



The Journal  
of the  
Order of Buddhist  
Contemplatives

*Serving Members and Friends  
of the Order Worldwide*

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Volume 37 Number 4  
2564 B.E. (Winter 2022)  
ISSN 0891-1177

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*Wesak Altar - Telford Buddhist Priory*

## **Winter 2022 Issue**

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## The Three Anchors

Rev. Master Daishin Yalon

– Shasta Abbey, Mt. Shasta, CA - USA –

*This is a transcript of a Dharma talk given at Shasta Abbey in May 2022.*

Good Morning. Nice to see all of you. I think this is going to be a short talk because Jukai starts today, and Rev. Master Meian is giving a talk this evening. The three things I am going to talk about are confidence, humility and fearlessness – and because this is a short talk, I'm just going to do a little bit about each one of these – you could have a full talk on each one of them.

Confidence, humility and fearlessness are things that I've been thinking about. They seem to be connected. I was also inspired by the gift of a beautiful statue we were given recently – it's back there near the Achalanatha shrine, and if you haven't seen it yet, I would suggest you do so.

Confidence, humility and fearlessness are three very important qualities of training and practice to work on and develop, something we all can do. They serve as real anchors in our lives.

I looked up confidence in the dictionary, and some of the meanings were good, (some of them were the kind of confidence we don't really want to work on and develop!) The meanings that I liked for confidence are "firm belief, trust, reliance" – I really liked the word 'reliance'. The dictionary also calls confidence "belief in one's own abilities". I think that is important – we all have abilities and qualities, we're good people.

So, confidence in Buddhism is both about self confidence and confidence in something bigger – you need both kinds of confidence. Some Buddhists prefer to substitute the word 'confidence' for 'belief' or 'faith' – it works better for them. Rather than saying "I believe or have faith in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha", they prefer to see it as confidence in the Three Treasures. For me, the main point is that I have faith and confidence in something bigger than me, which I am a part of, not separate from. I think a certain amount of self confidence is good and helpful. When it starts creating a bigger and bigger 'me', then that kind of confidence gets in the way of our training. Again, there's something bigger than me, which I am a part of, and I trust in, believe in, and have confidence in.

Rev. Master Jiyu often said, referring to herself "I am not the Cosmic Buddha, and there is nothing in me that is not of the Cosmic Buddha." The Triple Gem will not fail

us; it's a true refuge. Proper or right confidence is not cocky, proud or self-absorbed. When I was an athlete, there were a few really cocky people. It's one thing to have a bit of swagger and self-confidence, but when you're cocky, I don't know, I always found that a little hard to admire.

I ran across this advice from the Dalai Lama: he says that love brings self-confidence, and anger brings fear. Self-confidence comes from generosity, thinking and caring about others, that's what brings confidence. The Dalai Lama calls self-confidence "heart warmedness"; he also says that kindness and compassion give rise to self-confidence, which in turn empowers us to be honest, truthful and transparent. So it's not like we have to be confident first, before we can practice kindness, compassion and generosity. We just practice those right away, and they give us amazing results.

Buddhist confidence is free from arrogance and pride; it's not about a 'big self'. The best kind of confidence is a quiet confidence, a steadiness in training: not too up, not too down. Proper confidence lightens our load. You just get on with doing what needs to be done. That's true confidence, no big fuss, no drama. It's not like you have to know all the answers (good luck with that!), you just take it one step at a time. You pay attention and you do the practice, moment by moment.

So, for myself, the longer that I live and practice, I seem to know less. Sure I have some knowledge, it's not like I don't know anything – that would be false humility. The thing is, knowing wasn't what I thought it was; I was mistaken in the beginning. Real knowledge is the knowing of the heart – a little different than 'head' knowledge.

A while ago someone said to me, “you have the big picture”. I thought about it, and I concluded actually I don't feel like I have! I kind of make it up as I go. I don't know about you all, but in life a lot comes at you, it's not like you control most things. Sometimes my mind wonders how I'm going to do something, how am I going to get through this, I don't know how to do it – there's a lot going on. After some thought I make a bit of a plan – plans are good, you know. But hard, set plans, are they going to be the solution? Set plans can block flexibility and insight. Mostly I try not to worry, I put my energy into staying calm and being flexible. You know, things work out: I have full confidence that my Buddhist practice is the direction I want to go, the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha are my refuge. In the end, I'm the one who is responsible for my decisions on the road of practice, so what I do I take full responsibility for. No-one moves my feet for me, I move my own feet, I go in my own direction. We're the owners of our karma.

So, that's a little bit about confidence. Obviously a lot more could be said.

Humility – again I looked this up in the dictionary – is defined as “the absence of pride or self-assertion, self-assertion being the act of demanding recognition for oneself, or insisting upon one’s rights and claims.” A humble person is often actually self-effacing, the act of keeping oneself in the background. I kind of like that, keeping yourself in the background. There can be a tendency to keep pushing yourself out there. You can keep yourself in the background, you don’t need to play it up big. Just like with proper confidence, there is no big self there, that constantly needs feeding and watering. There is no need to put ourselves down, that’s not the way to do it, you just don’t need to make a big deal about the self. You can have real confidence in yourself, and be humble. Again, we realise that it’s all so much bigger than us.

The Dalai Lama often says, “I am just one of billions of people there are on the earth, nothing special.” He doesn’t profess to be something special, he’s just one of us. Rev. Master Jiyu, towards the end of her life would often said, “What do I know?” It wasn’t because she didn’t know anything. As you get closer to death, there is something bigger. Rev. Master Jiyu also said, “It’s enough for me to know the Cosmic Buddha.” For her that was the real knowing, to know the Cosmic Buddha. Another thing that Rev. Master Jiyu said was that Great Master Dōgen, towards the end of his life, would say that all I know is that on a face there are two eyes and a nose. I don’t know how he came up with that, but he’s obviously making the



statement: “What do I know?” We’re really lucky to have examples like Rev. Master Jiyu, the Dalai Lama and Great Master Dōgen: they’re very confident and yet humble people. They did their daily training, just ordinary people like you and me. They were not caught up in the game of gain and loss.

So that’s humility. I’ll talk a little bit now about fearlessness.



We were just given this lovely statue, to the right of the Achalanatha shrine. When you look at the statue, the Buddha’s got both hands up in a gesture called the ‘double abhaya’ mudra. Abhaya means fearlessness. On our main altar, the Buddha is holding just the right hand up, palm outward. This is the single abhaya mudra. I read up a bit about these mudras and when they arose in the Buddha’s lifetime.

The single abhaya mudra, that’s one hand up – the Buddha on the main altar – represents protection, peace, benevolence and the dispelling of fear. The story goes that the Buddha’s cousin, Devadatta, became increasingly jealous of the Buddha – this is something that had been going on since their childhood.

I think unfortunately Devadatta got dumped on and discouraged at certain points, and he carried the grievance with him. Later as the Buddha became well-known and well-respected, Devadatta became very jealous of and angry with the Buddha. Devadatta launched a plan to get rid of the Buddha and take over the Sangha. Unfortunately he went so far as to try to kill the Buddha a number of times.

One of these times he found an elephant – I think this was an elephant who had a bit of a temper – and he fed the elephant alcohol, which further enraged the elephant. Then he took the elephant to where the Buddha was, and the elephant charged at the Buddha. Elephants are big. The Buddha raised one hand, and he gave rise to thoughts of loving kindness. As the elephant came closer to the Buddha, he sensed the loving kindness radiating from the Buddha. The elephant went down on his knees and bowed to the Buddha. So the Buddha was safe, Devadatta's plan didn't work. This is where some people say the single abhaya mudra comes from. In actual fact these mudras were in Indian culture from way back, they preceded Buddhism. The abhaya mudras are mudras of friendliness, they mean you weren't armed, especially if you had both hands up!

The double abhaya mudra, which is what we see on the statue at the back of the hall, has both hands up. It's sometimes called 'the mudra of calming the ocean'. The story goes that the Buddha was wandering, and teaching,

and he came across some fire worshippers. As he usually did, the Buddha offered some Dharma to them. In return they offered him a place to sleep for the night which was near a river. So the Buddha settled down to sleep, and all of a sudden he heard the river rising, really rising fast. The river was starting to break its banks. So that's when the Buddha did the double abhaya mudra and the water slowed down and a flood was prevented, Needless to say the fire worshippers were amazed, and asked to become his disciples. This is the origin of the double abhaya mudra; it's really a mudra of intense protection.

The double abhaya mudra is called *calming the ocean*. Why they didn't call it *calming the river* I don't know. We're probably not going to experience anything like that in our lifetime. I don't think we're going to have to stop a flood, and we're probably not going to be faced with an aggressive elephant that we need to calm down. But what we all experience in our lives is fear – it's just a common human thing, it goes back to when we were in the animal state. Fear is not in itself a problem. It can be a protection, it can be a warning. What is important is what we do with the fear. Do we respond to the fear with wisdom, or do we just get more and more afraid? Do we freak out? Do we become defensive? Or angry? Or, do we take refuge in the Triple Treasure and our meditation practice? Because those are things, in the midst of fear, that allow us to just settle. The fact is that we can sit still

in all of life's circumstances, and find our way through seemingly difficult times. We all have them, and if we take proper refuge, if we really rely on our meditation, if we rely on the Triple Treasure, we will get help.

True confidence grows as we continue to practice. Again, confidence is both about self-confidence and a bigger confidence. We know in a humble way that we need not be driven by fear. It is just a condition that we are best served to sit still in, and find a wise way to practice in. Compassion and loving kindness are the direct antidotes to fear. Fearlessness is not a macho thing, it's not about getting your testosterone worked up, and conquering the world and protecting everybody; that's not quite it. Fearlessness can be gentle, and it can also be firm. Those don't contradict each other. There might a time when we have to be firm, and stand our ground. Even then we can proceed gently.

So, through our practice of confidence, humility and fearlessness, we can offer the world the gift of fearlessness. When we think about the meaning of dana, the gift of fearlessness is one of the forms of giving, and we can give this to the world, just by dealing with our own fear. This is actually a very powerful gift that changes the world.

Original Insight  
Reflections on The Buddha's Enlightenment

Rev. Master Myōhō Harris

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

Each year we celebrate the Buddha's Enlightenment. Reflecting upon it calls forth different aspects of all that training makes possible. This year, what comes to mind is the need for direct personal insight, rather than learned knowledge or copied words.

The scriptures say how important it was that the teachings of The Four Noble Truths and Dependent Origination, and all that Shakyamuni taught, arose within his own body and mind. They did not come from an external source, and that this ability to receive original insight was a factor in making him a Buddha. We too must know that the Refuge is within us, and that we can, and will, receive enlightening insight as the living Dharma unfolds within us, as it did within him. In fact the Buddha said not to believe his teaching because he said it, but to prove it true for ourselves. He urged his disciples not to just repeat his words, but to find their own.

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When Gautama left his home he had no idea what lay ahead. No one who steps out on that great pilgrimage of spiritual discovery knows what they will encounter along the way, or how much it will ask of them, or how long it will take. They only know that there is no other life for them, and that the stepping out, the taking of that first step, has a sense of both wonder and relief. It has begun. What ever does or does not come of it, they have tried, they gave it their all, and there is a peace that comes with that.

Life and time are not being wasted, because they are responding to an inner call to fulfil their life. The receiving of that call is an aspect of original insight, and opens the way to limitless possibilities for us, as it did for Shakyamuni.

We are told that the Buddha tried many ascetic practices, and went to various teachers, none of whom could satisfy his need. He walked on, and kept seeking for many years. When the call to find a truth that we feel eludes us has been heard, and we have responded, there is only one way, and that is to keep going. To never give up, no matter how hard it gets, or how elusive or challenging the quest seems. This time is never wasted. We know what we don't want, what we cannot settle for, and that it is better to spend a lifetime trying to find what we sense is, for us, 'the important thing' (Truth, reality) than to give up and settle for anything less, just because it seems easier. That too comes from original insight, and the realness of it is what sustains us during the more difficult times.

There is a world of difference between wandering aimlessly, feeling lost, confused, and unsure of what one is doing, wondering if we have failed in our quest, or if we will ever find what we are looking for, and steadfastly ‘going on’, into an unknown. Trusting that our life has a purpose, and continuing to follow that silent call, that intuitive sense that something unseen is drawing us towards it. In the depths of our being, the inner ear of the heart-mind tunes itself to this call, and we walk on in faith, sensing that our feet know where they are taking us, and that if we entrust ourselves to that call, we are doing something good with our life.

It is generally agreed that the Buddha left home at the age of 29 and was awakened beneath the Bodhi tree when he was 35. So that was six years of seeking, of trust and perseverance.

Not one second of those six years was wasted. He was not a failure for years, then suddenly became a success at the time of awakening, or receiving enlightening insight.

For most of us there will be many years when we may seem to struggle, or find it hard to place one foot in front of the other. Later, as we look back at the young trainee we were, we see faith in action. We see how the call to respond and fulfil our wish to live from a deeper awareness, and to enable the practice to change us, was in progress. There was never a time when ‘nothing was happening’, every step, every instinct

to keep going, was taking us closer to a time of significant change. Indeed it was that effort, that commitment to never give up, letting ourselves be taken to the depths of our darkness, that made the transformation of our life possible, and all that we went through prepared the ground, enabling us to be one who is capable of receiving enlightening insight.

What we seek is not outside of ourselves.

Original insight unfolds within us, yet we do not create it. It reveals itself from a universal source that is beyond any one individual existence, and, at the same time, it will be perfectly tailored for the individual in whom it manifests. This is because there is nothing within that individual form that is not of that source.

For an insight to change us, we must ‘realise the truth’ by digesting and becoming it. Each step must be taken one at a time, so that its teaching can enter into us, and we enter into it. An intellectual understanding is not enough. ‘I know’, is a step along the way to becoming the embodiment of that teaching, that insight. This is not always easy, and takes time, because we are too complex for it to be quick. There is much waiting in the wings to reveal itself, and many insights of varying kinds needing to be fully digested and understood. We will be pushed by the training to, and beyond, any mental limits or fixed ideas we have created; we will constantly be taken beyond all that we think we know, and it is a gift to oneself to not resist this process, this preparing of the ground.



When challenged by what is arising, because some of it will be painful to train through, we can be as a sword that is willing to place itself in the fire, so that it can come out stronger and truer.

You cannot make an omelette without breaking a few eggs. If we can be an egg that is willing to be broken, then that is a gift to ourselves. Making that leap of faith, trusting when we don't know what the outcome will be, breaks the bonds that held us back. The way of perceiving and responding that we had forged and lived by can fall away. We see that its time is over. The restless mind is finally quiet, there is nowhere left to go other than to turn within, asking for guidance. Now we have released the grip we had on our mind, and no longer insist on using it in a way that distresses it, it is free to serve the source, and reveal the help that comes.

All that we knew is now behind us, as we step into this vast, great purity. We intuit that this is why we came to training, and that it has a purpose beyond our imagination. We feel new, small, and as a clean sheet of paper that we have no desire to write on. We are finally free of our own self-created options, and are content to wait for the Refuge to give us direction.

Original insight does not always present itself in words. It can be an intuitive knowing, or a falling away, or an opening of our eyes so we see something in a completely different way. It can be the arising of painful memories or illuminated teaching that radiates through us, or a gradual

blossoming of understanding. It can be a subtle indication to turn in a certain direction, or to not do something. It can be a quiet inner nourishing; a completeness.

For myself, who was trained as an artist, and is a very visual person, it often comes in pictures, or like a film that my inner eye sees. As time goes on, whether we perceive what comes to us as wonderful, or hard to receive, becomes much less relevant, because we know it is all Dharma, it is all the unfolding of the Buddha's teaching, and the next step on our pilgrimage. It is the same.

If we see a sunrise, and then a pile of rotting rubbish, we do not say, "My eyes were working well this morning, because I saw something I find beautiful, but they are not working well this afternoon, because I saw something I think is ugly". The eyes see what is there, without assessing or labelling it, so does the meditation. Whether it takes us into darkness or the light, it is all a 'going on', and has a common root, which is our eternal essence. Original insight shows us that no matter what transient feelings may arise, the meditation flows, unimpeded, through it all. No feeling can ever dim the light of Buddha.

Looking at my own spiritual journey, I can recall times when I wondered if I could keep going, times when it was almost too much to bear. My mind had limits, barriers, of what it could look at, of the inner pain it could cope with. These limits had to be trained with, stretched, washed away, dissolved through choosing to trust, and holding fast

to the wish in the heart that came into this world with me. When I needed it, help came to me through original insight, which manifested as a great tenderness; a love that enveloped me.

No matter how much we think, analyse or agonise, in our quest to find what is real and true, nothing can ever match what comes forth from the incoming Buddha, the refuge. To be one who can be taught it is essential that we cease trying to take the place of the Unborn by wanting to control, or think our way through it. This is known as 'letting go'. When we just sit, in the purity of trust, and stop agitating the mind, by pulling it away from its source, the meditation can do the work within us.

When we place our life upon the altar, what flows back to us is so much more than what we offered.

Insights come, understanding reveals itself, what is needed finds us, within the openness of a clear mind that is content to not try and fill that space itself, but patiently carries on with daily life. When the time is ripe, original insight will rise up on the breath, and unfold. In this way we are blessed with teaching and insights perfectly timed and tailored for our individual spiritual journey, and it is why we can always take that next step, because the source it comes from is our formless universal essence (Buddha). It knows us to the core because we are it. It is why we don't need someone else's understanding, we don't need to hang on to what someone else found. The example, or words of others, can be a catalyst for inspiring us to train more deeply, yet we

still have to do the work of training and make them real for ourselves.

Sometimes original insight presents itself with such breadth of vision that it changes our way of perceiving and responding to both ourselves and the world we live in. No matter how great an unfolding of enlightening insight (kenshō) someone may have, without the continued grounded training, they will most likely flounder. Enlightening awakenings in training come as a gift of grace, they are not a magic wand. I have found that they provide the opportunity, and the means, by which one can train in a deeper way, by both confirming faith (inherent knowing) and trust in the meditation, and by opening an inner, broader eye (sometimes called the third eye), which sees what we could not perceive before that significant change that took place.

Later we see that these awakenings (I prefer not to call them ‘experiences’) are not isolated, or cut off from ordinary daily training, they are part of a continuum that is ever unfolding, and which sometimes reveals more of itself than at others. It is often after a significant awakening that deeper and more difficult areas of our kōan and karma arise, because we now have the means to sit with those areas of painful and deeply rooted confusion.

Trust in the practice becomes unshakable because of original insight. It is not hope or belief that keeps us going,

or what someone else said; it is a truth that fills our being, a coming alive, an opening up of broader vistas, a nourishing and assuring, and the continued ever unfolding of original insight, for which we can only be so very grateful, that sustains us.

An enlightening insight may reveal, for a short while, how we can be all the time. To be that way, all the time, requires years of dedicated training, choosing to let go of old habit patterns of the mind, reflecting within, contemplating in detail, turning to the refuge and offering ourselves, so that universal wisdom can rise up and help us to make good choices that do not continue old delusive ways. We have to want to be changed by those enlightening insights, and see daily life as our training ground, always willing to be taught by what arises, and never too proud to seek guidance. Our mind becomes as a net that catches promptings from the refuge, and we are glad to respond. The practice, which we cherish and pass on to others, will show us, step by step, how to do this. Ultimately, there is just a life that is lived in the most natural, unselfconscious way, where all our actions have one common root, which is that universal source (Buddha). There is no other way that we would rather live.

When does a spiritual journey begin and when does it end? No one knows. The call of the Great Mystery for all to find their purpose, is constantly flowing, and the time comes when someone hears it, and responds, and never

wants to cease responding. Does it end with their death? I think not. It fans out beyond time, beyond individuality, beyond anything that can be contained or neatly explained. Original insight transcends all boundaries.

It is this out-flowing, this eternal call, that we also celebrate at Buddha's Enlightenment, because whatever age or country one lives in, or will live in, we all hear (heard, will hear) the same timeless call, we all sit in the same place that Shakyamuni did; we all have the potential to blossom. It shows us that wisdom and compassion (which are not personal attributes), arise when needed, for our benefit, and for the benefit of all beings, so we can unselfconsciously become the life of Buddha, by living in a way that makes real what it is we are, were and always will be.

For myself I see the Buddha's Enlightenment Festival as being a celebration of knowing that whatever spiritual work has come to us in this life, we can do it. Original insight and this practice will show us how. We also express gratitude for the help that comes to us from others; from our Master, and/or whoever has offered us true teaching, to those we train with, and from those whose names we may never know, who have kept this great Buddhist way alive down through the ages.

The offering that we make on this Buddha's Enlightenment Day, and every day, is ourselves, and what flows back to us is a life beyond compare.

## The Precious Mirror Samādhi

Rev. Master Hakuun Barnhard

— *Wolk en Water Hermitage, Langelille – The Netherlands* —

*The translation offered here is a modified translation of the one that was made (in Dutch) for the benefit of our congregation at Apeldoorn when I was prior there at the beginning of the millennium. In my research and contemplations I have found most translations of this and other Scriptures to be of great value as they are. Each is valid in its own right and does not stand against another. Therefore I recommend reading each version as if it were a different Scripture before you compare it with others.*

*The Precious Mirror* is a Dharma-poem about the Wholeness of our being, how to find and sustain it, written by our Chinese ancestor Dong-shan Liang-jie (807–869; Japanese: Tōzan Ryōkai). The image used is a Precious Jewel with its ever-present ability to reflect, together with the momentary reflections in it. Deep meditation, Samādhi, cuts through our belief in the separateness of anything, especially ourselves. This brings about a joy and connectedness with the whole universe. We no longer ‘suffer’ as we see, understand and let go of the mind that we have created and its projections. We are free and truly at

home with ourselves and the world as they are – and see the universe as one bright pearl, undivided and whole<sup>1</sup>

### *The Precious Mirror Samādhi*

The Dharma of *this – as it is*,  
Passed on in person by Buddhas and Ancestors,  
Is now yours;  
Guard it well.

A silver bowl full of snow and  
A heron hidden in the moonlight –  
When you compare them they are not the same,  
Mixed together they find their place.

Its meaning does not lie in words  
And shows in whatever comes forth;  
Move – and you become ensnared,  
Deny it – and you fall into dilatory hesitation.

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<sup>1</sup> When conditioning sees the universe, it sees fragmentation and difference; when **seeing** sees the universe, it sees one bright pearl. Zen Master Dōgen writes about Master Gensa’s saying: “The whole universe in ten directions is one bright pearl” in the chapter *One Bright Pearl* of the *Shōbōgenzō*. The offertory of the Segaki ceremony says it similarly: “The Body of the Buddha permeates the universe; it manifests itself in front of all of us; there is no place where it does not so manifest itself.”



Turning away, going towards, both are inept,  
Just as when you relate to a giant fireball.  
Express it in fancy words  
    And you colour it at once.

In the middle of the night it is clear and bright  
But in the daylight it cannot be seen.  
It acts as a compass for all beings,  
When used it liberates from suffering.

Although it is not a doing  
It is not without expression.

Just as when you look into a reflecting jewel,  
Form and mirror-image behold each other:  
You are not it,  
It is truly this that you are.

It is as a baby in this world  
With all five aspects complete  
It neither comes nor goes, arises nor stays.  
It babbles, speaking without words –  
So we comprehend nothing,  
As its words are not recognizable.

Twice the trigram *Illumination* gives six lines,  
Wherein phenomena and the real intermingle.  
Stacked up, there are three pairs of combinations,  
The whole transformation is completed with the fifth.

It is like the taste of the schizandra, which has five flavours  
Or like the diamond sceptre, which has five prongs,  
In the true all is wondrously embraced,  
Drum and song arise together.

It penetrates the source and flows through the pathways,  
It embraces the whole land and covers the roads.  
To respect it brings happiness,  
It cannot be opposed.

This mystery of natural truth  
Is neither a realm of illusion nor of enlightenment,  
Following times of cause and of effect  
It shines brightly in stillness.

It is so fine that it fits where there is no space  
And so broad that it transcends all dimension.  
One hair's breadth off –  
And you are not in harmony with it.

So now we have the 'sudden' and the 'gradual'  
And we clarify the schools' meanings and tones.  
Once meanings and tones have been defined  
They become a measure of practice.  
Meaning and tone gone beyond,  
Timeless truth flows forever.

The old masters had compassion for those  
Who are quiet of body but restless of mind,  
Like a tethered horse or a trapped rat,  
And offered them Dharma.

In their topsy-turvy state  
These people take black for white,  
But when confused thinking comes to an end,  
The still, accepting mind is naturally present.

If you wish to join the ancients,  
Contemplate the ways of old.

Close to realizing the Buddha's Way,  
There was one who sat for ten eons gazing at a tree –  
Like a lame tiger  
Or a hobbled horse.

The more we feel inadequate  
We reach for precious furniture and rich clothes.  
According to our fear or wonder  
We see black shadows or white oxen.

The archer Yi used his skill  
To hit a target at a hundred paces.  
But when two arrows meet head on  
Does this depend on skill obtained?

As the wooden man begins to sing

A stone woman gets up to dance.  
This cannot be realized by feeling or thought,  
So why try to work it out!

A minister serves their lord,  
A child obeys their parent;  
Without obedience there is no filial piety,  
Without service there is no advice.

Doing this inner work unseen  
You may seem dull and foolish,  
But when you are able to persist in it  
You will be called a master amongst masters.

\* \* \*

Let's now look at each section in turn:

The Dharma of *this – as it is*,  
Passed on in person by Buddhas and Ancestors,  
Is now yours;  
Guard it well.

This very moment is only what is now and this simply is what it is (it is thus). This is not depending on anything and can be found at all times and in all conditions. Zen therefore does not 'work with stages'; in the end there is no path. But in and over time, there is change and development which come about through the process of

cause and effect, so there is depending. We train to see and understand this process in ourselves and in so doing steer the course of karma.

When we begin training we think that the world we see is how the world is ('mountains are mountains and rivers are rivers'). We are not yet aware of how our mind colours it. Once we start to look inward and question our experience, we sense a Presence. As training unfolds, things are no longer what they seemed; emptiness may make us wonder if they exist at all (mountains are no longer mountains, rivers no longer rivers). And further into training yet, things are simply what they are without any overlay (mountains are mountains, rivers are rivers). We are no longer seeking. Suffering and all things can be seen as Bodhi; first because they lead to Bodhi when faced and investigated, and also because samsara or nirvana are 'neither here nor there' and *we* flow with them. Emotions still come and go but there is no-one who owns them. Emotions may teach others as well. If people misuse this world and hurt others, some form of anger shows them directly there is something not right. This is life when one has returned to the market place (the last of the Oxherding pictures). *The Song of the Precious Mirror* sings about the truth of this as well as about the unfolding stages.

It takes some enquiring in stillness to realize that this as it is, is the truth. Our habitual patterns of thought and feeling need to be recognized and let go of so that our mind and heart is unclogged and open. What does this mean in

practice? That *things as they are* is fully accepted: how we are, how others are and how the world is. There is no fight with anyone or anything. When we offer means to change the world for the better it is from this position of compassionate acceptance.

When an open mind looks into the eyes of a Buddha or Ancestor, there are not two individuals with their conditioning but there is one mind, one heart, that stands up straight in the now. Free *Buddha being* is experienced directly in your open self. Nothing is given and nothing is received. In terms of this song, there is only the brilliant mirror. That we are not separate, but one whole with all, is passed on and ‘proved’. Zen Master Eihei Dōgen mentions that “Buddhas and Ancestors appear when being is untainted and free”.

The Chinese pictogram for the word ‘in person’, ‘direct’ or ‘secret’ shows a mountain – which means away from the world and from worldly eyes – as well as a heart-mind, which means that it is an intimate affair. Both are placed under a roof: it is private and enclosed. Only those who are receptive to direct pointing can enter this enclosure. They must have let go of their means to get inside it (for example intellectualizing or trying) and have open minds, like a master and their disciple.

Once this Dharma is ‘ours’, we need and want to guard this treasure with all our heart. For example by not letting points of view or a subtle wanting or not-wanting

veil it. No longer believing in the worth of our (hi)stories, we take care not to project emotions and thoughts about what happened to us onto ourselves as we are.

When we speak of Dharma-transmission it usually means the passing on of the Buddha-truth by a monastic master to a disciple. This protects the purity of the Dharma, as an ordained monastic has made long-lasting vows. There are also non-monastic meditators who look so deeply into their own being that they are able to receive transmission. Mostly you are open to receiving this teaching when you are already living it. Buddha recognizes Buddha. Each Dharma (thing or being) is ultimately the mirror, the jewel. In Samādhi, existence is seen as that mirror. Dong-shan considers this to be the fifth or highest stage of practice.

A silver bowl full of snow and  
A heron hidden in the moonlight –  
When you compare them they are not the same,  
Mixed together they find their place.

When we meditate we see unity and difference. The moon and the bowl are the Precious Mirror and symbolize the unmoving and timeless, that is not affected by change and accommodates all change. Dong-shan refers to it in his teaching on the *Five Positions*, or *Five Degrees* as the Absolute. The snow and the heron stand for the world of our experience when we look with enlightened eyes. (More about this on p. 36-7.)

When we hold on or push away, our picture of the world gets muddled and unclear and the Mirror is veiled. The unreflective person tends to experience appearances as hugely different and separate from themselves. It is the doubt about the validity of that, which brings us to exploring reality. What is existence? Who am I? In zazen I come to see the Mirror together with the objects: thoughts, sensations and the worlds of objects come and go while a bright infinity ever reflects. Whatever appears seems no longer so substantial and at times the “mirror” seems more solid and present than whatever appears in it. So: comparing, the Absolute and existence are not the same. Letting existence be, the Mirror fills all of space and existence appears in it and as it.

In some old Buddhist temples that I visited in Nara, which was, in the past, Japan’s capital, I have seen a mirror on a stand in a prominent shrine. The mirror was made of copper and was polished daily. Do we need to polish our mirror? Neither thinking nor not thinking is the polishing, the guarding of our treasure.

Its meaning does not lie in words  
And shows in whatever comes forth;  
Move – and you become ensnared,  
Deny it – and you fall into dilatory hesitation.

Whatever comes forth shows the life of the Precious Mirror. It accommodates all appearances: all we can see and hear



and sense, stillness and space. All that arises shows it and is it. Yet it is indescribable and inconceivable. There is not an It.

When we cannot let things be but affirm, hold on or reach out, we become ensnared. This happens for example when we look too intensely for ‘enlightenment’ or love. When we look away from what is, we ignore the Mirror. Then we fail to notice what we need to see and sluggishly hesitate, so no actions come forth or they fail to hit the mark. When we hold on to our ideas and projections, we may hear the words but not the truth in them which comes from the (master’s) one mind. Thus we fall into a hole or come to a dead-end.

Turning away, going towards, both are inept,  
Just as when you relate to a giant fireball.  
Express it in fancy words  
And you colour it at once.

Keeping the right relationship to the mirror (the fireball), to our life as it manifests – not too close, not too far – is the position of just this, just sitting. This is acceptance. Trying to see a Mirror without reflections is tension and misunderstanding. Best leave the Mirror to the Mirror. Wisdom and compassion are not created and cannot be grasped, they manifest naturally. When I fail to look, my mind is filled with haze or gloom. It is when I do not want anything nor fear anything that I experience the Mirror shining in my heart and mind.

When I speak in qualifying terms, it shows the colour of my views and feelings. Elated speech colours the world ‘beautiful’, dismal speech colours it ‘ugly’.

In the middle of the night it is clear and bright  
But in the daylight it cannot be seen.  
It acts as a compass for all beings,  
When used it liberates from suffering.

When I look in the daylight, which symbolizes the discriminating mind, I see entities, objects and issues but the Mirror cannot be seen. When I am becoming less interested in the world of phenomena and am content not to know, they stand out less. Dropping all holding on and pushing away, letting go of the identifications that bind us to a self, in the middle of the darkness of not-knowing, the mirror can be seen clear and bright. As the foundation of my being, the mirror functions as a magnet, pulling all things into Its Presence. It ‘calls’. I listen and let any reflected thing reveal it. Any shadows it shows, point towards it. So it points as a compass – always to itself. I always find my way back to it because it is what I am.

Although not a doing, it is not without expression.  
Just as when you look into a reflecting jewel,  
Form and mirror-image behold each other:  
You are not it, it is truly this that you are.

It does not do, nor is it being done to. It just is.  
Reflecting and allowing is its nature. Who is the true me? Is

it the living body and mind here? Or is it the one reflected in the water, in the mirror? Without a body-mind there is nothing to be reflected; without a mirror no-one can be seen. It is the mirror's function to show what is there. When I look into a jewel (a mirror), I see my image and the jewel. Looking closely, they hold each other – they are not two. I am not the image; I am not the mirror. I am the whole, the holding and the held; I am this miracle. I know the Mirror but it is not a knowing I have learned. I am embraced in this naturally knowing Mirror.

The first sentence of this verse can also be read: “Although it (the Mirror) is not a conditioned thing, we can talk about it.” Of course, that is what Dong-shan is doing.

From this point on he is going to describe qualities of the Mirror:

It is as a baby in this world  
With all five aspects complete  
It neither comes nor goes, arises nor stays.  
It babbles, speaking without words –  
So we comprehend nothing,  
As its words are not recognizable.

The mind of a just-born human is unformed, not yet programmed. Just so, when I sit immovably in original stillness, the mind flows freely. A baby has full potential. The five aspects point to the five senses as well as to the

five skandhas, which are not yet developed. This baby-mind does not channel meaning into separate specific notions, it babbles speech freely – words that will never be in any dictionary. So we do not comprehend what it means. Yet the babbles are very expressive, alive and true.

Twice the trigram *Illumination* gives six lines,  
Wherein phenomena and the real intermingle.  
Stacked up, there are three pairs of combinations,  
The whole transformation is completed with the fifth.

This verse explains the author's experience of spiritual development in terms of the *I Ching*, the *Book of Changes*. Dong-shan distinguishes five stages on the path of enlightenment, which he describes in terms of the relative (the partial, phenomena) or the absolute (the whole, the true). Here he explains this by means of the hexagram Li (which means Fire). One can combine the six lines that it consists of five times into a pair; each combination points at a certain understanding of the relative and the absolute in the course of training. Each stage progresses into and contains the other stages and the whole of training and enlightenment. It goes beyond the scope of this article to elaborate on what is known as Dong-shan's *Five Positions*, *Five Ranks* or *Five Degrees*. They make an attempt to describe the path to full enlightenment. We walk pathways, take many turns, and this is all the whole path. And in practice we just practice. Where we are, it is just this as it is.

Zen Master Dōgen, who lived four centuries later than Dong-shan, emphasized zazen without stages. Still, Dong-shan's *Five Positions* (Ranks, or Degrees) have been and are used in the Sōtō school of Zen (Ch'an) practice. They give direction and spur us on. They help me not to be satisfied with my bit of understanding but to go deeper. All practitioners are equal practitioners in the Buddhist Way; few maybe realize Dong-shan's fifth position. If I deny delusion I cannot learn and step forwards in clarity. If I only see the long road ahead – when will I ever arrive?

It is like the taste of the schizandra, which has five flavours  
Or like the diamond sceptre, which has five prongs,  
In the true all is wondrously embraced,  
Drum and song arise together.

The five stages on the Path are like the schizandra berry that has one taste which includes all five flavours that are distinguished in Chinese culture: bitter, sour, salty, pungent and sweet. So all of taste is naturally present in this berry. (In Western culture we are familiar with ice cream which can have many tastes: ginger, coffee, chocolate, vanilla – but it is man-made and lacks the salty taste). The vajra or diamond sceptre has a central pillar at its heart, the Absolute; the five prongs around it represent all relative things. When we turn it around, whatever side is visible, it always shows two prongs (duality, phenomena) together with the one central pillar. Both the diamond scepter and the schizandra serve to show the One Path with the five stages as a whole as well as the heart of being and all its

colours. The drum is the heart-beat of the universe, the call; the song is the expression of our life, the response. Both harmonize in the Mirror.

It penetrates the source and flows through the  
pathways,  
It embraces the whole land and covers the roads.  
To respect it brings happiness,  
It cannot be opposed.

True nature is ever-present, from the very beginning through to the very end. Walking our ways of practice, living our life, we uncover it; doing what is good to do, we exhibit Buddha activity. We do not know where we are but plunge into life and training, trusting our true nature. Truth does not care about our method of training nor about which stage we might be in. And stages do not necessarily progress. Moreover, they do not give us any permanence or value.

Trying to keep the Mirror unstained by avoiding life is not auspicious and does not bring happiness. If we sit for years on a mountain we may miss the opportunity of bumping into other people and meeting our selfish reactions. If we do not receive the feedback or reaction of others, we may not discover important details about ourselves. For this reason novices in Zen mostly train in the context of a community.

This mystery of natural truth  
Is neither a realm of illusion nor of enlightenment.

Following times of cause and of effect  
It shines brightly in stillness.

Illusion and enlightenment are reflected in the mirror, but neither of them is the mirror. The mirror is real and subtle; it is not born nor does it die. It reflects cause and effect serenely and impartially. And it naturally shines in our mind when nothing impedes its brightness.

It is so fine that it fits where there is no space  
And so broad that it transcends all dimension.  
One hair's breadth off –  
And you are not in harmony with it.

The slightest movement, the tiniest detail, is registered in the mirror. And however large, it fits. The smallest ego-centric thought, the greatest enlightenment. The minutest holding on or pushing away affects the harmony. Accept things just as they are, and you are in accord.

Here the poem takes a different turn and tone:

So now we have the 'sudden' and the 'gradual'  
And we clarify the schools' meanings and tones.  
Once meanings and tones have been defined  
They become a measure of practice.  
Meaning and tone gone beyond,  
Timeless truth flows forever.

The sudden (step-by-step) and the gradual approaches to training started to be distinguished from the time of master Hui Neng (Daikan Enō 638-713), the sixth Chinese Ancestor, and developed further in Dong-shan's time. Which one is better for me? What are the methods used? What is the meaning of this practice? These are and were questions of beginner trainees. At some point however we need to let go of methods and standards and enter the life of Truth without means.

The old masters had compassion for those  
Who are quiet of body but restless of mind,  
Like a tethered horse or a trapped rat,  
And offered them Dharma.

When we have spent some time in retreat we have seen the stillness of the setting and practice of meditation and Precepts quieten our surface energy. To appease all underlying tensions I need to see what I think I am. It is important that I no longer identify with thoughts, stories and emotions and let go of my thoughts about others and the world. Because with those beliefs I cannot be free: I am like a trapped rat or a tethered horse.

In their topsy-turvy state  
These people take black for white,  
But when confused thinking comes to an end,  
The still accepting mind is naturally present.



When I do not know the heart of being, reality as it is, I tend to have all kind of ideas about it. My ideas about the world and others hold a separate self in place. When I see that the world as I see it, is simply the thoughts that I create out of habit, fear or desire, that confused thinking comes to an end. Then there is a profound peace naturally present.

If you wish to join the ancients,  
Contemplate the ways of old.

Close to realizing the Buddha's Way,  
There was one who sat for ten eons gazing at a tree –  
Like a lame tiger  
Or a hobbled horse.

Dong-shan points here again to the unhelpfulness of too contemplative a focus. Yes, it is important to see beyond, and still the moving mind, but if then I retreat into quietism, I shun life as it is and cannot act. The mighty potential for freedom that a lion has, then goes unused. The song here refers to a story from the *Lotus Sūtra*.

The more we feel inadequate  
We reach for precious furniture and rich clothes  
According to our fear or wonder  
We see black shadows or white oxen.

When I feel inadequate or doubt myself, I may hold on to or search for means to adorn myself, make myself look ‘better’ to myself. I create these means for adornment to boost my status, to show my success or prove that I have the ‘right’ ideas about the world I live in, or that I follow the Precepts well. The self still seeks ways to stand out and feels a need for approval. But with each and any bit of desire to be something worthy, fear arises also and I cannot be free. If somehow I believe the world is a dismal place, I may project small or large disasters onto it – I see black shadows. When I am fearless and see the skandhas as empty, I may come across lovely white oxen. The Chinese here is rather obscure; the word for ‘black shadows’ could be translated as ‘wild cats’ or ‘black slaves’. Chinese society existed maybe not of castes but surely of strongly defined social groups. Some people of high class rarely met a person of the lowest stratum, who often also were the people with the darkest skin. They very likely were afraid of them. To see a white ox however was fortuitous. The Chinese did not have holy cows but the ‘great white ox’ was an image for the great vehicle and there are therefore several monasteries of that name.

The archer Yi used his skill  
To hit a target at a hundred paces.  
But when two arrows meet head-on  
Does this depend on skill obtained?

There are many difficult skills that we can learn. But

on this pathless path we mainly unlearn. We yield to the natural unfolding of life, which brings peace and joy:

As the wooden man begins to sing  
A stone woman gets up to dance.  
This cannot be reached by feeling or thought,  
So why try to work it out!

Sentient and insentient things manifest their true nature when we discover the wholeness of being and no longer think and feel we are separate. Then the universe rejoices.

A minister serves their lord,  
A child obeys their parent;  
Without obedience there is no filial piety,  
Without service there is no advice.

When a minister serves their lord there is a merging. The child obeys but the parent does not give orders. The child drops its immature wishes and perspectives and yields to the parental way of harmony. Thus love is found and lived.

Doing this inner work unseen  
You may seem dull and foolish,  
But when you are able to persist in it  
You will be called a master amongst masters.

The Way is not a way of glamour. The sage works in darkness. The sage may look stupid and dull and yet may become a beacon. Masters will acknowledge that. The last verses strongly echo the *Dao De-jing* (Tao Te-ching) which celebrates natural truth and the unseen work. When we follow the pointing of the old masters and prove their truth for and within ourselves through deep listening and testing, we will also find it.

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## Ceremonial

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*This is an edited transcript of a talk given during the Regional Sangha Day, attended by members of several UK meditation groups, at the Jamyang Centre, Leeds, 16th July 2022.*

It's very nice to see everyone; this is quite a special occasion, really. It's very nice to be able to hold this meeting in a Buddhist centre, and it's quite an appropriate day to choose actually, because a number of other Buddhist traditions are going to have a celebration around this time, to mark the Buddha's first discourse on the Four Noble Truths. It's called Dhamma day, and it was actually on Wednesday, when there was a full moon, in fact it was a 'super moon'. That's a big celebration in the Theravadin Buddhist world. Lots of Buddhists get together for that, so it's quite apt that you've chosen this Saturday.

I was asked if I could give a talk about ceremonial, which I think some people have had quite a lot of problems with – maybe not so much now but certainly in the past.

They've wondered what ceremonial has to do with Buddhism. People think that what we normally do is practise meditation, and that's enough. But following the Buddha's Way, the Buddha Dharma, is really a practical thing. It's what you do with your body, what you do with your speech, and what you do with your mind – all of those, and ceremonial is a way of expressing the Buddha's teaching in a non-verbal way.

The circumambulation we did – when we all went round offering incense and chanting – that is a centuries-old tradition – a simple form of ceremony, and you'll find it in all different Buddhist schools. There are caves in India which were excavated – they literally carved out temples in caves; they've been there since the second century – and in the middle would be a stupa, or an image, and there's a gallery where people can circumambulate around this representation of the Buddha Dharma, so it's an ancient practice.

Ceremonies have something in common, in that they all involve some form of offering, because offering is the way that you deal with a lot of things. It's a way of letting go, in a very positive way. Usually we offer nice things, but you can offer anger, you can offer worry, you can offer doubt. Offering is an integral part of ceremonial. There's always an incense offering, and we had quite an elaborate offering at the beginning of the second ceremony today, with offerings appearing, being offered to the Buddha and then placed on the altar.

Another thing that you actually offer is your participation, as your state of mind can have an effect on everyone else. If everyone joins in wholeheartedly, there is a unity of purpose, a communal kind of expression; something which people do together that unifies them. One of the other aspects of that is chanting; chanting a text or some teaching, and this goes right back to the beginning of Buddhism. For many years, while the Buddha was alive, they would recite the teachings regularly; it was an oral tradition. It wasn't written down, people didn't have Scripture books. Today I didn't have a Scripture book. Most of you didn't have a book; you know the Scriptures through having listened and chanted them before. You heard them and then you'd repeat them, and so they became integrated into your body and mind. That's why we chant the same Scriptures day after day; they become integrated into your life in that way. These days neuroscientists are quite interested in what you say and how you say it, and how it can change your state of mind by saying things in a different way. They have seen it is literally mind-changing to repeat something which has a positive effect on you. Chanting also has that unifying aspect to it; it's something which you can't do so much intellectually; it's something where you have to listen to others, and be in harmony with everyone else. It unifies; it creates the Sangha, if you like – so the chanting is another common feature.

One of the UK prisons has a celebration every year around a Buddha statue, and the Thai community show up

in force, and they have candles, flowers and incense (in the past they even had little orchids). They carry those candles, flowers and incense, and circumambulate around the statue in the prison gardens. They circumambulate three times, and then the incense, flowers and candles are offered. It's all rather nice in some respects. So that, once again, is a ceremony – there's the offering of incense, the offering of flowers, or fruit, and then the offering of brightness, or light.

The offering of flowers also goes way back. You see this in Asian countries – people offer lotus flowers. Lotuses grow like weeds in some places, and you can go and buy a great big lotus bud and take it to the temple – so you see people offering these flowers.

The lotus flower represents transformation. It's rooted in the mud; it grows through the murk. It comes right out of the water and produces a beautiful flower – the flower of enlightenment, if you like, which is unstained. That's because of its waxy petals; even its leaves are hydrophobic. (There's talk about making clothes out of them now.) So the lotus is symbolic of something which changes greed, anger and confusion and transforms it into compassion, love and wisdom, and then the seeds disperse – go back down again, to help everyone else and yourself transform more, if you like. So it's a lovely image of transformation, and it appears everywhere in Buddhist



iconography. Buddha statues often sit in a lotus, and there are usually pictures and symbols of lotuses on altars. And fruit is something which is sweet, and something which will sustain you, so that also is seen as a valuable offering. That's why fruit is often seen on the altar.

The ceremonial way of expressing the Buddha's teaching has become quite diverse. The offerings which were made in the ceremony we just did here are things like sweet tea and cakes, and this practice has come out of Japan and China. Buddhism has moved through many different cultures; it's gone from India into China and then to Japan, and our forms of ceremonial are influenced mostly by China and Japan; in fact some of our monks' robes are styled after mediaeval Chinese court dress. That's based on that idea that spiritual wealth and material wealth are intermeshed, and they're like that to show that there is something here of value; here is something that you can respect and reverence.

The flow of this kind of ceremonial into Japan happened after Dōgen arrived there – apparently it was Keizan who really developed it in Japan, or made the ceremonial more of a way of conveying it to people. The people of that country could respond to ceremony; it resonated with them perhaps more than, for example, the Scriptures. Everyone could relate to a ceremony done in this kind of way. If you've seen some of the YouTube videos that are going around, there's one of a Japanese

morning service, and it's actually more like theatre and a dance, and it's incredibly elegant how the footsteps are done. They are like dance steps – no two ways about it. And so with our ceremonies, it's like you're learning dance steps, and after a while you find you can relax, and appreciate what it's about, and give some expression to the teaching through it. That's the idea anyway.

In our culture ceremonial tends to mean something that is done to you, and there's some kind of power imbalance in it. This is not the Buddhist way: ours is much more the case that everyone is giving expression to something. So when ceremonial was taken from Japan and plonked into Western culture, which is basically what Reverend Master Jiyu did, she thought, well, we'll do it as the Japanese did it, see what works and adapt as needed. So we have things like everyone standing in a straight line, which is normal in Japan. Everyone would be in a straight line, make no mistake, no one would even think of being out of line; it expresses a way of being; paying attention to your relationship to everyone else, so that you're not sticking out.

So ceremonial becomes a practice, as opposed to just a fixed sort of form. It's being used to practise mindfulness in a way that you can't do so easily in other kinds of activities. Ceremony becomes an opportunity to practise mindful awareness, like today when we were offering the objects during the Great Monk's Offertory at the beginning

of the ceremony. You actually held them in a very careful way, in such a way that someone else could receive them without dropping them, and you're going to do it in the most beautiful way you can, because that's what the ceremony starts to represent. Here we have something which can be done in a very elegant, beautiful way, and it has a flow to it. For some people that can give rise to worry, but that means they have to work at relaxing and being still. It shows you something about training in that respect.

So while you're learning it – you have to learn how to relax with the form. As a celebrant, I once had someone come up to me with the incense stick, and they were almost cross-eyed with stress. And they handed it to me and it wasn't lit! Their purpose was to take the stick of incense to the celebrant who hasn't got enough hands to do it, and offer it to them and they can put it in the incense bowl – simple enough. But it can become: “Oh my gosh, I've got to do it in this particular way!” If you can learn to relax with the movements, it can flow, it has an elegance to it. Some of the things – the twiddly bits – are because our ceremony has been influenced by Sōjiji. I gather Sōjiji was a temple which chose at some point to do things in a bit of a flowery way. So those kinds of details are the Sōjiji influence – we've inherited that. It's a way of doing something which has got an elegance to it if it's done right. If you're not relaxed with it, it's going to look like you're thinking: “what am I doing this funny thing for?” And it won't look, or feel, right.

The whole thing is more like a theatrical dance, which gives an expression of the beauty of the Buddha's Dharma. That's what it's for, and the idea is that the Celebrant is a kind of exemplar. That's why there's a bowing seat; it's a bit higher up than everyone else, giving the Celebrant an elevated status. They're supposed to be able to show the teachings in the way that they walk, the way that they move and what they do. For instance the number of steps they take for each action is significant, it can show some Buddhist teaching in it, like taking 12 steps when going up to the altar, to show the 12 links of interdependent origination. But if they do more or less than 12 they need to be prepared to answer the question "what's the teaching in that?", so it's something that can be used in quite a creative way, to show things.

This is what Rev. Master Jiyu learned in Japan, and what she passed on to us. I think it's valuable; it's helpful to do these ceremonies in meditation groups, as well as the monasteries, to introduce people to aspects of the practice which grow out of the meditation. So they get the sense that there's more to Buddhism than just the sitting, and if you learn how to relax with it they will see that it doesn't have to be wooden.

You don't have to do ceremonial in the flowery style I've described, you can make small ceremonies for yourself. When this was being taught in Shasta apparently, I think that rather than using delicate, valuable offering

items, Rev. Master Jiyu got people to practice using waste paper baskets, to try and learn how to do it – they used something that was big enough, and it wasn't going to be a disaster if it dropped.

But then they started to think, right, well, we can do this in our ordinary life, and they naturally created a ceremony of ordinary life, by starting to treat things with that kind of care and respect. That's all part of it: care, respect, reverence, these kinds of qualities; that's what ceremonies are for, in a sense. They're ways of using your body, speech and mind to show those kinds of qualities – of reverence, respect, gratitude and carefulness. And doing this in front of a Buddhist altar helps you consolidate your practice. You align yourself with the Buddha nature – your true nature – so you're awakening your aspiration for Buddhahood, and thereby dissolving the old greed, hate and delusion which clouds that real, deep understanding of it.

Ceremonies usually involve an offering to the Buddha; the Buddha's teaching, the Dharma, and to the Sangha, the community who practise. And then there are bows. It's said that Buddhism will cease if bowing ceases, and bowing is something which is, once again, part of our culture, but you see western people, when they're going to bow, for example to a member of the royal family, they often do it very stiffly, or in a way which doesn't look natural. So although it's there, we haven't quite got it as part of our heritage in the way that east Asians have, in some respects.

The full bow, the full prostration, making *gasshō* or *monjin*, this bowing is a way of bending a bit, and it's a practice of opening. There's a way of using the hands that's a way to make a lotus – Reverend Master Daizui used to do it. He was making a lotus to hold up. The way we bow also illustrates raising the Buddha above you – when you raise your hands, you're putting something above your sense of me; acknowledging there is something greater, so you're humbling yourself. There's that power dynamic again – but you're consciously putting yourself below the statue or whatever that represents. So the bowing is a way of surrendering to a degree; it's a letting go of one's ego, and offering, all encapsulated in an action.

Our sadly deceased Rev. Master Teigan was famous for his amazing bow. Wherever he went, he'd sort of go right the way down; he bowed very deeply and then he came back up and it was all part of a flow, and it looked so dignified and devotional; he did it so well. He showed something in doing that, he was careful in how he did it; it wasn't put on or self-conscious in any way; it was just his way, his expression.

Bowing shows something very directly without having to have a commentary on it. We had a Sunday festival ceremony broadcast on the TV years ago at Throssel, and the presenter gave a voice-over commentary on what we were all doing. It was the *Morning Worship* programme, the ITV equivalent of the BBC's *Songs of Praise*; a so-called

outside broadcast. So all of the ceremonial was explained as we went along, with this hushed voice, which worked quite well. It meant many viewers got to see a Buddhist service, which was unusual for television in the 1980s. And nobody dropped anything, so that was quite good!

The other thing that is sometimes seen in our ceremonies is the scattering of petals – lotus petals. If you go to Throssel, you’ll see people throwing these little petals on the ground, during the circumambulation. It’s to show that this is the Pure Land right here. There’s a well-known story in the *Vimalakirti Sūtra*<sup>1</sup> when people ask: “Why is the world the way it looks?” Like here, where we’re in an industrial complex – the beautiful Buddhist centre we are in is situated in the middle of a load of factory buildings. Well, a ceremony can show the Pure Land appearing, even in the middle of an industrial estate. The idea of the petals is to show that the Pure Land is in front of you right now. In that story, they were asking the Buddha: “Why can’t we see it?” and the Buddha put his foot onto the ground, and suddenly, everything looks wonderful. And then he picks his foot up off the ground, and it all goes back to being a kind of wasteland – you know, trees with bits of plastic bags in them and the like. Then he basically says the reason you can’t see it like that is because your mind isn’t clear. If you clarify, or clean your mind, if you have a pure mind, you will see everything as the Pure Land, because that’s what it is.

There are people who practise Amida Buddhism, who chant “Namo Amitufo” with their rosaries all day, trying to get to the Pure Land. Their practice is sincerely calling on Amida’s name, the idea being that at the time of death the Buddha will appear with the lotus for them to step into and take them to the Pure Land. But there is another way: There was the story of an old lady who was asked: “You’re going to the Pure Land, aren’t you”, and she said “No, the Pure Land is here.” Her practice had led her to realize that the Pure Land was already right here, right now within her, which is why, in a sense, Pure Land Buddhism and Zen Buddhism have quite a similarity. One’s totally devotional and the other one has more of an intellectual aspect to it, or a meditative way of practising, but that idea of realizing liberation in the present moment now is very much part of both, so ceremonial is to demonstrate: “Here it is, the Buddha’s Pure Land is right in front of you! Wake up!”

#### *Notes*

1. Luk, Charles, translator & editor, *Vimalakirti Nirveda Sūtra*. Shambhala Publications, Incorporated, 1990.



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## News of the Order

### UK and Europe

#### Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey

— *Northumberland, England – UK* —

**Abbatial Election:** We are very pleased to announce that Rev. Master Berwyn Watson was elected on 4<sup>th</sup> November by the Throssel community to serve as the successor to Rev. Master Leandra. On taking up the Abbatial seat in the meditation hall the following morning, Rev. Master Berwyn made this solemn dedication: “I vow to do my best to help this community as long as I am able, and ask for the help of the Buddhas and Ancestors



and this Sangha in doing the work that comes to me. The myriad things have brought me to this time and place, where I am asked to take on the position of Abbot. May I accept the teaching of the ‘myriad things’, as part of the ongoing training of a monk: Just bowing to the next step that appears before me.”

We warmly congratulate Rev. Master Berwyn on his appointment, and we are grateful to him for his willingness to take on the role. The formal induction for the new abbot will take

place at Throssel in early 2023. Dates and details of this ceremony will be posted once they have been arranged.

**Coronavirus:** Having avoided Covid infections since the beginning of the pandemic, the community unfortunately experienced an outbreak at the monastery in early October. Seven monks tested positive, and we had to close our doors to guests for a couple of weeks to enable everyone to recover, and for it to be safe to welcome visitors again. This situation meant the cancellation of an introductory retreat and the Feeding of the Hungry Ghosts week, however some online teaching and meditations were offered instead, and the Segaki ceremonies were re-scheduled for November, when they were live-streamed and also had a number of lay trainees in attendance.

**Monastic Gathering:** Throssel monks had hoped to attend the biennial get-together of OBC monks in September this year, however due to the risks still posed by long-haul air travel it was decided to hold the meetings using online video conferencing technology. It is the first time this event has happened ‘virtually’ and it was both a useful exercise in discovering whether, as an international Order, we could hold discussions effectively via Zoom, and an enjoyable opportunity for us all to share our thoughts and experiences of training and of teaching the Dharma in these testing times.

**School Visits:** We have had two visits from local schools recently, with the children coming to find out about Buddhism as part of their curriculum. Monks have also, on two occasions, travelled to schools in Northumberland and County Durham to speak to the youngsters about meditation, Buddhist practice and the life of the monastery. Having had very few such visits in the last three years when the pandemic made it impossible, it was rewarding to be able to resume this connection with young people and communities nearby. The following photo shows Rev. Kōjō and Rev. Kyōsei in the ceremony hall with children

aged 8 to 11 years from Brough Community Primary School who came with their teachers in September. They asked many interesting questions, and joined in with meditation and walking meditation. The day ended with everyone visiting the animal cemetery and walk around the temple garden.



**Green Energy:** Our efforts to reduce fuel costs and minimize our carbon footprint progressed further recently with work starting on the installation of 24 new solar photovoltaic panels on the roof of the meditation hall. This began in early December with scaffolding being erected just before the Buddha's Enlightenment festival and monks' sesshin. We anticipate the work will be completed before the end of the month, when we will then be able to make use of the energy they will provide for both powering electrical equipment and heating water.



— *Rev. Master Roland*

## Great Ocean Dharma Refuge

— *Crymych, Pembrokeshire – Wales* —

The liveliness of the summer months has flowed into the quieter season of falling leaves and colder nights. Two successful broods of swallows have long flown from their summer home in our garage.

Summer guests were welcomed with gladness after the ‘lockdowns’ of covid and particular thanks are offered to Treasa, Sam and Renato for the help offered around the temple during their time of retreat.



It was a special joy to have Reverend Master Fuden and Reverend Clementia come independently of each other for three weeks. It was a great pleasure to train alongside each other now that travel is more possible and their practical help around the temple was very much appreciated. It was also a pleasure to have Reverend Master Daishin Morgan join us for a few days. During the summer months amongst our many visitors we also had a joyful visit from friends of the temple: Geoff and Emily Nisbet and their children from Washington State.



Looking back over the news of the past very turbulent months in the world, reflections on the sorrows of impermanence come to mind and heart as well as gratitude for the Dharma that brings true joy. Resting in That which is stable and enduring is uplifting in the going forward with confidence in the Unborn.

The past months as always, have been marked with the seasonal ceremonies of Segaki and Founder's Day where we remember with great gratitude the legacy of our master and teacher Reverend Master Hōun Jiyu. A memorial was also held and dedicated to the memory of our departed monarch Queen Elizabeth at that milestone moment, and prayers for peace were offered with heartfelt intent on Remembrance Day.

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

— *Rev. Master Mokugen*

## Norwich Zen Buddhist Priory

— *Norwich, England-UK* —

Recent events: Our Summer Party took place in June. We gathered in the beautiful garden and grounds in North Norfolk that form the usual venue for this annual event. The weather turned out to be dry and warm, so we were able to eat our delicious bring-and-share vegetarian lunch outdoors. It was a wonderful opportunity for Sangha members to meet up and socialise informally, chatting in a relaxed setting.

Our four-day sesshin in July was a valuable time for doing some intensive meditation with other Sangha members. Several people joined for at least part of the retreat, either at the Priory or online. The day retreat in October was well attended and it was particularly good to welcome members of the Cambridge Group.

The theme for the day was “ceaseless practice”, which was the focus of the Dharma talk and discussion.

On 6th November, we marked the Priory’s ninth anniversary. We held a Festival Memorial for Rev. Master Jiyu (on what was the 26th anniversary of her death), which enabled us to express our gratitude for her life and training, without which our Priory would not exist. 10 people came along to be part of this celebration (photo below), with more joining online. For our Dharma discussion, we explored some of the teaching to be found in the story of the perfect goldfish, from *The Wild, White Goose*.



Various improvements have been made to the Priory building over the summer and autumn. The most notable has been the installation of a new front door. In addition, repairs to several windows and one of the patio doors should improve the insulation and draught-proofing of the property.

Thanks: My thanks to everyone who helps to keep the Priory well-maintained and functioning smoothly. The garden group have continued their weekly sessions enhancing and maintaining the grounds. A recent project of theirs was to improve the system of water butts that collects rainwater from the garage roof, to make this much more user-friendly. Small-

scale repairs and maintenance work inside the building have been ongoing, including painting of all the internal doors, while the library now has two smart sets of shelves. I am also grateful to those people who continue to help with cleaning the Priory and with various administration tasks.

— *Rev. Master Leoma*

## The Place of Peace Dharma House

— *Aberystwyth, Wales* —

In September we held a Memorial In Memory of HRH Queen Elizabeth II, offering gratitude for her service to our country and for her steadfast commitment to her vow. The monarch is one of the four benefactors in Buddhism and is seen as maintaining a country that gives us the freedom to practice the Buddhist way.

We also enjoyed a brief, yet most welcome, visit from Reverend Master Fuden, who came for lunch on his way back to Germany. It was a pleasure to have him here.

On the morning of the 31st of October, we had our first outdoor Segaki Ceremony in the garden. The birds were keen to take part, and had to be kept at bay to prevent them eating the offerings before the ceremony had started. Afterwards they were given a generous scattering of food. In the evening we had the Toro, with chanting of the Scriptures. It is always moving to see the smoke curl upwards into the night sky.

On November 6<sup>th</sup>, gratitude, for all that she made possible, was offered to our Founder, Reverend Master Jiyu-Kennett, who died 26 years ago. Her spirit lives on, and is here, with us, and within us. Human lives come and go, but the life of Buddha neither comes nor goes. In celebrating her life, we do not need to look back, we look within, to the Master in our heart.

The monthly Zoom meetings continue, and it is good to be able to meet up with those who live far away, and in different countries.

This summer extra blinds were added to two windows, providing shade from the excessive heat. The common room stays cooler, but the back of the temple has full sun for most of the day, and with temperatures of 38 degrees at times, the protection was appreciated.

The monthly *Dharma Reflections* talks are offered as mp3 files. If you would like to receive them, please contact Rev. Master Myōhō on [placeofpeacewalesinfo@gmail.com](mailto:placeofpeacewalesinfo@gmail.com). You can have them as a one-off, or occasionally, or every month, as you wish.

Thank you to all who offer support to our temple, whose meditation hall is pictured below.



— Rev. Master Myōhō



## Reading Buddhist Priory

— *Reading, England – UK* —

**Festivals and Ceremonies:** On Sunday 6th November we celebrated Founder's Day, in person and on Zoom. It was a particularly poignant festival, being twenty-six years to the day since Reverend Master Jiyu's death.

**Meditation Morning:** A meditation morning was held in mid-November, and was well supported. It was reported that Sangha members appreciated the opportunity for this extended period of quiet reflection in the company of other meditators.

**Garden Morning:** On a sunny autumnal day in October, Sangha members helped Reverend Gareth prepare the garden for winter, pruning shrubs and raking leaves. The morning concluded with a hot lunch, which was well received.

**Visits:** On the afternoon of the 29th September, filming took place at the Priory. Reverend Gareth and Sangha members had previously been invited to take part in a short educational video on aspects of Buddhist faith and practice. This came about through Reverend Gareth's involvement and work with the local SACRE\* group. The video took the form of a Q&A session, the questions having been given in advance. One sangha member joined in, alongside Reverend Gareth. The video is to be shared on the national SACRE website, and will be available as a teaching resource across schools.

**Inter-faith Schools Visit:** In November Reverend Gareth returned to St. Bart's School in Newbury, to take part in their Interfaith & Worldview week. He was part of a panel of representatives from other traditions who had two minutes to answer questions set by the students. Reverend Gareth reported that the students responded with interest to the different points of view being put forward.

**Sangha Farewell:** It was with a mixture of sadness and gratitude that we said goodbye, in early October, to Holly and Jeremy, long-standing Sangha members, who were moving away from the area. Reverend Gareth hosted a farewell lunch after the Sunday morning service. It was a relaxed occasion with good food, and opportunities to chat and reminisce. Reverend Gareth thanked them for their valuable contributions to the life of the Priory over the years, and we wished them well in their new ventures.

\* *Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education:* A Government partnership initiative bringing together members of local faith communities, teachers and local authorities in order for faiths to have an input into the content of religious education and collective worship.

— *Gina Bovan*

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## Dharmazuflucht Schwarzwald

— *Gutach (Black Forest) – Germany* —

On November 6th, we commemorated the 26<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of our Founder, Reverend Master Jiyu, with deepest gratitude for all that she has given us, and for having made this temple possible.



At the end of October, we had our week-long Segaki-retreat, with two of our lay ministers attending, and several more congregation members coming for the actual ceremony.

In recent months, we were invited to make contributions at ecumenical prayers for peace which were held in two of the main catholic churches in our region. These events had been organized in view of the current war in the Ukraine and the violence that is happening at the moment in many parts of the world. Apart from us, a protestant pastor and a catholic priest, as well as representatives of a local mosque, participated in these events. We were each asked to give a small talk on what we view as most important for maintaining peace and harmony, and to say

prayers for all the people living in regions where there is violence and war at present.

Not long ago, we also had about a dozen high-school students together with several teachers come to our temple for an introduction and a discussion. Before the pandemic, we used to have regular visits of school classes with their teachers, but then they had to temporarily stop because of Corona. After this visit, Rev. Clementia was also invited to participate in a prayer for peace in that particular high-school.

Over the summer, we were both able to individually spend some time at Great Ocean Dharma Refuge in Wales. We are very grateful to Rev. Master Mokugen for this precious opportunity. On these occasions, it was very good to also meet up and spend some time with Rev. Master Daishin, Rev. Master Saidō and Rev. Master Myōhō. Many thanks to Rev. Master Saidō for the opportunity to spend the night at the Telford Priory on the way to Wales and back, and for very kindly picking us up from Birmingham airport and driving us back there at the end of our stay.



In December, we will be giving a public talk and leading a small retreat at the Buddha-Haus city center in Stuttgart. The Buddha-Haus was originally founded by Venerable Ayya Khema, who was one of the most well-known and respected Buddhist teachers in Germany when she was alive. We have been doing these winter retreats at the Buddha-Haus for many years, but had to cancel them in the last few years because of the Covid-pandemic.

— *Rev. Master Fuden*

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## News of the Order

### USA & Canada

#### Shasta Abbey

— Mount Shasta, CA - USA —

**New Statue:** The donation of our new Manjusri Bodhisattva statue for the meditation hall arrived from Canada in October. Thai Bao, a Vietnamese Buddhist sculptor, together with friends, brought the statue on 7<sup>th</sup> October. It was installed in the hall that evening, and the next morning Rev. Master Meian performed an eye-opening ceremony. Manjusri is the Bodhisattva of Great Wisdom and sits in stillness upon the beast of self. We are all very grateful to sit in this new statue's beautiful quiet presence.



**Retreats and Events:** Our Segaki retreat was held October 27-30, ending with the Founder's Day Festival on Sunday, 30<sup>th</sup>

October. 28 people attended, with 19 joining online via Zoom. The discussions were particularly good, and it was rewarding to see how much teaching participants were taking to heart. Our annual festival memorial for Rev. Master Jiyu was held on Sunday, 6<sup>th</sup> November, and was followed by a meal offering for the community and all guests from a group of Vietnamese lay Buddhists in the Bay Area.

**Monastic Visitors:** We gladly welcomed a month-long visit from Rev. Cheong Eong Sunim, a female Zen monk for Korea. Her help was of great service in the kitchen. We also appreciated a short visit from Rev. Clairissa of the Wallowa Buddhist Temple in Oregon. As Thanksgiving drew near, we enjoyed visits from Rev. Master Hugh of the Eugene Priory and Rev. Maser Leon of the Portland Priory. And we welcomed once again for the winter Rev. Kalden Wangmo, a former OBC monk now training in the Tibetan Vajrayana tradition. Such guests are always welcome, and their visits help strengthen our sangha ties.

— *Rev. Master Oswin*

## Redding Zen Buddhist Priory

— *Redding, CA – USA* —

Rev. Helen participated in the 2022 Shasta County Interfaith Forum Thanksgiving Service held on the traditional Sunday before Thanksgiving at the Church of the Latter Day Saints in Redding. The first time this popular event has been held in-person since the start of the Covid epidemic, there were over 200 people in attendance. Rev. Helen offered Buddhist teaching on gratitude as well as the *Dedication of Merit*.

The door to the Priory is gradually opening wider. We now hold in-person meditation during the week, in-person meditation instruction, and in-person working meditation, as well as in-person sanzen, house-blessings, and memorials.

Shonna Smith and Jeff Snyder were married at the Priory on October 1, 2022. In the presence of the Priory Sangha, Shonna and Jeff affirmed that they would "... help each other be successful each in our own way..." A festive celebration in the Priory kitchen followed and was enjoyed by all.

Rev. Helen continues to meet on Zoom once a month with the Thunder Bay (Canada) Meditation Group, exploring aspects of meditation practice and training in daily life. Also, on November 30, at the request of Hospice Northwest, Thunder Bay, she addressed more than 25 attendees on the topic of *The Holidays and Grief*.

— Rev. Helen

## Still Flowing Water Hermitage

— Meadow Vista, CA – USA —

It was a pleasure to see so many monks at the Order Monastic Gathering in September. Thank you to all who attended, and for the lively discussions on so many topics.

Since our move in April, I have been happily settling into Still Flowing Water Hermitage's new home, while at the same time carrying on with our previous activities. The Bear River Meditation Group continues on full-steam, and they are a joy to work with. As I write, we are planning our Rohatsu festivities and for our January Intensive Practice Period.

Since settling in here we have had several overnight visitors, both monastic and lay, as well as many visitors here for the day, or a cup of tea. It has been a joy to see them all.

On 23 July we sadly lost one of our very old-time members when Paulyne Koe died that day. She had been going to Shasta Abbey since the early days, and coming to the meditation group when she could. (She lived in Sacramento, an hour's drive away.) Once she was home from a hospital stay on hospice, Rev. Vivian was able to visit her several times. She died



peacefully with her husband and family around her. She is very much missed by us.

After much discussion, the meditation group has decided on in-person meetings alternating with Zoom meetings, leaving hybrid meetings to a few special occasions (e.g., Rohatsu). We will experiment with this for now, and make adjustments as necessary.

Rev. Vivian has begun offering ‘Sunday at the Hermitage’ once each month. This is a time for up to five people (that is what the meditation hall can hold, plus Rev. Vivian) to come to Still Flowing Water Hermitage for meditation, Scripture recitation, a Dharma talk, and discussion. The small group size is a welcome alternative to our gatherings on Zoom which is so large that it is difficult for some to speak in our discussions. We will continue this indefinitely.

In the last two months Rev. Vivian has taught two different classes, ‘Women, Gender and World Religions’ and ‘World Religions’, at two different campuses of Sierra College, the local community college. The students were very engaged and asked excellent questions, providing an enjoyable time for all of us.

At the end of November, Rev. Vivian was celebrant at a burial of ashes for a neighbor in Dutch Flat whose mother had died six years ago. The ceremony was stunningly beautiful, with the sunset illuminating autumn foliage at just the right moment (of course!), and was followed by a delicious dinner brought from Green’s, a famous vegetarian restaurant in San Francisco, along with the mother’s favorite, apple pie.

Finally, a reminder that the Hermitage is available for individual residential retreats. If you are interested in this opportunity, please contact Rev. Vivian via the temple’s website: <https://stillflowingwaterhermitage.org/contact/>

We are very grateful for all the donations that support us financially, and for the training of so many, in so many ways.

— *Rev. Vivian*

## Wallowa Buddhist Temple

— *Joseph, Oregon – USA* —

November 2022 marked the twentieth anniversary of the Wallowa Buddhist Temple, in that it has been twenty years since Rev. Master Meidō arrived in Wallowa County with the intention of establishing a temple. In November of 2002, at the age of 59, after 22 years in the monastery at Mount Shasta, Rev. Master Meidō moved her sitting place here to the Wallows, and first began offering individual retreats and teaching in a small cabin overlooking the Lostine River. Now, from the Wallowa Buddhist Temple in Joseph, Oregon, we offer our gratitude for all that has unfolded for the temple during the subsequent 20 years. The photo here shows Rev. Master Meidō at the cabin door during her first year in Lostine.



**New Website:** You are invited to visit our new temple website at our same address: <https://wallowabuddhisttemple.org>. There you may read a brief history of the Wallowa Buddhist Temple (with lots of photos), on the page called *About the Temple*.

**Segaki:** Rev. Master Meidō was celebrant for a Feeding of the Hungry Ghosts on October 16th. The monks were joined by a number of the local congregation for a still, bright autumn morning festival ceremony (photo below).



The temple hosted an “Open Altar” later that afternoon, allowing any who were unable to attend the group morning to drop by one-by-one, so as to approach the Segaki altar and offer incense in remembrance of those who have died. Some also sat quietly for a while in the chairs set up around our hillside ceremony grounds, or spoke with a monk individually.

It was a real delight for us to be able to gather together again to honor all who have died before us, and to share the profound teaching of this ceremony. Good company and cream

buns with strawberry jam were greatly enjoyed by the participants.

**Monk's Pilgrimage:** In late October, Rev. Clairissa set out on a pilgrimage of sorts, visiting three O.B.C. temples and the home of a lay minister of our Order over the course of a solo road trip.

Driving south through Idaho and Nevada to the east side of the Sierras, Rev. Clairissa stopped at the mountain lakeside home of lay minister Patti who together with her house guest Mary (also a lay minister) kindly hosted her for lunch. Rev. Clairissa was honored to offer incense at Patti's beautiful home altar on the 13th anniversary of the death of Patti's husband, Doug.

Continuing through Southern California, between visits to family Rev. Clairissa stayed for the weekend with Rev. Masters Phoebe and Seikai at Pine Mountain Buddhist Temple in their new location in a quiet Santa Paula neighborhood. There she participated in a temple blessing ceremony, was invited to offer a Sunday Dharma talk at Segaki, and deeply appreciated time together with the monks.

After traveling north along the California coast, Rev. Clairissa enjoyed mid-morning tea and a temple tour with Rev. Helen at the Redding Zen Buddhist Priory. She then spent two days at Shasta Abbey, joining the monastic community on the occasion of Reverend Master Jiyu's Yearly Memorial and visiting our Founder's burial stupa on this 26th anniversary of her death, before heading home across eastern Oregon.

It was a source of great joy to share the practice face-to-face with so many friends in the monastic and lay sangha of our Order. It was good to meet congregation members from each temple. We offer our thanks for the warm welcome Rev. Clairissa received.

Potential for Individual Retreat Guests: One of the main purposes of the Wallowa Buddhist Temple from its beginning two decades ago has been to offer individual retreats. Currently, we have resumed in-person retreats as ever-changing conditions allow. If you are opening to the possibility of a future retreat here with the monks, you are most welcome to contact us.

— *Rev. Master Meidō and Rev. Clairissa*

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## Canada

### Lions Gate Buddhist Priory

— *Lytton, British Columbia – Canada* —

We were grateful for fine sunny weather right through to November, and for the many visitors who came. People came for tea, for day visits, and for longer stays from the local area, other parts of British Columbia, and from Alberta.

We held many festival ceremonies on Sundays over the past months, including Kshtigharba, Bhaisajyaguru (The Medicine Buddha), Kanzeon, Thanksgiving, and Remembrance Day. On September 11, we held the one-year memorial for Mogi Wong; a number of people attended from Vancouver. On September 18, we held a memorial for HM Queen Elizabeth II, and we welcomed people from the local area for that. Segaki (The Feeding of the Hungry Ghosts) was held on October 31 at Mandala Hall.

Rev. Master Kōten and Rev. Master Aurelian attended the Monastic Family Gathering from September 20-27. This consisted of a number of meetings held virtually via Zoom. Most of the monks of the Order were able to attend from North

America and Europe. The meetings lasted a couple of hours each day. It was very gratifying to see all our brother and sister (and aunt and uncle) monks, to renew acquaintances, and to discuss matters in an informal setting.

In mid-October, Rev. Master Kōten visited the Edmonton Meditation Group for ten days. He led a day retreat at the Providence Centre in Edmonton, attended two of the Sunday meetings, and offered private spiritual counselling for a number of group members. We are grateful to everyone for arranging the many details of travel and accommodation which made the visit a success.

In mid-November, we were delighted to welcome Venerable Kalden to the Priory. She is an old friend, a monk of the Tibetan tradition who began her monastic career as a monk at Shasta Abbey in 1999 around the same time as Rev. Aurelian. She has since become a disciple of Venerable Tenzin Palmo, in India, and has spent the past three winters in a cave in the Himalayas. Although her visit was short, it was very lively and full of teaching and wisdom.

— *Rev. Master Aurelian*

## Further Information

The Order of Buddhist Contemplatives was founded by the late Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett. The Order is dedicated to following the tradition of Serene Reflection Meditation (Sōtō Zen).

The main offices of the OBC are at the two training monasteries in the Order, Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey in England and Shasta Abbey in the USA.

More information can be found via the Order's website at:  
<https://obcon.org/>

Information on the whereabouts of the Order's temples and meditation groups, with their website and contact details, can be found at: <https://obcon.org/temples-and-meditation-groups/>

As well as the two training monasteries mentioned above, there are a further nine affiliated priories and nine meditation groups in North America, and in the United Kingdom there are ten priories and twenty-two meditation groups.

There are also Priories in both Germany and Latvia, plus two Priories and three meditation groups in the Netherlands.

Four issues of *The Journal* are published each year. They are available as PDF or Ebook files via the Journal's website: <https://journal.obcon.org/>

There is no charge for *The Journal*, though donations are always welcome via: <https://journal.obcon.org/donations/>

An annual compendium is available at the end of the year via print-on-demand, comprising all the articles which appeared in each issue during the previous twelve months.

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

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

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

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