samadhi* and *Vipassana*). But of course, one of the purposes of the *Awakening* is to explain why we don’t always act from the awakened mind; that there are differences. So the author goes on to explain that there is ‘inherent awakening’ and ‘final awakening’. Many Mahayana scriptures use the

analogy of eyesight to explain this. We are generally all born with the capacity to see, but if our eyesight was harmed in some way (by an accident for example) we would not be able to see clearly for a while. So even though there are differences in people's clarity of vision, all have an inherent capacity to 'see'.

How ignorance and delusion are still of the nature of purity: the analogy of the great ocean

The author of the *Awakening* has so far said that the mind of suchness and the mind of arising and ceasing are inseparable. So what can be labelled 'ignorance' must also be an aspect of the mind of suchness. The author then uses a series of analogies to get this across:

...Since the characteristic of ignorance is not separate from the nature of awakening, the mind and consciousnesses are both indestructible and destructible.

This is like the great ocean, where water moves in waves due to the wind. The characteristics of the water and the wind [as waves] are not separate from one another. Since it is not in the nature of water to move [by itself], its characteristic of movement will cease if the wind ceases, without its wetness ever being destroyed. And it is because, in the same way, the intrinsically pristine mind of sentient beings is moved by the wind of ignorance. Both the mind and

ignorance lack characteristics of shape, and they are not separate from one another. Since it is not in the nature of the mind to move [by itself], its continuous flow will cease if ignorance ceases, without the nature of cognition ever being destroyed.¹⁶

I find this an exquisite way to look at the relationship between ‘delusion’ and ‘awakening’. It is easy to begin Buddhist practice with a sense that “there are things I need to get rid of in order to reach the good stuff”. This is one of the ways our minds have been conditioned. But if we persevere with practice we find this model doesn’t work. We can find a temporary peace through learning concentration, but the ‘bad’ stuff – the awkward and bizarre thoughts, the fears and desires– they just keep arising. We then really get to grips with what it means to “neither try to think, nor try not to think”.

In sitting, there cannot be even the most subtle pushing away of what we ‘don’t like’. It is then that this kind of analogy begins to make sense. The awkward things we don’t want are still of the nature of water, of purity. Once we start to realise this the sense of agitation will cease. In a way we can take it a step further and say that there is no need to try and stop the waves appearing in the ocean as they are just an aspect of the nature of water which is suchness.

In part two of this appreciation of the Awakening of Faith, I will look at how the author explains the arising of ignorance and then move on to the explanation of how the

bodhisattva practises by following the six Paramitas, especially the practice of meditation.

Notes

- [1.](#) *The Awakening of Faith*. Trans. Yoshito S. Hakeda, (Numata Center for Buddhist Translation & Research, 2006), p. 43.
- [2.](#) Great Master Dōgen, Shushōgi, in *Zen is Eternal Life*, (Shasta Abbey, 4th ed. 1999), p. 94.
- [3.](#) *Treatise on Awakening Mahayana Faith*, (attributed to Asvaghosa), ed. and trans. John Jorgensen, Dan Lusthaus, John Makeham and Mark Strange, (OUP 2019), kindle version p. 61.
- [4.](#) Trans. Yoshito S. Hakeda.
- [5.](#) Harvey, Peter. *An Introduction to Buddhism, Second Edition, Teachings, History and Practice*, (Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 91.
- [6.](#) Trans. J Jorgensen et al, p. 66.
- [7.](#) Trans. Yoshito S. Hakeda
- [8.](#) *Deepest Practice, Deepest Wisdom: Three Fascicles from Shōbōgenzō with Commentary*, by Kōshō Uchiyama (Author), Tom Wright (Author, Translator), Shohaku Okumura (Wisdom Publications, 2018), p. 10.
- [9. https://obcon.org/dharma/essays-on-practice/serene-reflection/](https://obcon.org/dharma/essays-on-practice/serene-reflection/)
- [10.](#) Trans. J Jorgensen et al, p. 68.
- [11.](#) Trans. Yoshito S. Hakeda
- [12.](#) Trans. Yoshito S. Hakeda p. 71.
- [13.](#) The alaya is often translated as ‘storehouse consciousness’ and is like a repository of past memories. It was used as a concept a lot by the Yogacara School of Mahayana Buddhism. But most academics say the author of the *Awakening of Faith* wrote it before separate schools existed. Along with the alaya, this analysis adds an aspect of mind called ‘manas’ which would translate in modern psychology as a sense of ego. When we take the view of manas as real, we reinforce the strong sense of a permanent self. It seems there are things ‘out there’ in the world that we either want to have or are averse to. This can lead to a kind of ‘feedback loop’. The more we grasp onto objects, the more it feels like we have a solid self, and the more we grasp. The solution is meditation and awareness.

- [14.](#) Trans. J Jorgensen et al, p. 72.
- [15.](#) Trans. Yoshito S. Hakeda. p. 82.
- [16.](#) Trans. Yoshito S. Hakeda p. 76.

No Hard Facts

Rev. Caitlin Clark

—Great Ocean Dharma Refuge, Pembrokeshire, Wales—UK—

This article is based on a Dharma talk given at a meditation morning at Great Ocean in July 2019.

I would like to say a few words about the *Diamond Sutra*¹ this morning. It is a teaching that I come back to over and over again, and almost on a daily basis I will either pick it up and read a little bit, or recite part of it for myself. It is said about the *Diamond Sutra* that to read or recite it is deeply helpful, and I find this to be true. There is something about it that can help clear or calm the mind. It is quite a short sutra, and even to read or recite it all the way through only takes about three-quarters of an hour.

One might describe it, in essence, as a slightly expanded version of *The Scripture of Great Wisdom*, with its own particular flavour. Both Sutras show that there is really no ‘thing’ that we can take hold of, and that “allayer of all pain Great Wisdom is”.² Part of the slightly different flavour of the *Diamond Sutra* that I find particularly helpful is that it points to the ‘allaying of all pain’ in an explicit way – to the

merits and benefits of “upholding this Sutra”. There is something profoundly comforting about the *Diamond Sutra*, I find, as well as a warmth and humanity to it that I deeply appreciate.

The Sutra opens with a scene from the Buddha’s daily life, as he puts on his Kesa, takes his begging bowl and goes on his alms round. He then returns to where he and all the monks (and many other beings³) are staying, has his meal, and tidies up afterwards. Seeing the Buddha going about his daily life, doing his own training, is what will inspire Subhuti to ask for the teaching that forms the heart of this Sutra. Certainly, along with a typical dose of suffering and dissatisfaction, what drew me to Buddhism in the end was seeing other people doing their training. I’d had an interest in it before, but at some point I got to know a number of Buddhists, and that’s what inspired me to start practising. I don’t think they had talked much about Buddhism, but I liked what I saw.

Over and over the text extolls the merits of “upholding this Sutra and expounding it to others”. In the final chapter the Buddha describes very beautifully how this Sutra should be expounded to others – by “not grasping after appearances; abiding in That Which Is, remaining unmoved”. One might say, by doing our own training, with faith in the Eternal. This is how we can really benefit beings.

In Chapter Two, Subhuti respectfully asks his question;

“When good men and good women”... that’s

us...“commit themselves to unsurpassed perfect enlightenment, on what should they rely, and how should they pacify their minds?”

I find this such a wonderful concise summary of what we long to know and do. On our behalf, Subhuti asks; what is our refuge, what is our foundation, and how can we find, return to and live from that ‘place’? And secondly; how can we not be run around by our minds, a slave to our thoughts?

“When good men and good women commit themselves to unsurpassed perfect enlightenment...” One might say; ‘When good men and good women really mean it’, which we all do. We all have our ups and downs and seeming blips, but this is no cause to doubt our sincerity of heart and purpose. We are training. This isn’t just a passing thought or whim. We are committing ourselves to unsurpassed perfect enlightenment. The Cosmic Buddha has already grabbed us by the Buddha Curl, as my Master used to say⁴. We are already on the Way and there is no going back. It takes our willingness and effort, of course, and this *is* the direction we are moving in.

Chapter Three is titled “The Heart of the Mahayana” – the Heart of the Great Way. So there is a big flag going up here, saying, ‘listen carefully, this chapter is really important’. The Buddha’s reply to Subhuti begins;

“All Bodhisattva-Mahasattvas” – all great Bodhisattvas – “should pacify their minds in the following way”...

Another way of phrasing that might be; ‘A Bodhisattva-Mahasattva is someone who pacifies their mind in the following way’. The practice the Buddha is about to describe is something that we all can do at any moment. In any case, for our purposes I’ll say ‘we’ now instead of ‘they’:

“Whilst vowing to save all sentient beings, we should remember that in truth there are no sentient beings to be saved. And whilst vowing to save all of the incalculable, illimitable, infinite numbers of beings, we should remember that in reality there are no sentient beings to be saved. Whilst vowing to lead all sentient beings to Nirvana, excepting none, whether they be egg-born, womb-born, moisture-born or miraculously-born, whether they be with form or without form” ... and the Buddha goes on to list and include all conceivable kinds of beings ... “we should realise that in reality there are no sentient beings to be saved. And why is this Subhuti? It is because no Bodhisattva who is a true Bodhisattva, cherishes the idea of a self, a person, a being or a soul.”

There are a couple of themes here that stand out as central to our practice, to our Buddhist life. To pacify our minds, to not get run around by our thoughts, the Buddha advises us to “vow to save all sentient beings” and at the same time to “not cherish the idea of a self, a person, a being or a soul”.

Our general human default, however, is that we *do* cherish the idea of a self, a person, a being or a soul. We think “It’s like this! They’re like this, I’m like this, she’s like this, he’s like this; *it’s like this.*” And the *Diamond Sutra* is saying, ‘Wait a minute! Are you sure?’ Our practice is to ‘not cherish the idea’; this is what we are doing when we sit. So often we cherish these ideas of things, we make ‘realities’ of things and we really believe them; ‘It’s like this, and it’s not like this’. When we let go of doing that, and we *persist*, eventually we see through these ‘realities’, we see a little more clearly.

One of the most helpful things about the *Diamond Sutra* for me, is that it keeps *demonstrating* what we need to do. And reading or reciting it can get us in the groove, in the unset mindset of what we need to do (or rather, not do). It *persistently* says, ‘you can’t cherish the idea of anything’. It keeps spelling it out, because we keep thinking, “but what about this? Surely that’s true?” And the Buddha keeps on saying, ‘well, actually, yes and no; but you can’t cherish the idea of anything’. Why not? Because our ideas of ‘things’ are fundamentally unreliable, and the next chapter talks about that.

Even as I have many twists and turns with this, I am beginning to realise a little the incredibly helpful truth of this teaching in everyday life. I see how indeed I keep believing ‘it’s like this’. Yet I am not powerless. I can really work on letting go of ‘cherishing the idea’, even though I then come back to cherishing the idea again. But I can keep saying,

“well, no thanks. I’ll not cherish that idea”, even *as* the ‘idea’ may be urgently and utterly convincing. And if I keep letting go of it *persistently*, as the *Diamond Sutra* demonstrates, over and over – in the end it’s like a little light bulb goes on or a bubble bursts and I see; “Oh! Oh, it’s not quite like this!” or sometimes, “It’s not like this at all!”⁵ Even the ‘not quite like this’ makes all the difference.

The little extra colouring or twist of fear and self that gets into a view is like the glue of it, the solidifying of it. And it is this that causes all the trouble. It is often not like we are totally off-beam. It isn’t that we need to knock ourselves down as completely stupid and deluded. It’s just that there is this bit of extra glue – a solidifying of something – that makes a hard thing that we can’t get by, and it makes it into this focus; into this *hard fact*. We make a hard fact, and then generally obsess about it. Or bang our heads on it, or try and hide from it, or whatever it is we do. And it is those *hard facts* that the *Diamond Sutra* repeatedly leads us to let go of and see through; “like bubbles, like shadows, like dreams”⁶ A little later on in the Sutra, the Buddha tells us that even the Buddha’s teaching, enlightenment; the Buddhadharma – it is *all* to be let go of. It is all ‘ungraspable and cannot be named’. We want a hard fact, and there *are* no hard facts, other than the ones we make. But boy we believe in those hard facts and they really trip us up.

Now to look at the second main theme of this chapter. When we get caught up in; “it’s like this” or “I’m like this” or “he’s like this” or “she’s like this”; how should we pacify

our minds? “*Whilst vowing to save all sentient beings*, we should remember that in reality there are no sentient beings to be saved.” I have a sense with the Bodhisattva vows that often we think they are a bit beyond us, or at least beyond where we are now. Actually I don’t think this is true. On one level one might say they are stretching us. They are saying; *don’t hold anything back*. “As we vow to save all sentient beings...” We might think, “How can we possibly do that?!” Well, by doing our best to keep our heart open or to give or to not hold back – with *everybody*. It doesn’t mean be a muggins or a fool. It means, as best we can, to *diligently choose* to not be stingy or proud or close our hearts. This is what our vow is pointing to. And what it is *really* pointing to is that *this is actually our wish*. Our wish is – as it says; “to lead [or help] all sentient beings to Nirvana, excepting none.” This really is our deepest wish. When we remember or realise – wake back up to – that wish, nothing else matters. There’s not a hard fact, there is not a solid problem anywhere.⁷

The great Christian saint Teresa of Avila, when talking to her community of nuns, said something like “when there’s love for each other, it doesn’t really matter what we all do”. We might get on each other’s nerves sometimes, but we can see it in the context of sympathy and love and kindness. We all know this; when we are in that ‘place’, something difficult or unwelcome might happen, and ‘oh, well’ – we can just let it go. On another day, when we already have our nose up against our hard facts, something can really ‘ping’ us and get us going. So the Buddha is helping us to remember

our Heart Wish here, and to remind us that there aren't these hard facts that we invest in and believe in.

In difficult times, reading the *Diamond Sutra* can be like prising a wee wedge under our little heavy boulder of hard facts, which we may then see to be neither substantial nor heavy at all. It can be like sticking a toe in the dark door of hard facts – just that little bit of light and air can make all the difference to lighten things up and help us see through them. “Oh!...actually!... maybe I've not quite been seeing clearly here.” There's *relief*. It takes the *persistence* of the *Diamond Sutra*; *keeping on* letting go of those things that we really believe in. Sometimes our views have become so 'normal' to us that we no longer see what we are believing and investing in. It helps to remember that there is no refuge in thoughts. That can be our bottom line. And especially there is no refuge in thoughts that we are letting ourselves be slave to or driven by; those 'hard facts' that are the building blocks of suffering.

The fourth chapter is called “The Wondrous Practice of Non-Attachment”. The Buddha has given teaching on ‘How we can pacify our minds’ and now he will talk about ‘On what we can rely’ – what is our refuge, what is our foundation? He begins;

“Moreover Subhuti, within this phenomenal world, a Bodhisattva should practise generosity without relying on any idea, dwelling nowhere.”

Again, I find this such a wonderful summary of our wish and practice. Then the Buddha spells it out for us;

“That is to say, you should not cherish the idea of ‘things seen’ when practising generosity. Nor should you cherish the idea of things heard, touched, tasted, smelled or thought. In this way should a Bodhisattva practise generosity; without relying on appearances. Wherefore? When a Bodhisattva practises generosity without relying on appearances, the merit of such a one will be incalculable.”

So – “within this phenomenal world, a Bodhisattva should practise generosity without relying on any idea, dwelling nowhere.” It is all just unreliable; it’s a phenomenal world. We know how different we are from one day to the next, how different the mountain looks from one day to the next, how different the weather and politics and sport are from one day to the next. There is some kind of continuity, but to say “it’s like this or I’m like this” – in a sense it is just not true, and so it’s not helpful. We can’t base our lives on that. To “not cherish the idea of things seen” – so often we hold onto something we have seen or heard, and rapidly it becomes a hard fact.

Many years ago I watched a Wimbledon final between Serena and Venus Williams. The next day I read the rather small write-up about it in The Times. I was struck by how little resemblance the article bore to the match I had watched on TV. This was clear, even though I wasn’t there at the

match or playing in it. Even so, how *could* one possibly sum up the complexity and richness of that little swatch of life in four hundred words, or in a whole newspaper, or capture it in TV coverage? Yet this is what we do all the time. *We sum things up*. And we usually have some kind of ‘Tabloid Truth’ headline, in big letters – *IT’S LIKE THIS, AND IT’S NOT LIKE THIS!* It isn’t that there is nothing at all to it, but as my Master used to say to me, “Some things have one grain of truth in them, and nine grains of delusion”. Maybe it was the other way around, but when we leave the Buddha out of it, it is always one way or the other; there is always something missing. Often, with tabloid headlines it is more like one grain of truth and ninety-nine grains of delusion. Yet we so easily come up with those ‘tabloid truths’ too – about ourselves, and about others, and about life – not seeing the compassionate workings of the Eternal in all conditions but just seeing the difficulty, or what we feel we are lacking, or whatever our particular version is.

The Buddha shows us it doesn’t have to be this way. The chapter continues with him describing the vastness of space, then concludes;

“Equally incalculable is the merit of the Bodhisattva who practises generosity without relying on appearances. Subhuti, this is the fundamental teaching on which Bodhisattvas should rely.”

We all know this. It is in living the life of Buddha – in the practice of living generously and letting go of

appearances – that we come to know Buddha, our True Nature; that we find our True Refuge and peace of heart.

Chapter five is titled “Seeing through appearances, seeing the True Reality”. This is what our meditation practice is about and helps us to do; to let go of or to see through appearances, to not stay on the surface of things. In a way this is where The *Diamond Sutra* begins to get very interesting, because it starts cutting away all of our shaky ideas about everything. The chapter begins;

“Subhuti, what do you say, can you recognise the Tathagata by His excellent physical appearance?”

We have heard that we can’t cherish ideas of beings or rely on appearances – our ideas of what we perceive. Now here is the Buddha himself, looking magnificent. Can you recognise the Tathagata, can you *know* the essence of Buddha by his physical appearance? Can we grasp onto or rely on that?

Subhuti replies;

“No, World-Honoured One ... The Tathagata has explained that a physical appearance is not actually a physical appearance.”

The Buddha continues; “All appearances are illusory. If you can see that all appearances are not what they appear, you can see the Tathagata.”

This is where the brain starts to go, “whooooah!” It is pointing us ‘beyond this human mind’ as it says in *The Scripture of Great Wisdom*. Sometimes I’m walking down the road and I think, “OK, a physical appearance is not actually a physical appearance.” I’m seeing this, I think it’s like this; there can just be a question mark. Just not to fix things. “An appearance is not actually an appearance” – one might rephrase this as, ‘things are not what they appear’, or ‘there is more going on than meets the eye’.

When we look with the mind of Buddha – with the mind that doesn’t cherish ideas of things, that doesn’t rely on appearances – we see or sense the compassionate workings of Buddha in *everything* – in the true essence of the ‘hard fact’ rather than the hard fact we are banging our head on. We see that if we bow, things are not what they seemed; and what they are is Buddha.

Notes

1. Passages from the *Diamond Sutra* cited in this article are mainly based on the following three translations and texts;

The Diamond Sutra and the Sutra of Hui Neng, trans. A.F. Price and Wong Mou-Lam, (Boulder, CO: Shambhala Publications, 1969).

Describing the Indescribable, A Commentary on the Diamond Sutra. Hsing Yun, trans. Tom Graham, (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2001).

A Manual of Zen Buddhism, by D.T. Suzuki (contains a partial translation of the *Diamond Sutra*).

For those who may be interested in further reading, the great Chinese Master Hui Neng gives a wonderful commentary on the Sutra – see *The Sutra of Hui-Neng Grand Master of Zen*, with Hui-Neng’s Commentary on the *Diamond Sutra*, trans. Thomas Cleary, (Boulder, CO: Shambhala Publications, 1998). There are numerous published

translations of the *Diamond Sutra* into English, and also several commentaries available.

2. From *The Scripture of Great Wisdom*.
3. In the final chapter we hear that “all the bhikshus, bhikshunis, lay brothers and sisters, and the whole realms of devas, humans and asuras were filled with joy by his teaching, and taking it faithfully to heart they went their ways and practised accordingly.”
4. A paraphrase of a favourite saying of Reverend Master Jiyu. The Buddha Curl is the swirl of hair at the crown of the head.
5. As all meditators know, this is generally not a one-time process. We may easily lose sight of our insights and need to keep on turning within and practising the precepts in order to more readily live and assimilate the truths we see.
6. From the final chapter of the *Diamond Sutra*.
7. I in no way wish to minimise how difficult or testing inner or outer conditions can be; it is just that nothing is, at heart, the insurmountable impasse or obstacle we may imagine it to be.

Choosing to Train

Rev. Master Rokuzan Kroenke

—Columbia Zen Buddhist Priory, Columbia, SC–USA—

*From Columbia Zen Buddhist Priory Newsletter, December 2005,
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In our training, we have the choice to see our suffering as an opportunity to train or something to be run away from, to be solved, to be relieved. On some level, we all believe that happiness is our due. We believe that if we get everything right, we will be happy. This is a delusion. Happiness is just a feeling that, like all feelings, is impermanent. No matter how we arrange things, no matter how much merit we accumulate, no matter how wealthy, or educated, or beautiful, or popular, etc. we become, happiness is uncertain and, even when experienced, will eventually fade. As long as we are attached to happiness, we will naturally be averse to unhappiness, and life guarantees at least occasional unhappiness to us all.

The Buddha taught that life consists of birth, and then inevitably, sickness, old age (if you live that long), and

death. This cannot be avoided. And yet we often expect our suffering to go away, especially if we train. Somehow everything will eventually feel good. This is also a delusion. Training is not changing how we feel. Training is letting go of attachment to how we feel. And that leads eventually to true peace.

Because we believe that we should be happy, when we feel unhappy, we tend to believe that something is wrong. And if we are training and unhappiness arises, we feel cheated. This is not what we expected, and so, at these times, there may be an inclination to turn away from our training. However natural this turning away might feel, all this would succeed in doing would be to delay our eventually dealing with the source of our suffering.

Be aware that when we commit ourselves to training we beckon to our difficulties; in a sense, we invite them to arise. One important aspect of training is dealing with our habits, i.e. those ways of thinking, speaking, and acting to which we cling. Since attachment or clinging is the source of our dissatisfaction or suffering, only by dealing with these habits, by letting them go, by no longer allowing them to control us, can we come to know peace. And we cannot deal with them unless we are aware of them and don't turn away from them. Once we express our willingness to train, they come to be shown to us. We are slowly (and sometimes more quickly) given the opportunity to face them. By truly being willing to see what is there, to accept and embrace it, to allow ourselves to be aware of our difficulties: our judgmentalism,

our anger, our fear, our painful memories, our confusion, etc., we begin to deal with, to convert these difficulties. So, when we say that we wish to train, that we are willing, ‘Something’ takes us up on it, and we get opportunities to see what needs help, change, conversion.

It is just that what we see can sometimes feel overwhelming. That is when our commitment to daily training really proves invaluable. It forms a foundation on which we build faith and trust in our practice of the Buddha-Dharma. Our willingness can keep us going even when we feel overwhelmed by what we see. And as my Master often said, no matter how overwhelmed we may feel, we truly never get more than we can handle (even though at times it can feel like it).

In our practice, we continuously have the choice of whether to train, or to turn our backs on our training. We may want to just push our problems away, and the thought may arise: “I will train when this is gone, dealt with, etc.” Or we can work on understanding that this problem is our training, and that we need to make an effort to accept and embrace it. Viewed with this attitude of mind, spiritual, mental, or physical discomfort becomes a blessing, because it makes us want to train, it reminds us to train, to actually look our suffering in the eye, so to speak, and deal with it; not turn away from it as has previously been our habit.

So we should always do our best to be willing to choose to train; to accept and embrace our suffering; to see it as an

opportunity to train. And when this willingness seems beyond our power, try to be willing to be willing. Training is hard and the reward is great. Teachers of Buddhism sometimes appear to emphasize the negative in training, rather than the positive, e.g. the aspect of the practice which involves choosing to face and deal with our suffering or that which is unpleasant, rather than the peace and harmony that is the eventual result of that continued choice. Some may find this apparent emphasis discouraging, or even repellent. The reason teachers do this is very simple: we will not realize the result unless we face the problem, and very few of us are willing to face the problem without much guidance and encouragement. We simply don't want to look at our suffering, our discomfort, our unhappiness, the results of our clinging. Therefore, anything which tries to point these out is unwelcome and may be defined as negativism. Once so categorized, we may feel that we can ignore it. To do so however, is to turn our backs on being able to do something about ourselves, and thus eventually find the Truth: That which satisfies our deepest longing.

The Difference between Peace and Happiness: A Buddhist's Perspective

Karen Richards

—Telford, Shropshire—UK—

From a talk given by Karen Richards to a conference of The National Women's Register. The conference's theme was 'Faith in the Future' and contributions were invited from a number of different faiths. The original talk can be found on the Telford Buddhist Priory website here: [The difference between Peace and Happiness](#)

I used to be a member of The National Women's Register, back in the 1970s and 80s, when my children were small. It was called The National Housewife's Register then – those were the days! We met in one another's houses and gave talks on subjects that interested us and I was asked to give one on Buddhism. So this is my second stab at it, you might say. I was just setting out on the Buddhist path at that time and so I gave a talk simply called 'Buddhism'. Not having much experience of the religion myself, I approached it in a 'thus have I heard' sort of way, outlining such teachings as The Four Noble Truths and The Noble Eightfold

Path. Today, I intend to approach these teachings slightly differently, as you will see.

Rev. Master Jiyu Kennett once told her disciples “I can’t promise you happiness but I can promise you peace”.

I was intrigued when I first heard this. I wondered what the difference was; after all, a bit of peace and quiet, with my feet up and a cup of tea, certainly makes me happy. In fact, in the midst of a busy day, it’s probably what I crave the most. So what did Rev. Master mean when she made that statement? Does Buddhism make you unhappy and if you are happy, doesn’t that mean that you are also at peace? Well, not necessarily.

In my life I have experienced much happiness. I have a good marriage. My children grew into nice people and I now have five wonderful grandchildren. I’ve had a good career, as a teacher, I helped with the setting up of Telford Buddhist Priory, where people come to share their Buddhist practice. Life has been good.

At the same time, there have been difficulties. My husband, David, suffered severe and life changing health issues that in 2007 brought him near to death and left him an invalid, unable to function without a lot of care, mainly mine. My in-laws, whom I dearly loved, both died. My daughter had cancer and needed radical surgery. My father developed a serious heart condition and also needed care (Editor’s note: and has subsequently died) and my dear mum suffers from

Alzheimer's, also needing care (Editors note: she died, during the Coronavirus lockdown this year). So even if we are steady, hard-working and seek to live a spiritual life, happiness isn't something that can be guaranteed. In part, this is because happiness means different things to different people.

So, the juxtaposition of those two abstract nouns, 'peace' and 'happiness' raises the possibility that, in a spiritual context at least, they aren't necessarily the same thing. It also acknowledges the fact that the pursuit of one, the other or both is what human beings often spend their lives doing, and, although through the media, we may think this is a modern phenomenon, in reality it was ever thus.

So, what was it that the Buddha realised? What was it that he taught? First of all, he realised that suffering exists. This is called the First Noble Truth. We could say that we do not need to go through all that the Buddha did to realise that suffering exists – it's everywhere. We know that people suffer.

However, it's not quite so obvious what the cause of our suffering is. It is easy to get trapped into thinking that some people suffer and others do not, and to blame our suffering only on external causes. But, if you think about it, we hurt most when we lose something, or when we can't get our own way or when the world isn't quite how we want it to be. So the Second Noble Truth is that suffering is caused by attachment or clinging to ideas and ideals.

The Third Noble Truth is that there is an end to suffering. It doesn't have to be this way. The way out of suffering is not necessarily an easy one but the Buddha left us a blueprint, a pathway for us to follow. This blueprint is the Fourth Noble Truth and it is the Noble Eightfold Path; it is a path that if followed, will liberate us from suffering. The elements of that path are:

1. Right understanding
2. Right thought
3. Right speech
4. Right action
5. Right livelihood
6. Right effort
7. Right mindfulness
8. Right concentration

We often see these elements depicted as a wheel. This is an important image because a wheel is constructed as a series of spokes, with a circular rim. For a wheel to work at its optimum, each spoke has to be as strong as the other. If one spoke is missing, the wheel becomes unstable, so that it is important that each spoke is present.

So, bearing what the Buddha taught in mind, I come back to my initial question, "What is the difference between peace and happiness?" Well, as the First Noble Truth indicates, it is important to first understand that suffering exists and that something can be done about it.

So, all of those years ago, when I was a young mother and a member of National Housewives Register, I had some pretty fixed view about how the world should be. I thought that I was liberal, tolerant and accepting of people's views, their religion, gender, culture, politics and sexual orientation. I was a member of the Peace Movement. I marched through Hyde Park, with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, and through the mud at Greenham Common, with my husband, friends and my children. And I sat, with my lighted candle, with my back to the perimeter fence, singing "We Shall Overcome"— I had good intentions. I understood the craziness of this world and I wondered why everyone else wasn't marching and protesting to effect change, like me.

Now, to be clear, it's not wrong to be part of a political party or social movement or to campaign for any of the things that we believe in. On the contrary, if approached with the right attitude of mind, being willing to put oneself on the line can be a fearless act of giving. Without the willingness to act, most social change would not happen. But, speaking purely of my own attitude of mind, I can see that my idealism often alienated those people around me, who maybe disagreed with my stance. Although well meaning, I wanted the world to be different and I was unaccepting of the way that it actually was or is.

From a Buddhist point of view, this is problematic, because if our intentions arise from a harsh judgement, from anger that arises because people behave in a way that does

not align with our own world view, from a feeling of discontent, then we will forever be disappointed, because we are different people, looking at things differently; that is the way of things. We won't be happy and we certainly won't find peace. So I, like the Buddha and like most of us, experienced a feeling of unsatisfactoriness. This unsatisfactoriness or unhappiness, doesn't just come from looking at the wider world, it might also come from looking closer to home, like feeling fed up with our own situation, our job, our body, our health, our house, the bedroom wallpaper – anything at all in fact.

The good news is, that if that feeling is disconcerting enough, we tend to do something about it. There isn't just one method of going about this, as we see today, but for me Buddhism appeared in my life. My husband had been interested in meditation for years. And, through a friend and fellow member of the Peace Movement, we were introduced to Sōtō Zen Buddhism. (Serene Reflection Meditation).

I had only been meditating and attending a Buddhist group for a short period of time, when a small but significant spiritual experience or awakening of sorts occurred. I remember one day, preparing the evening meal in my little kitchen. I was washing cabbage. It was a savoy, one of the most beautiful vegetables on the planet! I don't know if you have ever let the water run down the leaf of a savoy. It gives the impression of a river, flowing over a luscious green landscape and the green changes from a dark, almost black at the tips, through to emerald and then a shade of lime, with

a pale apple colour, right at the centre. That day, I was enjoying my cabbage washing and I became aware of the energy within the leaf. It was subtle yet very powerful. It felt like it was vibrating, singing almost and I was stopped in my tracks. It was a solitary, momentary experience of deep wonder and serenity, which opened up my heart and mind to the interconnected nature of life and pushed me on to learn more.

There was both happiness and unhappiness to come of course. Such is life. This wasn't a once and for all conversion from one state of mind to another. However, a casual interest in Buddhist meditation turned into a lifetime commitment that day in my kitchen and the memory of it spurred me on when times got tough.

The pursuit of happiness, by trying to fit the world into an idea or ideal in my head is futile, it turns out, because happiness shifts and changes. For instance in the 1970s and 80s, I wanted a husband and a family, alongside world peace, a liberal loving society and, if at all possible, a new three piece suite and a slimmer body. I put quite a bit of energy into pursuing all of those things but my first steps along the Buddhist path made me question whether those things were the ultimate of life. It was the chink of an opening into something more sustaining; another dimension of the self, which left all of the other 'stuff' standing.

In subsequent years, I tried my human best to put into practice the other aspects of the eight spoked wheel we call

the Noble Eightfold Path. What I have talked about is how Right Understanding was turned around for me and how this led to a movement of the wheel.

So, have I answered my question? Well, happiness is unstable. It changes, just like we change. The things that made me happy at twenty don't necessarily make me happy now. I would still like the world to be different. I would like people to always be kind; I'd like my husband to be well, my mother not to have had Alzheimer's and to have a nice long holiday. But the practice of Buddhism has shown me where to take refuge, where to point myself, what lies beyond my wants and discontents.

Currently, I have quite a grotty carpet in my living room that I would love to change but can't afford to. Looking at it makes me feel discontented. If I only see the colour that no longer matches the curtains, or the mark where one of my grandchildren spilt something and I can't get the stain out, I feel despondent and unhappy. Oh, I'm definitely saving up to change it – that carpet has had its day – but, in the meantime, I am allowing my discontent just to be there. I let it needle and nudge me because I have learned that wherever there is discontent, there is an opportunity to be still and learn something about myself. Little grains of non-acceptance of the way things are become apparent, and it is good to look at them closely with the same honesty and clarity that the Buddha himself did. My stained carpet then is actually a teacher and I am very grateful to it.

Happiness is a transient thing. My discontent, like the Buddha's, if utilised, provides a gateway to peace. They work in tandem. So, I guess that over the years, through Buddhist practice, I have found a certain peace in my life, and that makes me happy.

Kind Leadership

Neil Rothwell

—Leith, Edinburgh—Scotland—

The above title is the name of an e-book written particularly for people in a leadership position at work but much of it can apply to work and non-work situations more generally. I do not talk about Buddhism or meditation in the book, but the content is underpinned by what I have learned from the practice of zazen, applied to my work in the NHS. This extract is taken from the final chapter called “Leadership and Kindness”. The book is available on Amazon: [Kind Leadership e-book](#).

This extract also appeared in the Portobello Buddhist Priory Newsletter September – December 2020.

I have not mentioned the word ‘kindness’ very much throughout this book, even though it is in the title. We all know what kindness is. It is perhaps easier to recognise in others than in ourselves. When we act kindly we are often not aware of it; there is simply a sense of doing what’s needed at the time. Kindness is at the foundation of our nature. Evidence of this is that if there is an incident in the street e.g. an old person falls over, people around will instinctively turn towards the person to see if they can help.

The people don't think "how can I be kind here?" it is just something hard-wired into us. Similarly, people often remark how much news in the media is negative. If all the news reported was good, we would unconsciously think "this is how things are meant to be – in line with kindness" and not take too much notice. This would not make a profit for the news media. When we see things are wrong, that same part of us thinks "let me find more about this" with a view to seeing if there is anything we can do to help.

This natural foundation of kindness is one of the reasons I have not mentioned it much in the rest of the book. It can be helpful to cultivate kindness within oneself, for example asking the question, "What is the kindest thing to do here?" On the whole, though, being kind tends to be most effective when it isn't too self-conscious. We can try too hard to be kind, although even that is probably better than being unkind. If we have the intention to be kind, it will tend to flow more easily.

An attempt to be kind can highlight things within ourselves that inhibit this response. Anger and fear are two of main ones. Being a leader can involve many situations which are stressful. The stress can be caused by doubts about ourselves and the people we work with. Emotions can be divided into three components: thoughts, actions and body (or TAB for short, from the initials of the three words). The initial reaction is often a bodily one. For example if we become either afraid or angry, our heartbeat increases. We may become sweaty or physically tense. This is the body

gearing up for action (fight or flight). Thoughts may include something like “I’m going to make a mess of this” for fear, or “How dare they!” for anger. Often there is a stream of thoughts like this that keep the feeling going. The more we think about it, the longer the feeling lasts. Thinking can even produce an emotion without any external provocation. For example, worry is a stream of thoughts that on its own can produce anxiety.

The third component is how we act on the feeling. Being unaware of the thoughts and bodily sensations can lead to an overreaction, for example, speaking angrily and saying things we later regret, or, giving in to someone when we are afraid, when it would be really best to stand our ground. To break free of this, we need to stand back and look inwards at our own reaction rather than just focusing on the situation in front of us. Take a breath. By recognising that we are afraid, stressed or angry, we bring these emotions into conscious awareness, which means they are no longer controlling us. This creates a space where we can actively choose how best to act. Given this choice, people tend to act more kindly than they otherwise would have done. This means we can act effectively even when we have these feelings. Emotions can be useful and it is not necessary to try to get rid of them, but to see them as part of a bigger picture rather than letting them control our actions.

Kindness can seem like a soft option but it does not stand against clear decision-making. I have seen a fair bit of poor decision-making in the public sector and elsewhere and

this is often the result of one of two things. The most common is fear of change. People can be afraid of either offending someone or simply going into the unknown. Hopefully the collaborative approach described in this book will help minimise the number of people who feel alienated by the changes. It is normal to feel challenged by going into the unknown, but with support and involvement people are more likely to see it as an exciting opportunity.

The second common cause for poor decision-making is excess personal ambition on the part of the leader. Sometimes a new manager will come into a new post and try to change things quickly in order to prove themselves. The symptoms of this type of change is staff feeling alienated and a sense of ‘change for the sake of change’. Of course, it is rare that everyone will be happy with change but neither should most people feel unhappy.

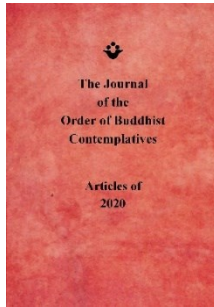
In contrast, decisions fuelled by kindness tend to be productive. The main thing is to look at the totality of the situation. Kindness needs to apply to everyone, not just the person in front of us or the one who is most vociferous. Often there seems to be a conflict between peoples’ needs in a situation but experience has shown me that a good decision ultimately tends to be in the best interests of everyone.

Kindness also takes courage. Trying to be kind in a position of leadership can feel like swimming against the stream. We may feel there is an expectation from others (or even ourselves) to be more authoritarian or ‘dynamic’. The

fact that you are reading this book shows that you feel there is something more to leadership than this, and in following this sense you will be moving towards a more fulfilling and effective job for both yourself and those around you.

Journal News

Journal Annual of Articles 2020



We are pleased to announce that alongside production of this Journal, the *Annual of Articles 2020* is also being prepared. This paperback book will contain all the articles from this Journal plus all the others from the earlier three issues this year, 28 articles in total.

This will be available in the New Year from Lulu print on demand publishers, <https://www.lulu.com/>. Search for *2020 Annual Journal of the OBC*, price £10. An email will be sent to the newsletter subscribers when it is available:

<https://journal.obcon.org/e-newsletter-sign-up/>

We hope you enjoy the opportunity to revisit the articles of this year in print form. These include articles dedicated to our practice of Serene Reflection Meditation, a range articles in response to the Covid pandemic and many other topics, written by monks and lay trainees

News of the Order

USA and Canada

Shasta Abbey

—*Shasta Abbey, CA–USA*—

On 25th July we celebrated a memorial for our Dharma sister, Rev. Master Myfanwy McCorry, who recently died unexpectedly. She was the priest at a small temple in southern England, Dragon Bell Buddhist Temple. As Head of the Order, Rev. Master Haryo was the celebrant.

On 1st September Tuesday we observed a 49-day memorial for Wesley Ira Purkey, who was executed 16th July at the Federal Penitentiary in Terre Haute, Indiana. He was 68 years old and had been on death row for 17 years. Rev. Master Scholastica had been corresponding with Mr. Purkey for a number of years and was celebrant for the ceremony. A priest from Sanshin Zen Center in Bloomington, Indiana, had visited Ira monthly and was with him in the execution chamber.

On 14th September, Rev. Master Haryo recognized Rev. Margaret Clyde as a new master of the Order. Rev. Margaret was ordained in 1981 by Rev. Master Jiyu. She trained for several years at the Portland Buddhist Priory and currently is the Prior at the monastery. We congratulate Rev. Master Margaret and wish her well in her future practice.



Rev. Masters Margaret and Meikō with masks and friend Mitra

We continue to be closed due to the Covid pandemic, but are following our usual calendar of festival ceremonies, such as Festival for Feeding the Hungry Ghosts (Segaki)—see photos.



Segaki banners for the Buddhas of the Dead



Segaki altar food for hungry ghosts

We are finding new and varied ways of offering the Dharma online, both through recorded videos, but also Zoom talks and discussions. The discussions sometimes bring in more than 65 people, about twice the number who would usually be able to attend events and retreats in person. We look forward to the day when we can reopen and share the Dharma in person with our lay friends.

—*Rev. Master Oswin*

Lions Gate Buddhist Priory

—*Lytton, British Columbia—Canada—*

We had an active summer and autumn despite being officially closed. We have begun to welcome a small number of people from the local area for meditation and Vespers in the evenings, and Sunday meditation and services at Mandala Hall where it is possible to safely observe the recommended health protocols.

We have also started to offer bi-weekly Dharma Talks and discussions via Zoom on Saturday afternoons. Anywhere from 25 to 40 people usually attend, and we have gotten positive feedback regarding these meetings. If you are not on our mailing list and would like to be notified of future meetings, please drop us a line.

On Sunday, September 6, we were visited by a small delegation from Lingyen Mountain Buddhist Temple from Richmond, BC in the Metro Vancouver area. The temple had asked us, along with a number of Buddhist organisations, to participate in an Ulambana (Family Memorial) Festival, which they were holding ‘virtually’ this year due to the pandemic. We sent them a tape of the monastic and lay community reciting Scriptures, which they played as our contribution. The two people who came offered incense and bows at the Mandala Hall altar and Kwan Yin statue, and presented us with many gifts and donations. After the presentation we held a memorial ceremony in honour of all the dead, during which names were read out of all those to whom people wished to offer merit.

We continue to make improvements to Mandala Hall. We bought a beautiful used Tibetan carpet depicting stylised lotus blossoms, approximately 6’ by 3’ which we are using as a bowing seat in front of the altar. We placed the four Buddha Mothers on shelves on the pillars around the altar, each with her own mandala. We installed a propane heater, which will allow us to use the hall through the winter.

In late summer and early autumn, we enjoyed some beautiful sunny weather, and our vegetable garden produced potatoes, carrots, peas, tomatoes, parsley and other herbs. We have also planted more fruit trees (cherries and apricots) and strawberry plants.

Another project that we have now completed was the installation of new electrical equipment for our off-grid power. We bought three new solar panels, new deep-cycle batteries, charge controllers, and an inverter. The new system works very

well, giving us greater electrical capacity and over a kilowatt of potential charge from the panels.

We had our well-water retested this summer, as it has been ten years since the last test. It indicated that our filtered water was very safe, and that there was a high coliform count in our raw tap water, so we sanitised the holding tank and pipes, after which the test results showed it was fine.

We also chopped and split most of the trees that were cut down earlier in the year because they were a safety hazard. There was a large tree along the road from Prajnatarā Hall with a smaller tree companion. We called them the “Master and Disciple Trees”. Apparently, the Master Tree was diseased, and it blew over in a strong wind this summer. It was a huge tree, one of the biggest on our property. Though we are sad to see it fall, it will provide us with a great deal of firewood.

On October 1, we hosted an Autumn Moon Festival gathering on the outside deck of Bodhidharma Hall, with two local lay ministers as guests. It was a warm, lovely, relaxed evening. People brought “round” treats, and we all watched the autumn full moon rise over the eastern ridge.

We are pleased to inform everyone that Rev. Valeria, who is a US citizen, received her Permanent Resident Status this summer, after waiting for several years for it to be approved.

—*Rev. Master Aurelian*

Redding Zen Buddhist Priory

—*Redding, CA–USA*—

The life of the Redding Zen Priory continued to deepen during the past Autumn months in the face of Redding weather (including the nearby Zogg fire nine miles from the city), and Shasta County’s high number of COVID cases. As a Sangha we have come together on-line to meditate, study and discuss the Dharma, celebrate the ceremonies of our tradition and mark life’s

sacred moments. Working with members of the board of the First United Methodist Church we created defensible space around the Priory by limbing trees and clearing thick brambles. And we're continuing to polish and sparkle up the Priory gardens. I'm deeply grateful that we can continue to come together on-line, since the Priory Reopening Committee strongly recommends that we not open the building until there is a better handle on the virus.

Zoom has indeed provided a solid platform for growth. New Sangha members have increased our numbers. We have welcomed Rev. Master Kinrei, Rev. Valeria and Rev. Jisen to our Thursday Dharma Discussions. Nearly 50 people attended our Evening of Quiet Meditation on Election Day. In a joint Eugene Priory - Redding Zen Priory Zoom event Rev. Oriana and I were co-celebrants for the Blessing of the Nation before Election Day. And we held our third Priory Annual Meeting in November, and celebrated the life of the Priory through this time.

Even in these challenging times we can trust that the "...the Light of Buddha is increasing in brilliance and the Wheel of the Dharma is always turning..."



The Priory Meditation Hall

—Rev. Helen

Still Flowing Water Hermitage

—Meadow Vista, CA—US—

Like so many other temples of the Order, Still Flowing Water Hermitage and the Bear River Meditation Group moved their activities to Zoom when we began sheltering in place in March. We continue our regular Monday gatherings there, and are meeting twice each week for meditation and Morning Service. We will soon begin a book study group, led by Rev. Amanda at Shasta Abbey, on *Describing the Indescribable*, a translation and commentary on the *Diamond Sutra*.

Over the last few months we have had the good fortune of visits, on Zoom, from Bear River's chaplains at Shasta Abbey, Rev. Masters Daishin, Meikō and Astor. In each case they offered Dharma talks and discussions, and these were well-received by those present. What a joy it was to see them at a time when we can't meet in person. We have also had visits from other monks in the Order who have kindly offered Dharma to us all.

On two Saturday mornings in October, the 3rd and 31st, Still Flowing Water Hermitage and Faith Lutheran Church of Meadow Vista hosted an interfaith Gathering in the Park for Peace, Hope, and Unity (with masks and physical distancing, of course). Our wish was to offer participants a way to make use of their spiritual practice as a help in the troubling times we are currently experiencing. Both mornings were quite successful in this regard.

Following the interfaith event we have held what has become our monthly Sangha in the Park. Members of the Bear River Meditation Group gather together in small, physically distanced groups to discuss the Dharma in a beautiful, almost unused park. Seeing each other in person in this way goes a long way to cheer us up as the pandemic rages on.

Also in October, Rev. Vivian attended, via Zoom, the week-long Western Buddhist Monastic Gathering, an annual meeting of Western Buddhist monastics across traditions. As usual there was a rich interchange on a range of topics from rituals on death and dying in our respective traditions to how to heal from abuse in the Sangha. I think we all come away relishing this contact with a wider monastic Sangha.

In March we held a retreat on "Poetry as a Gateway to Buddhist Practice" at the usual venue, Applegate Community Center. The next day sheltering in place was ordered in California. We rejoiced that we were able to manage to have that retreat in person.

Rev. Vivian has been invited to offer Dharma talks on Zoom three times in the last months to the Mountain Stream Vipassana Group based in Auburn, CA. It is a refreshing experience to come to know another local group of sincere Dharma practitioners. As with so many of you, she has also offered talks on Zoom at other temples of the Order.

As we are learning, Zoom can be a wonderful gift. Because of it, Rev. Vivian was able to participate in two Genzo-e retreats offered by Rev. Shohaku Okumura, Roshi. These retreats focus on a chapter of the *Shōbōgenzō*, as translated by Okumura Roshi. It is quite a privilege to have access to his scholarship and deep training in meditation.

Rev. Vivian is deep grateful to all who have supported Still Flowing Water Hermitage with food, financial offerings, gifts in kind, offerings of time and help, and, most of all, Dharma practice.



Rev Vivian outside the Hermitage

—Rev. Vivian Gruenenfelder

Wallowa Buddhist Temple

—Joseph, Oregon – USA –

As this news is being written, in mid-November, snows have come again after a warm summer and pleasant fall, blessedly with no wildfires in the wilderness areas near the temple. We were glad to have wrapped up several outdoor fall projects just in time for the change in weather.



Golden Buddha in snow blanket, Wallowa Buddhist Temple

Our summer vegetable garden benefited from many contributions from local temple friends and neighbors, who offered tips on how to succeed in our short growing season, greenhouse starts, organic horse manure, and other helpful garden items. The garden is now blanketed with snow, the last of its harvested produce and herbs having been consumed, shared, or put up for the winter, with gratitude.

The yearly firewood pile has been split and neatly stacked, ready for what is predicted to be a cold wet winter. We are very grateful for the friends of the temple who have come individually over the last few months to help outdoors with the physical work of hauling, splitting, and stacking.

It has been a major adjustment not to be welcoming our usual individual retreat guests on a regular basis, an intrinsic part of what the Wallowa Buddhist Temple offers. Despite the temple closing to in-person visitors, we notice with gratitude and joy ever-increasing connections with many who were not in such regular touch before the current situation. We are glad to be able to offer the Dharma in various new ways so as to assist those who are doing spiritual work within the many shifting circumstances of our times.

Although we are unable to use live video here due to limited internet connectivity at the temple's location on a remote mountainside, the monks continue to offer individual contact and counseling by phone and email -- and even by U.S. Mail, for some folks in outlying areas of our frontier county who are without internet.

Each week we send out an email to the temple's listeners, near and widespread, with a posted "Sunday Morning Retreat From Home" schedule, temple news and an attached audio file of a new Dharma talk prepared and pre-recorded each week by Rev. Clairissa. One of the local congregation who is an audio engineer kindly offers weekly sound editing from his home studio, giving these audio talks a very clear quality for listeners.

On Sunday mornings, the monks follow the "Retreat From Home" schedule here at the temple, offering merit by name in the Kanzeon shrine for each person on our email congregation list, and also remembering all those on our merit board. This has the effect for us of bringing everyone near, in our hearts.

Because of our technical limitations with online offerings, we are delighted that other Order temples do offer such things, so that those who find them helpful have access from home to online retreats, video Dharma talks and ceremonies, interactive blogs, publication downloads, etc. It seems in some ways the pandemic is drawing the wider Sangha closer together thanks to these electronic connections.

Both monks are well, though saddened by recent losses for friends and family this past year due to the pandemic and to the fierce wildfires in our state and region. We are especially thankful for the thoughtful support we are receiving in many forms, including fresh garden vegetables, groceries, home-cooked meals, restaurant take-out meals, home canned foods, gift certificates to local businesses, online orders, hand-sewn cloth masks (brown!), shopping, outside chores on the grounds, and monetary donations. The blessing of such generosity from the temple congregation, friends, and supporters is keeping the temple running and making the continued offering of the Dharma possible.

Individual Retreats: One of the Wallowa Buddhist Temple's main purposes has always been to offer the wider Sangha a place for individual retreats. If you are considering doing a short individual retreat in your home, we are open to discussing with you the possibilities for our offering you support and refuge remotely without the use of live video. In the meantime, we welcome your phone calls, emails, and letters from wherever you are.

—*Rev. Master Meidō and Rev. Clairissa*

News of the Order

UK and Europe

Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey

—Northumberland, England—UK—

Following the announcement of a month's lockdown due to Coronavirus, the monastery closed on 5th November. We have been continuing to offer teaching via Zoom and recorded talks. We were glad to be able to welcome a small number of individual guests for meditation and sanzen in August and September when the weather was warm enough and the restrictions at the time allowed: Groups up to 6 came for tea and questions with a monk and Evening Service in our new marquee.

Monastic news: Rev. Master Willard left Throssel for Devon on Oct. 8th to become chief priest at Dragon Bell Temple. Since the death of Rev. Master Myfanwy in July he has been taking care of the temple's affairs and the local congregation have now asked if he will be their resident prior long-term. Rev. Master Haryo and Throssel's abbot Rev. Master Leandra have given their blessing to this move. The community thanks Rev. Willard for his contribution to the life of the Abbey over many years and wishes him well as he trains with the sangha at Dragon Bell.

Gillian Hawdon, who joined the community at Throssel in May, and who has been away since June recuperating from illness, has decided not to return to the postulancy but to continue practice as a lay trainee. We wish her well and hope to see her again at the monastery in future.

On 11th September we welcomed Sandra Westhoff, who is a postulant at Dharmatoevlucht, for a visit to train with us. We are glad to have her with us into the New Year.



Sandra

Rev. Master Leandra was invited by Jakusho Kwong Roshi of Sonoma Mountain Zen Center in California to give a Zoom talk in November. She had visited while in the US for our last monastic gathering there.

Festivals: Rev. Wilfrid was celebrant for our Dōgen Festival this year and gave a Dharma talk afterwards in the Ceremony Hall. Rev. Sanshin led the Founder's weekend retreat on Saturday and the Festival and talk on Sunday. His dedication was based on an extract from *The Wild, White Goose*:

A stone thrown into a pond;
Ripples spreading out in all directions.
The immovable being, anchored in stillness.
We bow in gratitude for this precious offering

Segaki: We missed not to be able to invite people to join us for Segaki this year but were able to offer a week retreat through using new technologies: live-streaming morning and evening service, Dharma talks as well as the Segaki festival and Toro. Rev. Master Leandra and Rev. Master Berwyn led the retreat with one of them teaching every day.



The Segaki ceremony



Our Segaki altar this year

Gratitude: We are deeply grateful for the donations offered for the Segaki retreat and for other retreats we have run online since we closed, and for all the generous support we have been given over these months to support the community while we are closed.

Norman Trehitt: Norman Trehitt, a long-time member of the Lancaster meditation group, and a lay minister of our Order died on Tuesday 26th May. A limited number of friends and fellow Buddhists were present for the cremation ceremony in June, with many more able to attend virtually as the event was 'live-streamed' over the internet. On Friday 13 November we held a memorial ceremony for Norman in the Ceremony Hall at Throssel with Rev. Master Mugō as celebrant. This was then followed by a procession to the cemetery where his cremated remains were interred.



Placing earth in the grave

Marquee in storage: With the onset of cold and damp weather, we took down our marquee, cleaned and dried it and put it in storage. It took a number of us to lower it, as can be seen below.



—Rev Alina

Dharmazuflucht Schwarzwald

—Gutach (Black Forest) – Germany—

Autumn and winter in times of Corona: After regularly having guests on retreat in our temple over the summer, we had to close again during the month of November as the German government introduced quite strict Corona-measures for this month, due to the cases of people getting infected with the Corona-virus starting to rise again steeply after the summer. Our usual meditation Sundays are continuing as usual though.

We very much hope that in December, we will be able to welcome again our friends in the lay congregation. Over the winter we shall probably limit the number of guests staying with us to one person.

While we were more generally open over the summer, we didn't feel the need to start having online meetings with our congregation. Given the new situation, we have now initiated such online events for congregation members.

Segaki: At the end of October, we celebrated our yearly Segaki ceremony. Three of our Lay Ministers had signed up to come to the week-long retreat, but because of the new Corona-regulations, they had to cancel at the last minute, so we ended up having the ceremony just the two of us with Joachim, one of our faithful members, who took the photo below.

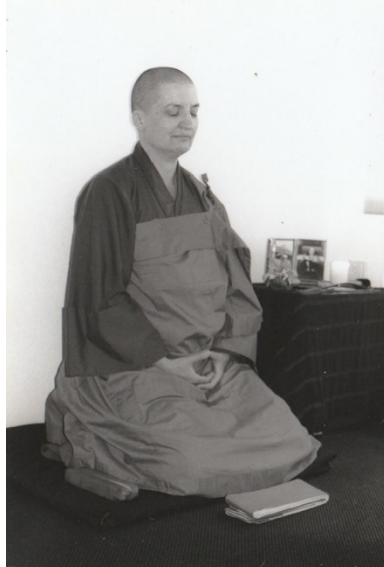


20th anniversary: As we had already announced in the last issue of the journal, this year we are celebrating the 20th anniversary of the association that supports our temple and constitutes its legal framework. Here a brief history of how our German temple came into existence:

In the second half of the 1990s, I started to come to Germany several times a year to lead retreats here, for example at Ayya Khema's "Buddha-Haus" in Bavaria. With time, a small congregation formed, and some of the committed lay trainees took Jukai at Throssel. Below is a picture taken after Jukai in 1998, with Rev. Master Haryo and Rev. Master Daishin, as well as the German lay trainees Andreas, Amelie and Peter.



At that time, Rev. Mildred and I worked on translating our liturgy from English into German. Especially Rev. Mildred, whose native language was German, was very instrumental in this. Towards the end of that decade, she came to Munich and started a small temple there. Unfortunately, she had to return to Throssel not long afterwards, when the first symptoms of the brain tumour, from which she died in 2004, started to show. We will always be grateful for all that Rev. Mildred did for the development of the German Sangha. The photo below shows her in the Munich temple around 1999.



In the year 2000, lay minister Barbara Lang from Munich established what was later to become our charitable organization. In 2004 I then came to Germany. Rev. Master Saïdo very kindly drove me down from Throssel at the time and helped me to settle into our first, rented place. Shortly after that, our association was granted the charitable status, and we changed it to its current name.

In 2006, we were able to buy a house in the northern Black Forest for our first temple location. The year after, Rev. Clementia came to live at the temple, became a postulant and was ordained in 2008. After living there for seven years, for a variety of reasons we felt that it was good to move to another, slightly bigger place.

In 2013, we moved to our current location in the central Black Forest. Since then, in addition to our original lay congregation, we had a variety of new lay members join our association, some of whom have been coming regularly on retreat. The photo below shows Sylvia after her lay ordination.



We've also regularly had monks come on retreat over the years. Below is a picture taken on a typical Black Forest winter day two years ago, standing with Rev. Master Mokugen above the temple.



We very much hope that in 2021 we will be able to welcome again both monks and members of our lay congregation in our temple.

—Rev. Master Fuden

The Place of Peace Dharma House

—*Abersytwyth, Wales*—

Here at The Place of Peace we continue at a steady pace. Dōgen said that the uncertainty of life is the Truth revealing itself before our eyes, a teaching that gives us much to reflect upon at this time. The conditions of our world may change, the ways in which we can train together may change, yet at heart, at root, nothing has changed, as the gentle stability of the life of faith remains a constant.

Twenty four years ago this November, Reverend Master Jiyu died. She was the Founder of our Order and Rev. Master Myōhō's Master. Gratitude has been offered for her life, for the clarity of her teaching, and for her example of unwavering faith.

Nightly offerings continue to be made for those who are going through such a difficult time at the moment. Ceremonies have also been held for the hundreds of thousands of mink and chickens who have been culled in Europe in recent weeks, and for all who were involved in this act.

There are regular monthly and fortnightly Zoom meetings, and any who wish to join them are welcome to do so. Our Sangha is spread near and far, and this has enabled trainees from Canada to Newcastle to take part in these Dharma events.

There are monthly Dharma Talks, available in both CD and mp3 format. If anyone would like to receive them, please contact Rev. Master Myōhō.

Thank you to all who continue to support the temple; your offerings are especially appreciated at this time.

—*Rev. Master Myōhō*

Reading Buddhist Priory

—Reading, England–UK—

Here, in the south east of England, we are part way through our second national lockdown, yet despite the circumstances, the Priory continues to flourish. A regular, almost daily programme of formal practice has continued online, and our ‘temple without walls’ has seen a growth in regular attendees from a wide geographical area. The meditation periods and services are streamed live from the Meditation hall, and preceptors present from their own homes, so we are able to retain the flavour of an in-person spiritual gathering.

Festivals and retreats have also transferred well to online practice. In October, Reverend Gareth held a three-day retreat, which included the Kanzeon festival. The retreat programme followed as closely as possible that of our outside retreats, with meditation periods, dharma talks and discussions, silent lunches, and a farewell social lunch to round off. It was very well attended, and captured the feeling and spirit of an outside retreat, something we have missed out on this year because of lockdown restrictions on travel and gatherings. In November, a day retreat was held, and included a Memorial service for Reverend Master Jiyu. The day was well attended and appreciated, and virtual day retreats will now be a regular feature on our monthly calendar.

Our study group meets once a month online, and our focus for the next few weeks of study is Reverend Daizui MacPhillamy’s *Buddhism from Within*.

Due to changes in the rules around social gatherings, Reverend Gareth was fortunate to be able to visit in person and conduct a house blessing for a long-standing sangha member Jafer Mammoo and partner and baby, shortly after they had moved into their new family home now called *Gentle Love*. Reverend Gareth reported back that the ceremony, followed by a convivial lunch, was a happy time.

This summer, we have been fortunate to have prolonged fine weather, so visits to and help with the garden have been able to continue. The front garden has been transformed; a realisation of a long-standing project to improve parking at the Priory. A local firm widened the driveway, laid new paving, and built a wall around two sides of the garden. Reverend Gareth kept us posted with short video clips and photos on our private social media sangha page, so we could respond to, and have a sense of connection with what was happening.



New front drive

—Gina Bovan

TEMPLES OF THE ORDER—USA / CANADA

Shasta Abbey

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

Eugene Buddhist Priory

Rev. Master Oriana LaChance
85415 Teague Loop
Eugene, OR 97405-9536
Ph: (541) 344-7377
info@eugenebuddhistpriory.org
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

Pine Mountain Buddhist Temple

Rev. Master Phoebe van Woerden
941 Lockwood Valley Road
Maricopa, CA 93252
Ph: (805) 633 1143
pmbt@pinemtnbuddhisttemple.org
www.pinemtnbuddhisttemple.org

Portland Buddhist Priory

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

Redding Zen Buddhist Priory

Rev. Helen Cummings
1190 South Street,
Redding CA 96001
www.reddingzen.org/
Ph: (530) 962-0317
reddingzen@gmail.com

Still Flowing Water Hermitage

Rev. Vivian Gruenfelder
PO Box 1374, Meadow Vista,
CA 95722-1374
stillflowingwaterhermitage@gmail.com

Wallowa Buddhist Temple

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

CANADA

Lions Gate Buddhist Priory

Rev. Master Kōten Benson
P. O. Box 701
Lytton, B.C. V0K 1Z0
Ph: 250-999-3911
lionsgatebuddhistpriory@gmail.com
www.lionsgatebuddhistpriory.ca

Affiliated Meditation Groups

CA: Auburn, Chico, Morro Bay,
Ventura

ID: Sandpoint

MT: Whitefish

CANADA:

Edmonton, Alberta, Lytton BC
Vancouver BC

TEMPLES OF THE ORDER—EUROPE

UK

Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey
Rev. Master Leandra Robertshaw,
Abbot
Carrshield, HEXHAM
Northumberland NE47 8AL
Ph: 01434 345 204
gd@throssel.org.uk
www.throssel.org.uk

Dragon Bell Temple
Rev. Master Willard Lee
Cross Farm
Drewsteignton
DEVON EX6 6PA
Phone: 07342 200 782

Great Ocean Dharma Refuge
Rev. Master Mokugen Kublicki
Penwern
Felindre Farchog
CRYMYCH, Pembrokeshire
SA41 3XF
Ph: 01239 891 360

Norwich Zen Buddhist Priory
Rev. Master Leoma Hague
NORWICH,
Ph: 01603 457933
info@norwichzen.org.uk
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.uk

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

Reading Buddhist Priory
Rev. Gareth Milliken
176 Cressingham Road
READING RG2 7LW
Ph: 0118 986 0750
rpriory@yahoo.co.uk
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. Master Alicia Rowe
CROMFORD
Derbyshire
Ph: 01629 821813.
alicia@fieldofmerit.org
www.sittingbuddhahermitage.fieldofmerit.org

Telford Buddhist Priory
49 The Rock
TELFORD TF3 5BH
Ph/Fax: 01952 615 574
www.tbpriory.org.uk

Turning Wheel Buddhist Temple
Rev. Master Aiden Hall
7 Chadderton Close
West Knighton
LEICESTER
LE2 6GZ
Ph. 0116 210 3870
www.turningwheel.org.uk

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

GERMANY

Dharmazuflucht Schwarzwald

Rev. Master Fuden Nessi
Wonnenbach 4
77793 GUTACH
Germany
Ph. +49 (0)7833 - 96 56 408
www.dharmazuflucht.info

LATVIA

Sōtō Zen Riga

Rev. Bridin Rūsins
Sōtō Zen Riga
Tomsona Street 30-8
Riga LV1013
Latvia
Ph: 1-215-666-5634 (direct line as if in US)
Ph: 011-371-259-563-40. (Latvia)
www.sotozenriga.lv
elgarusins@gmail.com

THE NETHERLANDS

De Dharmatoevlucht (Dharma Refuge)

Rev. Master Baldwin Schreurs
De Dharmatoevlucht
Jean Monnetpark 73, 7336 BB
Apeldoorn, The Netherlands
Ph: (0031) (0)6 372 68 541
www.dharmatoevlucht.nl

Wolk-en-Water Hermitage

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

Affiliated Meditation Groups:

The Netherlands:

Groningen, Utrecht.

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

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