



The Journal
of the
Order of Buddhist
Contemplatives

*Serving Members and Friends
of the Order Worldwide*

Volume 38 Number 1
2564 B.E. (Spring 2023)
ISSN 0891-1177

Copyright © 2023 Order of Buddhist Contemplatives
All rights reserved



Kanzeon Statue in the Berkeley Buddhist Priory Garden

Spring 2023 Issue

Editor: Rev. Roland

Proofreading: Thanks to Gina Bovan, Eldridge Bultjens, Chris Hughes, Eric Nicholson, Leonard Selzler and Eric Xuereb.

CONTENTS:

<u>In Memoriam: Reverend Master</u> <u>Saidō Kennaway</u>	4
<i>Rev. Master Mokugen Kublicki</i>	
<u>A Lamp Unto The World</u>	8
<i>Rev. Master Myōhō Harris</i>	
<u>Being Grounded in the Present</u>	13
<i>Rev. Master Meiten McGuire</i>	
<u>Beyond the Dream</u>	18
<i>Rev. Master Hugh Gould</i>	
<u>Two Old Men on a Park Bench</u>	29
<i>Willie Grieve</i>	
<u>Five Laws of the Universe</u>	34
<i>Rev. Master Andō Mueller</i>	
<u>Aspiration for a Higher Life</u>	52
<i>Rev. Master Seikai Luebke</i>	
<u>News: USA & Canada</u>	66
<u>News: UK & Europe</u>	72
<u>Further information</u>	81

In Memoriam

Reverend Master Saidō Kennaway, M.O.B.C.



With sadness we announce the death of Reverend Master Saidō Kennaway, a much-loved and deeply appreciated and respected member of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives, and Prior of Telford Buddhist Priory. Reverend Master Saidō passed away on Friday 3rd March 2023 at the age of 72.

Deep sympathy is expressed to the wide circle of all his family and friends as well as to those in the monastic and lay Sangha. He will be greatly missed.

Reverend Master Saidō's illness of pancreatic cancer progressed swiftly during his last few weeks, and he died after a one-night stay in Princess Royal Hospital, Telford. Rev. Kanshin Lucas and John Bamford were at his side. Many thanks are offered to all those who helped or sent many greetings and thoughts of love, gratitude, and support. Especial thanks are expressed to Karen Richards, Chris

Hughes, John Bamford and all the members of Telford Buddhist Priory.

Reverend Master Saidō, who had made such a generous offering of his life and training for the good of so many, was grateful for, and touched by, for all the messages and prayers he received in the last weeks, even though unable to answer each individual as he clearly would have wished.

From his early years and Ordination in 1977, through the profound and crucial years of training at Shasta Abbey with the core group of monks invited from the U.K by Reverend Master Jiyu-Kennett, and onwards during the years after returning to develop Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey as a centre of monastic and lay training, Reverend Master Saidō's contribution has been immeasurable, and his dedication, depth of teaching and generosity in helping all, truly exemplary and inspirational. It is a tribute to Reverend Master Saidō that so many considered him their teacher, guide, supporter and close friend.

He became Prior of Telford Buddhist Priory in 2000. There he continued to be a refuge and teacher for many, and yet encouraged each in their full ability to realise the truth and to participate fully in the ongoing life and running of the Priory.

Most people would not even know of the many branches to which Reverend Master Saidō extended his Dharma help and practical expertise, through being a Trustee or Advisor to many charities and groups both within and beyond the Order. From his deep commitment to Angulimala, the prison chaplaincy service, to being available as an Advisor and friend to all the Order temples, priories, and meditation groups in Europe ... the list was long and went on! His

experienced support and contribution was always useful, often pivotal, and greatly appreciated.

Reverend Master Saidō had a deep and profound Faith, and the help he extended was based on a deep understanding of the Dharma. He was always down-to-earth, practical, unassuming and had a wonderful sense of humour which always kept those around him with a smile on their face and not infrequently in stitches! He had a genuine interest in everyone he met and showed great generosity of spirit in showing appreciation, championing various skills, and listening to all with genuine interest and attention.

Going forward many will better express his contribution and their gratitude for his life and legacy. As one of his many friends, I will add my name to all those who say an enormous “Thank you!” with love and a deep bow from the heart.

Reverend Master Saidō, the legacy of your profound yet unassuming, kind, and wise heart will live on, and leave its imprint in this world!

— *Rev. Master Mokugen Kublicki*

Short Resume

Rev. Master Saidō was born David Kennaway 14 March 1950, Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire; died 3 March 2023, Telford, Shropshire.

A science graduate, before entering monastic life he worked in the field of water treatment and purification.

In addition to the roles quoted above, he was First Prior of Reading Buddhist Priory 1990-1991; vice-abbot of Throssel Hole, 1990s; OBC European Advisor 1997-2023;

trustee of Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey, The Network of Buddhist Organisations, Norwich Zen Buddhist Priory, Rochdale Zen Retreat, Dharmazuflucht Schwarzwald, The Place of Peace Dharma House, and The Order of Buddhist Contemplatives Activities Trust. He was also Spiritual Supporter to Morning Star Sangha Trust and Monastic Advisor to Archbishop Rowan Williams Hermitage Trust.

And for many years, one of his jobs at Throssel was to take the daily rain guage reading:



A Lamp Unto The World

Rev. Master Myōhō Harris

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

A personal tribute to Reverend Master Saidō Kennaway who entered Parinirvana on 3rd March 2023.

The death of a monk, or of any person, is the unfolding of the Buddha’s Teaching. It is part of ‘existence, time, flow’. The conditions that came together to create a human being have changed, they fall away within, and as, that unfolding.

Whilst we are here, in human form, we make endless choices as to how we live the transient life we have been given. It is through those choices, through the way that we are, that we show our understanding of Buddhism. The Buddha told his followers to become a lamp unto themselves. It is by showing the truth of what we have found, through how we do what we do, how we treat others, that the light of Buddha shines forth in this world. Words can come easily, too easily at times, actions take a great deal more effort.

Reverend Master Saidō and I were postulants together in 1977. We were amongst the first group of Britons who went from Throssel to Shasta Abbey, to be ordained by, and train under the direction of, Reverend Master Jiyu, with the

intention of returning to form the basis of a British Sangha. As the years went by, he made choices, always grounded in meditation and the Precepts, that enabled him to be transformed from an inexperienced postulant into the magnificent monk he was, thus becoming the living embodiment of the teaching and, by his actions, demonstrating how others can change their lives too.

How he lived his life was the Dharma talk. How he conducted himself was the ever-flowing unfolding of the Buddha's teaching. Trustworthy and honest, dependable, kind, free of affectation, helpful and a joy to be around. Always in harmony with the Precepts. These actions were the light that shone forth from his lamp, making it a universal lamp. The Light of Buddha shines of itself, and the practice shows us how to become a lamp that enables that light to be seen in human form. Through his years as a Teacher of Buddhism and a Master of Meditation, he inspired, and guided, many others to find the refuge for, and within, themselves.

Reverend Master Saidō led meditation groups in several prisons. When a prisoner from one of those groups heard how ill he was, he sent him flowers. The deepest form of training is to 'just live', in an unpretentious, unselfconscious way. He embodied this, and it enabled a wide variety of people to be able to connect with the Buddhist teaching. Like so many others, I feel blessed to have had this gentle monk in my life.

If ever anyone was ready to ‘meet the end of life without impediment’, it was Reverend Master Saidō. When he told me that he only had a short while to live there was no emotion, no tension, just acceptance. His words were, “It’s impermanence”. What came to mind was a quote from Dōgen, who said that the uncertainty of life is the truth, revealing itself before our eyes. We are all one with existence, time, flow. We are all transient. Nothing is fixed. There will come a time for each of us when death is the next step on our journey. Reverend Master Saidō could take that step without a backwards glance, because he had nothing that was left undone to trouble his mind.

Our human life manifests for a reason, and the practice highlights what, for each of us, is the particular spiritual work that needs to be understood, resolved and completed within our lifespan. It is worth taking time to reflect upon that, whilst we still have this life.

The pancreatic cancer advanced rapidly and he experienced pain without complaints or regrets. He died as he had lived; which was to be one with the truth, fully accepting what life had brought to him. There was no resistance to his deteriorating physical condition. When the mind and its object are one, and we do not create any separation, there is only the life of Buddha, appearing in endlessly different forms, some of which can be very painful. He sat, unmoved,

within those changes, and they carried him home, unto the source.

His death, like his life, was an offering of Dharma. On the day he died I was miles away, yet in meditation I knew he had slipped effortlessly into a sea of peace. The tender beauty of it filled the temple. There is a completeness to it. Human grief passes, being part of existence, time, flow. The Eternal Mystery, the place wherein we sit and disappear, had called him home and, with a bow, he entered Parinirvana.¹

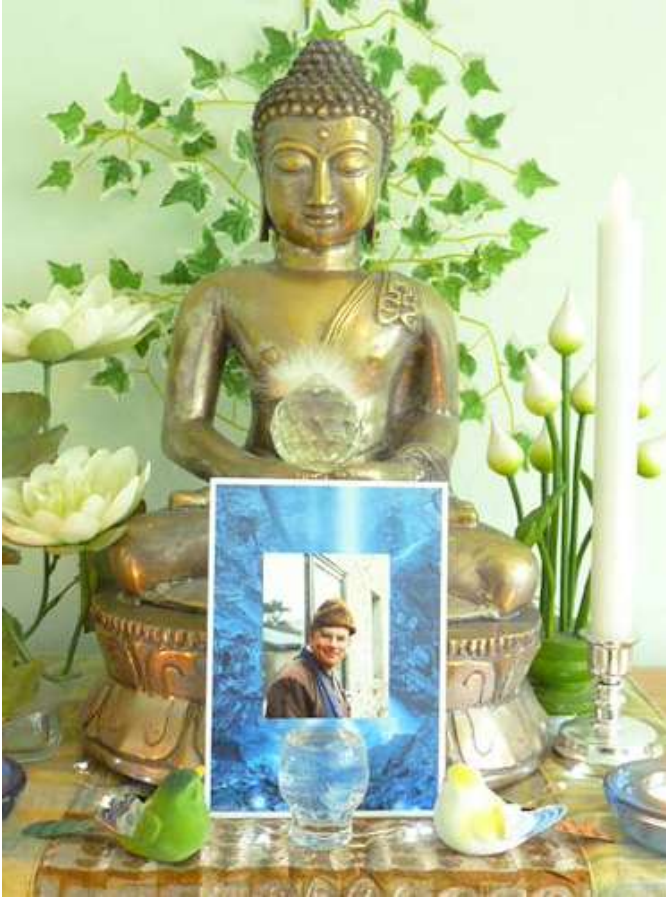
* * *

His monastic name was Hōun Saidō, meaning the Western Hall within the Dharma Cloud. Rev. Master Kōten wrote this poem:

Saidō

The Western Hall is silent now,
Quiet and Stillness pervade,
Gone into the Light.

Om Mani Padme Hum, the dewdrop slips into the shining sea.²



Notes

1. Parinirvana is a word used to describe how the depth of someone's training can result in the extinction of greed, hate and delusion, when, at the time of death, body and mind fall away, and all that remains is Eternal stillness.
2. This final line of the article is not part of Rev. Master Kōten's poem. It was added by the author.

Being Grounded in the Present

Rev. Master Meiten McGuire

— Vancouver Island, British Colombia - Canada —

The Vancouver Island Zen Sangha is delighted to announce that Coming Home – Taking Refuge Within, the long-awaited new book of Rev. Master Meiten McGuire's writings and reflections, is now available. The following piece is a previously unpublished chapter from the new volume. More information about the book follows the article.

I'm seeing more and more clearly the ceaseless activity of attention. Most of the time it is caught up in the play of the skandhas, the never-ending flow of activity in thoughts, feelings, fantasies, broodings, play-backs of the remembered past. It's all over the place, or we are all over the place as we are dragged around by all of this. It is what was meant by a Buddhist monk when he would admonish himself each morning to, "Wake up, don't be fooled!" He wasn't referring to being fooled by others, but to this very dominating tendency to get caught up in the skandhic activity.

I can see that the trouble I'm having with physical balance, and hence walking, is a gift urging me to be in the present, otherwise I am off balance and could fall. This makes me very uneasy, so you would think it would be simple to just

stay grounded in the activity of standing and moving, but no, it isn't that easy. When we are "grounded in the present," we are really "functioning with awareness"—it is the same thing put in different ways. Within this precious awareness the Voice of God, the Eternal, the Lord of the House may be heard. It is always here, right now, every moment. The trick is to stay tuned to It instead of all the activity within our little minds. The latter is included within the Whole, but it is only a part of It, and the mental noise can drown out the "still, small Voice" of the Eternal just as our pointed finger can block out the sun. Then we take this little tiny bit, this 'me,' as the center of everything—and suffer, accordingly. The Buddha said that when we grasp at anything, Mara stands beside us. Mara is how Buddhists refer to the doubts, desires, and muddle that confound us when we mistake the part for the Whole and then place demands [grasping] on how that Whole should be.

The antidote for this is simply to pull ourselves back to an awareness of this moment. This is a place of quietness for it is just being one with that which is. "Seeing the Way things are" sometimes is a synonym for being enlightened. Momentarily we let the veils of our desire, hatred, and confusion drop away—or rather they just do drop away when we have grounded ourselves in the present. This is the place of peace and security. There's nothing to fall from, it's solid, it's real. The very serenity and simplicity and evenness make it hard to notice.

When I get caught up in the stream of thoughts and feelings and then wake up, so to speak, and return to just being here, I am bemused that something so precious is so difficult

to do. Well, that is the rub of it of course—one can't attain it in the sense of holding on to it, for then we are once again in the land of samsara, the suffering that comes with grasping at anything. By letting go, we have what we were afraid we'd lose that led to the clinging, the attachment. And it takes a lot of trusting, a lot of faith, to just let go.

Fear of the Unknown, of what comes next, prevents our living in the Flow of Life. In that Flow come both pleasure and pain, success and failure, all the opposites that prompt our swinging, wanting the one and scurrying away, if we could, from the other. This is why all-acceptance is so very important to cultivate. Reverend Master called all-acceptance the Perfection of Zen, of our training. We can veer off from staying in the Simple Present, which is the Place of all-acceptance, because being in this spiritual Place not only exposes our suffering, but also threatens to expose the causes of the suffering. And that can be very unpleasant to endure. So we opt for the 'devil we know' instead of the 'devil we don't know,' and do things that create more suffering so that we can avoid facing the causes of suffering within ourselves.

Our own humanity, our own limitations, the consequences of our own actions, help us wake up from this nightmare again and again. When we are thrown back on our need for help from Something greater than ourselves, and when we are able to cry out for that help, we cut through the negative cycle. And in fact, we can't do it all ourselves, we need to rely on the Eternal to help us. This help is always available to us, but so often it is only when we come to that exquisite place of uncertainty that we really get in touch with

It. When we feel all self-sufficient and on top of things, then we think we are in charge of our life, and it does not even occur to us that we need the help and guidance of the Eternal. Of course, deep-down we know this isn't so. Any moment life could be snatched from us, or some catastrophe or another could fall right on top of us totally unexpectedly. I am finding that there is nothing so salutary as the humility of knowing there is nothing that I can count on and that God is running the show. I am assured that it is all working out, that everything is being taken care of. Over and over again, I am getting proof of this in my daily life.

All-acceptance can be grounded in seeing the value of what befalls us, rather than trying to hold things to another course. It isn't a Pollyanna view that ignores life's difficulties, but it is firmly rooted in that faith that whatever happens is for the best. Now how we understand what really is best has to be from the point of view of our spiritual development—I think that is the only way to get out of the realm of the opposites. The recognition that we can't see the whole picture can help here. It is said in Buddhism that Buddhism will last as long as bowing lasts. And bowing is an important part of our practice in a monastery, the getting down on our knees and bending head to the floor kind of bowing. The physical act hopefully puts us in touch with the more important heart-act, giving our heart over to That which is greater. We do a lot of bowing each day in the monastery, conveying that this kind of acceptance can't only be done once. It is a constant re-dedication of our lives to what is fundamentally important and helps put into balance our daily concerns, if we let it. It is a very wonderful way to live, a way to cultivate the faith to stay

grounded in the present and listen to the Voice that can guide us.



Coming Home – Taking Refuge Within is a 540-page paperback. It includes Rev. Master Meiten's previous three books, which are now out of print: *Reflections on the Path*; *Reminders on the Way* and *Returning to Stillness*. 25 new chapters of previously unpublished writings – essentially a fourth book – complete the volume.

The print version can be bought via Amazon, where an eBook version is also available, at minimal cost. The eBook is also free to download from the Vancouver Island Zen Sangha's website: (<http://www.vizs.org/writings.php>).

Beyond the Dream

Rev. Master Hugh Gould

— Eugene Buddhist Priory, Oregon – USA —

This is an edited transcript of a talk given at the temple in October 2021.

I'd like to take a look at the chapter in *Roar of the Tigress, Volume Two* called *Beyond the Dream*¹. And since this book is available online through Shasta Abbey's website, if you find what we're talking about of interest, I'd highly recommend that you take a look at this chapter. Because it's a very lengthy chapter, what I want to do is touch on a particular thread that Rev. Master Jiyu develops, as I think it's quite relevant to what we've been discussing over the last number of weeks.

Beyond the Dream is from a lecture that Rev. Master Jiyu gave in the monks' meditation hall at Shasta Abbey, probably back in the 1980s. And it's about one of the chapters in Great Master Dōgen's work the *Shōbōgenzō*, called *Muchū Setsumu*, which is translated as: *Giving Expression to a Vision from Within the Vision*.

Now in the title *Muchū Setsumu* it has the word ‘Mu’ twice. It’s a Chinese character that’s pronounced ‘Mu’, but it’s not the ‘Mu’ that we know about that means ‘emptiness’. In this case, the character means either ‘dream’ or ‘vision’. Those are the two closest English words for it, and Rev. Master Jiyu says that she will use the word ‘dream’ to refer to how we usually see our world; the world we’re living in, the normal everyday life that we’re aware of. She’ll use the word ‘vision’ to refer to that which goes beyond the dream, that which goes beyond this world, this everyday world that we live in and are aware of.

The starting place for talking about this chapter, this teaching, from the *Shōbōgenzō*, Rev. Master Jiyu says, is to recall the verse from the *Diamond Sutra*: “Thus shall ye think of all this fleeting world: a star at dawn, a bubble in a stream, a child’s laugh, a phantasm, a dream.” All of these images, all of these descriptions are of the transiency of life, and the True Reality lies beyond this transiency. The ‘vision within the dream’, therefore, is That which is Real because It goes beyond our usual everyday reality. And then, interestingly, she says that the True Reality, the vision:

...has the characteristic of seeming to be unreal from within the dream in which we presently live. When we have a glimpse of this Reality we call it a ‘vision’ because, in our world of dreams... [that is, in our everyday ordinary life] ...we have no suitable word in our vocabulary to describe That which is unborn, unbecome, unmade, uncompounded.

And then she says – and it would be interesting to listen to the recording that this chapter was transcribed from: “It is imperative to know from personal experience this vision within the dream.” I would imagine she is saying this directly and strongly, and with great faith and certainty.

Rev. Master Jiyu then gives us a kōan, talks about a kōan, and says that, in the code of ancient Zen writings, this Reality that lies beyond the dream is also sometimes called ‘the head’ (as in the head that’s on top of your shoulders). Perhaps you have heard the old kōan which poses the question: “What do you do when a tiger chases you up to the head of a ten-foot pole?” ‘The tiger’ is also code for the will to train and ‘the pole’ is both the stem of the lotus of training and the physical spine. So already she’s touching on things that she has talked about extensively in *How to Grow a Lotus Blossom*.

The question that has been posed by this kōan is not one of what to do when there is a large cat licking its chops at the bottom of a pole on top of which you are sitting, but of “When the will chases you to the ends of training and the spirit rises to greet the Unborn, rises to greet the True Reality, what do you do?” And she says the answer is very simple. You just be one with the True Reality, enter the vision within the dream, leaving aside what you “know to be real”. This is where Zen training will lead. If you sit down and meditate, as Rev. Master Jiyu used to say, you run the risk of being “grabbed by the Cosmic Buddha.” If you sit down and meditate, the True Reality over time will reveal itself. This is the choice that we must make. The ‘will to train’ is the

exercising of, the putting into action of the choice that we're making moment-to-moment, day-to-day. You either remain within your dream, holding on for dear life to what you "know" or you leap into the unknown, wherein lies the True Reality.

She then goes on to talk a little bit more about the True Reality and one of the things she says, and it's something that we're very well aware of, is: "It cannot be understood by the reasoning mind, let alone by the religious doctrines and theories that people put upon you in your childhood." I didn't have any such doctrines and theories put upon me in my childhood, but I know Rev. Master Jiyu, and a fair few other people did. She goes on to say: "Know that a full explanation of the True Reality is impossible ... Therefore all the words that I have said are inadequate and wrong in one sense, but they are an attempt to explain the inexplicable."¹ [Page 79, lines 27-32] They are a very sincere attempt on her part, on my part, on any teacher's part to point in the direction of True Reality, to impart what it is. But also, be aware that all words are inadequate and inaccurate. And I know that, so don't hold me to what I say sometimes!

Now, the next part that she talks about is, I think, getting at the incredible importance – and the word 'incredible' is very much an understatement – the vital importance of temples and places of training and what their functions are. She says that the place where the vision within the dream is most fully given expression is the assembly of the Sangha. And, right here and now, we are one assembly of a Sangha. She says: "As such, this assembly is the place of the greatest

intimacy which humankind can experience, for it is the place of the sharing of Truth.” So, the reason that people come together in temples and meditation groups is that we want to share in the Truth. “It is the place of practice and the place of teaching, the place of the turning of the Wheel of the Dharma, the place of the flowering of the Dharma.” And it can be challenging, I know, in our current times because it's prudent for us to be joining via Zoom due to the Covid pandemic. We don't have our usual going to the temple, walking into the temple and realizing that we're walking into a space, into a place where we're wishing to share in that Truth. One of the things that can be very helpful as a reminder is to try to really bring to mind, when you're connecting via Zoom to a temple, whatever temple that may be, that you've walked into the temple, and all that represents for you and your practice.

I thought it was really wonderful to see that Rev. Master Jiyu uses the word ‘intimacy’, and she uses it very specifically in terms of the Dharma and the sharing of the Truth and the support that we're giving each other for our own journeys in the unfolding of the Truth. Rev. Master Jiyu then takes it from the coming together as a Sangha and the sharing of the Truth, the sharing in our practice, to say that:

...as the dream subsides over the course of training, as we cease to be interested so much in the dream and become more and more interested in the True Reality, so the Truth emerges. We can know from our own living experience That which previously seemed to be but a pleasant dream within our dreaming, which is the

Reality. And that what we have, up to now, called “reality” is but a dream.

I came across these teachings years ago and it has taken time to really deepen my understanding of the statement that this “reality”, this life that we take as reality, is but a dream and to see what's really being pointed out here. It doesn't mean that this life is not important or isn't occurring. Rather, in the process of clarifying it and honestly acknowledging more and more we see that actually everything that has unfolded in our life is transient. We realize that this life is not really a refuge. As we meditate, as we go about our daily life expressing this understanding, that is the only way we're able to open ourselves up to the True Reality.

Notice she says it becomes something more than what previously was just ‘a pleasant dream within our dreaming’. There needs to be, over time, this clarification, this deepening understanding of what's really going on; of really seeing, fundamentally, that transiency and our grasping onto it, of trying to hold on to it, is actually really suffering for us, even though it may seem that our dream, our everyday dream, is really wonderful at times. Despite that, it's transient, and sometimes we go through a lot of grieving or a lot of anger, a lot of disappointment. And over time, we also realize that being sad and grieving and being angry, is also transient, in the sense that we can't hold on to that, that doesn't help either. The anger in not being able to continue the great dream we had last night doesn't actually make the dream come back any better. There's a real depth to the life of practice and training

that we go through to clarify: “What's the dream and what's the vision? What's the dream and what's the True Reality?” We may feel it is too bad that ‘daily life’ is no more substantial than a dream. But it's not our fault. That's just the way it is.

Rev. Master Jiyu says that another aspect of the vision is that many people have flashes of realization. Many people have the arising of the pleasant dream within the dream, but very few it would seem know what to do with them. She then states something which many of us are familiar with: “In Christianity it is said, ‘Many are called but few are chosen.’ But in Buddhism, it is more that all are called, but few answer”. In other words, the True Reality is there. And Rev. Master Jiyu says that if they do not answer it is usually because they lack sufficient faith to believe in the vision instead of the dream.

She then divulges a secret that Zen Masters know: “Herein lies the great ‘secret’ that one master passes on to another. Without faith in the reality of the vision, the only ‘reality’ that will be believed in will be the worldly dream”. So, it really, really comes down to faith, to trust. Faith and trust that there is a True Reality. Faith, trust that there is an Unborn, Undying, Unchanging. And she says: “Thus there will be constant wandering and searching in samsara down the centuries...” for those who don't have that faith. “It is because we lose sight of the vision that we busily try to keep the dream as our reality and try to force ourselves and others and the world to turn it into a real reality”. And she says it never works. It never works because, as we well know, when

we have a really wonderful dream, we can't keep it going. It's the same with our waking dream.

As to forcing ourselves and others, Rev. Master Jiyu says that "this is the state in which most of us live most of the time. You can see it in the desperateness with which people try to keep the dream called 'my life' going, and in the urgency with which they distract themselves."

So again, I think it's really helpful to remind ourselves that this is from a formal lecture Rev. Master Jiyu is giving in the meditation hall. You can really feel her pointing very, very deeply, really holding out her arm, holding out her faith so that people can hold on to this, trust in this.

Rev. Master Jiyu then moves to talking about our concern with our bodily health, and she makes it very, very clear that she's not talking about, "Oh, you don't need to go to a doctor" if something really serious is going on. She's not talking about that. She's talking about the reality that this body, as Dōgen says, is "as transient as dew on the grass". We know about birth, old age, disease and death, and this all needs to be looked at within the context of: 'This is all a dream; this is all a bubble in a stream; this is all a star at dawn, the little tiny twinkling star at dawn that you see suddenly get completely engulfed in the brilliancy of the day'.

When you really start realizing and understanding that this life is not a refuge, she says, those who know the vision actually don't worry about the fact that the body and the mind and life are transient. And that, paradoxically, is why a lot of

Zen masters – because they know the vision and they're not worried about the transiency – live to a great old age. She says you don't have the vision so you can 'kick the bucket' and then just go off and enjoy it!

Rev. Master Jiyu is very pointedly saying that we get the vision, we have the faith in the vision "...so that samsara ceases to be samsara and instead becomes a beautiful playground or a great garden, in which people can wander and play and work, and help others to find the vision." But the master cannot help them to find that vision if all they are concerned about is the dream.

This is a very direct explanation as to why we don't go out trying to drum up business. At some point a person has to have an inkling that there must surely be more to this life. And we all know the effort it requires, the work it requires to do this practice and how difficult it is emotionally to actually be putting down what we normally think of as reality. So, we have to wait until people are actually ready for that. We actually have to wait until they're willing to walk in through the temple gate. And, as we all know, with ourselves and others, lots can happen even after we walk through the temple gate. Rev. Master Jiyu says: "So, remembering this, do not worry so much about the dream; keep your perspective on what is vision and what is dream." What we can do is to have faith in the reality of the True Reality and know, through our continuous training, what is Real and what is but a dream.

So, this next bit that Rev. Master Jiyu says is, I feel, the most important part of the whole chapter. She says this right

in the heart of Shasta Abbey, she says this right within the heart of the Sangha:

To make the vision appear within the dream, although it is not a calculated or deliberate act, is an act of willingness and of faith. It is essential; it is your only true purpose for being here: to make the vision appear within the dream, and to know the truth and reality of the vision.

It is the only true purpose for being here and, turned in the other direction, it is the only purpose for a temple. The purpose of a temple is so people can gather to share in that intimacy of wishing to find the truth and to allow the vision to unfold.

Now it seems to be that in this life that we call reality, but which is actually a dream, the way our minds work is that, when we hear one thing said as being the case, we automatically infer that all other things are wrong or not the case. So please understand what the temple is for and there are many, many other things that are good to do, and need to be done. And, of course, we do those things. And a temple is for enabling people to have that vision and to know that it's the True Reality.

I wanted to finish with one final quote from the very end of the chapter. Rev. Master Jiyu says:

Do not be caught up in the dream of worldly things,
do not forsake your own sitting place to wander by

streams and within mountains, keep away from the great and the worldly – this is the way of the Buddhas and Ancestors. This is what will eventually bring to fruition what is predicted by the Buddhist Fourth Law of the Universe, which matters so deeply at this present time: in the long run ‘without fail evil is vanquished and good prevails.’

Rev. Master Jiyu was saying this, offering this teaching which is so deeply important, back in the 1980s. I would say, this teaching is even more important and relevant today. Please don't forsake your own sitting place. Please don't forsake your own opportunity to find the True Reality. And it takes a great deal of faith, a great deal of trust, to do so.

Notes

1. Jiyu-Kennett, P.T.N.H., *Roar of the Tigress, Volume Two*. Edited and with an Introduction by MacPhillamy, Daizui. *Shasta Abbey Press, Mt. Shasta. 2005.*

Two Old Men on a Park Bench

Willie Grieve

— *Edinburgh, Scotland – UK* —

First published in the September—December 2022 edition of the Portobello Buddhist Priory Newsletter.

A few days ago a friend and I were sitting on a park bench in a little park above the River Clyde near New Lanark. We'd walked part of the way along a most beautiful wooded path threading its way up and down above the river and stopped to eat our sandwich.

On the walk he'd talked of difficulties in his life: relationship problems; a potentially intractable medical condition; deep loneliness.

As we sat, I found myself telling him about another friend who'd died recently. I'd gone to his wake the night before his funeral; I wanted to give a tribute to my dead friend, and told the many people there of his kindness to me at a time of deep personal anguish because of something to do with one of my children.

My friend who'd died had been sent off to boarding school aged 7, and he'd carried into his adult life a sense that groups of men could represent danger.

He'd clearly also learned at boarding school that showing emotion was not advisable, and both his body and face had a curious quality as if frozen. As I got to know him, I'd discovered he was uncoordinated and couldn't, for example, catch a ball. Conversation with him in the small men's group to which we both belonged was rather difficult: he was guarded, and this together with his lack of facial expression and what would be known as body-language somehow made empathic conversation difficult.

But one day, walking with him in the country and telling him of the emotional difficulties I was experiencing, I powerfully felt a deep, raw kindness from him. His frozen, 'locked in' exterior seemed to melt away; and the intrinsic generosity of his heart was so evident and sincere that I felt held by it and was deeply comforted.

I tried to explain this to the other mourners, and why I wanted to read out Naomi Shihab Nye's poem 'Kindness' as a tribute to him. As I started to read the poem, vivid recollections of his deep kindness began to come back to me, and the poignant, heart-breaking contrast between his open and so-generous heart and his otherwise clumsy, frozen stiffness; and I found myself overcome.

Perhaps half a dozen times, I had to stop and try to regain control of my emotions. Eventually, I reached the end of the poem, and stood, looking down at the floor, silently acknowledging to myself my embarrassment at having shown such emotion, especially in front of a large group of strangers.

As I walked through the crowd to the back of the hall, not meeting anybody's eye, a man took my arm, and thanked me for the tribute. I said I was sorry to have become so emotional, and he replied – 'But that was the tribute. It came from your heart.' I was struck by the dissonance between my embarrassment, even shame (this is Scotland, after all) and how the tribute had touched him. Two strangers, hearts speaking to hearts.

As I told this story to my companion on the park bench, I found myself becoming emotional again. He could see the tears in my eyes; hear the catch in my voice. He asked gently if I knew the poem. Not from memory, I replied, but I have it on my phone.

I passed it to him, and asked him if he would like to read it out. He did so, slowly. We discussed some of the lines: 'the tender gravity of kindness'; how 'before knowing kindness as the deepest thing inside you, you must know sorrow as the other deepest thing'.¹

We fell into silence, gazing out over the rose garden in

front of us to where the trees steeply sloped down to the river Clyde, eyes lifting to the fields in the distance beyond the river; and the far away hills, indistinct in their haziness.

Suddenly, startlingly, I heard a deep sob beside me. I turned and saw my friend was crying. It was as if a hard knot of grief or loneliness or sorrow had become dislodged in him, releasing the emotion behind it.

We sat side by side without speaking, two old men in their 70s, tearful on a park bench; two threads uniting in ‘the cloth of all sorrows’ and letting what had arisen pass through into a place of peace and tender kindness.

Later, still in companionable silence, we walked through the rose garden in the park. I found myself transfixed by the beauty of these flowers, these roses. Deep red, glistening with drops of dew or rain. A perfume, bitter-sweet. Perfection. Utter perfection. We stood for some minutes, enrapt, before walking on.

On the path, fragments of words from Dōgen came to mind which I later looked up:

To carry the self forward and illuminate myriad things is delusion. That myriad things come forth and illuminate the self is awakening.²

Whether mistakenly or not, I had the sense that in the

curiously cleansed state after letting the wash of emotion pass through me, those roses had ‘come forth’ in a way I hadn’t experienced before. Their vivid presence and perfection seemed to enter an empty space cleared by a letting go, a letting arise and fall away with nothing added, except perhaps for both of us a tacit acknowledgement that for what we had shared, no words were needed.

Notes

- [1.](#) Shihab Nye, Naomi, *Words Under the Words: Selected Poems*. Eighth Mountain Press, 1994.
- [2.](#) Tanahashi, Kazuaki, ed. *Enlightenment Unfolds*. Shambala, 1999, p 55.

The Five Laws of the Universe in Relation to Serene Reflection Meditation

Rev. Master Andō Mueller

— Shasta Abbey, Mount Shasta, CA —

This is an edited version of a talk given at Shasta Abbey in May 2018, kindly transcribed by Kristy Kette.

Today we've had a Meditation Sunday, so I'm going to talk about one of my favorite Buddhist teachings, the 'Five Laws of the Universe'. I would like to relate it to our Serene Reflection Meditation practice. For me, this teaching has been very helpful to go back to when I need clarification and direction, and it's one of our windows into the great body of the Dharma. Of course, there is a lot of overlap between this and other Buddhist teachings. I see it, though, as foundational for supporting the practice of meditation and Buddhist contemplation. Most of you have probably heard of the Five Laws of the Universe. If you haven't, you might like to have a look at Rev. Master Jiyu's article and commentary on this subject in our booklet entitled *An Introduction to the Tradition of Serene Reflection Meditation*¹ which is available on Shasta Abbey's website at the very bottom of the publications page.

So, the First Law of the Universe is: the physical world is not answerable to my personal will.

This may be obvious, but how many times do we need to be reminded of this? Certainly a little awareness of this law is what brings most of us to do religious training, isn't it? I know, as a young person, my life didn't go quite the way I had imagined it would. This created quite a disturbance in my mind and heart. We don't realize when we're young, or perhaps at any point in our lives, that this disturbance is actually a very positive thing. Great Master Dōgen taught that: "We must always be disturbed by the truth." So already at a young age most of us have that sense of "Hmm, there is something I'm not getting here." So if we're willing to trust our experience of this first law of the universe we can start to change course. This law points me to the need to practice acceptance and humility. We have no ultimate control over the processes of our bodies, our environment, natural and physical laws, our planet, the universe...ultimately, we are not in charge. Rev. Master Daizui once gave me a beautiful, helpful answer to my question at one of our monastic spiritual direction ceremonies. He said: "We are not in the driver's seat." This was actually very close to the time when he was dying of cancer so I think it reflected a profound realization for him. So it's our practice to tune in and work in harmony with these universal principles. We can't stop our bodies from growing older, getting sick sometimes, and eventually falling away no matter how hard we try. It is also, of course, our responsibility to take care of ourselves and each other, and our world, as best as we can. Right here we

have this interesting paradox, and that's why we meditate. In our meditation practice we sit still in the midst of these seeming opposites. We sit still in the midst of whatever is going on, within and without, not pushing away thoughts, feelings, sensations, perceptions and also not grasping after them – always returning our attention to just breathing, just sitting steadily, gently with a bright, alert all-acceptance. We don't try to be something special or get somewhere else during meditation or even be in charge of the meditation. How could you really do that? If you've tried meditating you'll know that these strategies don't work. You can bring your mind back to just sitting but everything else you have to allow to let go.

Rev. Master Jiyu, in her commentary on this law of the universe, says: “We are not the Cosmic Buddha and there is nothing in us that is not of the Cosmic Buddha.” That's a contemplation for meditation, isn't it, or a reason to meditate. She says further: “Thus, no Zen Master ever says that they are enlightened or unenlightened... That Which Is, is not a personal God...” Since there is nothing within us that is not of the Eternal or the Cosmic Buddha, we can feel free to just sit and to be present with whatever arises, pleasant or unpleasant. There is nothing actually to push away or to grasp after – nothing really to be feared. Our responsibility is to take care of the Life of Buddha, that which we are part of. When we are suffering from frustration or unfulfilled expectations, it is very helpful to reflect on this first law of the universe. Usually the suffering means we are trying to do something that doesn't work; we are going down a dead-end road. So it's

just reminding us. It always helps me, at such times, to take a good, deep breath: “Ah, yes, that is not the way to go....let’s correct course and go on straight ahead.” By just sitting we align ourselves with this truth, and what needs to be done next opens up.

The Second Law of the Universe is: the law of change.

Many of us are brought to religious practice through some realization of this law, which points to the fact that everything within and without is in a constant state of flux, without interruption. We've all heard this teaching many times and we may think of it as poetic, however, it is not just a nice, philosophical idea: it is a truth of the universe reflected in real, lived experience. Perhaps we've at some time lost a loved one, a family member, a friend, a pet critter that we held dearly has passed away, or a close relationship hasn't worked out. Perhaps we've lost a job, our income, or our health may have taken a turn for the worse.... just to give a few examples of significant changes in our lives that get our attention. Even if we feel completely happy and have everything we want, we still sense that eventually we will separate from these things and their enjoyment. The luster and beauty of youth fades eventually despite our best efforts, even when we take good care of ourselves.

This always brings to mind one of the interesting stories from the *Therigata*², the record of awakening stories of the female arahant disciples of the Buddha – their enlightenment poems. The state courtesan of the ancient Indian city of

Vesali, Ambapali, became a lay disciple and supporter of the Buddha. She was apparently an exceptionally beautiful woman and had acquired a great amount of wealth in her position. In time, however, she became disillusioned and renounced the world, asked to enter the monastic order, and following the Buddha's teaching eventually became an arahant. In her awakening poem she relates the contrast between her former beauty and the condition of her body in old age:

My hair was black and curly the color of black bees.
Now that I am old it is like the hemp of trees.
This is the teaching of one who speaks truth.....

My eyebrows were crescents, painted well.
Now they droop, and are wrinkled as well.
This is the teaching of one who speaks truth.....

I had a sweet voice like a cuckoo moving in a thicket.
Now cracked and halting you can hear my age in it.
This is the teaching of one who speaks truth.....

This is how my body was.
Now it is dilapidated, the place of pain,
an old house with the plaster falling off.

To some this can seem like a dismal reflection, but to Buddhists it's actually considered healthy and vital to allow the awareness of the law of change to penetrate our minds within the open stillness of meditation. This is so, so

important, otherwise we will live in dread of loss, of sickness, old age and death, and there is no need to do that.

As we practice meditation, we see that grasping after external things to make us happy eventually becomes unsatisfactory. We all have some experience of this or we wouldn't be here. Once we sit still with this insight and allow awareness of it to be fully present, we begin to allow a peace and a joy to arise that is beyond any transient satisfaction we might have had in the past or might have hoped for in the future. Certainly, this is my experience. We can see that we've been investing importance in the wrong direction by identifying so strongly with passing thoughts, feelings, things, experiences. By training ourselves in meditation to let go of clinging to or rejection of these, we connect with that which is much deeper, bigger, and embraces everything. And we become aware of the fact that we actually can do something about ourselves; we are capable of change.

So that's the other side of the coin of the law of change. I remember when this started to really dawn on me in my training. I began to see this particular law of the universe - this teaching of Anicca in a completely different light. It was as if I had been trying to fight it and had resigned myself: "Okay, well, I've just got to put up with this....." But it actually works in our favor. We are capable of change and suffering is not permanent. We can convert our harmful tendencies. We don't have to first change everyone around us or fix the world to suit our opinions and views in order to deal with our suffering, nor do we have to settle for mediocrity –

which many of us unfortunately do – for sort of second best in our training by clinging to ideals and expectations. Rev. Master Jiyu often warned us of the latter, especially her female disciples. To my mind, acceptance of the truth of change opens us to real liberation. The Buddha taught us that there is an Unborn, an Undying, an Unconditioned, Uncreated. In my experience, the flow of change is the Compassionate Uncreated, Unchanging. By just sitting in meditation we can safely give ourselves over to it. As Rev. Master often kindly pointed out: if we try to grab hold of a handful of water from a river we end up with nothing; however, if we are content to just trail our hand in the water we will know the pure fullness of the flowing water. This explains how to sit in meditation.

The Third Law of the Universe is: the law of karma is inevitable and inexorable.

I have found that some understanding of the law of karma – even a little – gives our lives a profound sense of purpose. According to Buddhist teaching, we come into this life with our work cut out for us. We've already got a job to do. Meditation practice eventually quiets the waves of thoughts and gives us some detachment from our feelings and sensations, from the drive of our desires, our expectations, so that we gradually come to see the negative karmic tendencies we've developed and what needs to be done to let go of and convert them. Without meditation it is very difficult to develop this awareness of what needs to be done.

As we can see when we listen to the news and also study history, humankind seems to go round and round on the same problems. I often feel that teaching about the law of karma to children in schools would be immensely helpful. Of course, it would have to be done with a non-judgmental attitude of mind and from some real experience of how it works on the part of the teacher. It needn't be done as Buddhist teaching per se; just passing on our lived experience of this truth in natural ways as early as possible in the life of a child would prevent so much suffering and would help empower young people to trust and live from their own True Nature.

In serene reflection meditation practice we allow awareness of our spiritual dis-ease to come to the surface, and we begin to see how we are reaping the consequences of past and present choices and behaviors. By neither repressing nor indulging thoughts and feelings as we sit, including letting go of self-judgement, we gradually see with pure awareness what our minds have been up to and how we create suffering. By sitting still and just being with how we feel, for example, we stop adding fuel to the fire of ignorance and allow it to eventually burn itself out. This is my experience – just not shying away from feelings in meditation throughout the day, whatever they might be. Not pushing them away and also not getting all caught up in them, but just: “Ah, ok, I am really annoyed right now” or just note, “I’m feeling very fearful”, or whatever is there. Since all things within ourselves are ultimately of Buddha Nature we don’t have to be afraid of being with anything that arises. There is no ultimate evil here. In the end everything can and will teach us.

Depending on the strength of a particular negative karmic tendency, be it from having acted out of greed or anger or delusion, the conversion can take some time, so we have to be patient and it's often not comfortable. Sometimes one can experience short periods of excruciating pain. I remember sitting in meditation at a time following some past mistakes in my training when I was turning my heart around. It felt like sitting with a burning infection, like a boil coming to the surface. You know how sensitive that feels when you have an infection and it hasn't quite opened and been cleaned out? It's extremely tender and you feel you can barely stand it, but I found that with patience – just keeping going with faith in the practice it eventually changed. It turned over into becoming a cleaned-out wound, and as the pain dissolved soothing, warm, water began to flow through me. It was a gradual process and I'm glad I persisted. Sadly many people give up meditation before they get to that point of conversion in their lives, so persistence is vital. Knowing about this law of the universe and, of course, the support of the Sangha helped me to trust that what I was experiencing was a natural process of cleaning up karma.

We find, in just sitting, a cutting through that which has bound us to the wheel of suffering. We can change the direction of our karma and we can live a life of merit – one that is of increasingly greater benefit to all beings including ourselves, and one that is in harmony with what really works. When we accept the truth of karma as being inevitable and inexorable, we learn that we are being offered opportunities all the time to heal and to find greater peace. Through

meditation we become open to what really works, which is expressed fully within the Buddhist Precepts – to cease from evil, do only good and to do good for others. It is a great joy to discover that we truly can do something about ourselves.

The Buddha taught that in reality “No doer is there who does the deed (a particular action that creates karma), nor is there one who feels the fruit (there isn’t an absolute self here); feeling is the reaper of karma”.³ There isn’t a permanent self that we have to fix or wrestle with or judge as good or bad or hold onto in any way. It’s more a matter of being willing to look, sitting still with the karmically-generated feelings and letting go, allowing ourselves to rest in our True Nature, in what we sometimes refer to as the Great Ocean of Meditation. For me, this teaching has been critical in understanding the law of karma. There are just inclinations that ‘we’ have inherited from the past and color the way we feel and think. We can do something about this now, by ceasing to perpetuate harm; we don’t have to continue selfish tendencies and also pass them on to a poor wretch in a future life. Once we have cleansed a particular deluded karmic stream or a chain of jangles or knots, as it were, it vanishes, actually. Of course we need to keep going in our training, and there is nothing to carry on and no self to carry anything. We can gradually free ourselves and realize that the law of karma, at its source, is actually Infinite Compassion. When we see clearly and accept within the mind of meditation our harmful tendencies and open up to sange,⁴ compassion enters in. And we are able to have greater compassion for others, because each of us has been or is working on some difficult piece of past

karma.

The Fourth Law of the Universe is: without fail evil is vanquished and good prevails – this too is inexorable.

Through our just sitting practice, as we learn to let go of attachment to the idea that we're a permanent entity, a separate, abiding self, we have the privilege and comfort of becoming more aware of the inherent goodness at the heart of life, at the heart of all things. We're creating fewer 'clouds in a clear sky', and we can see the Buddha Nature shining through beings and things more and more. We begin to see the potential of Buddhahood in ourselves and others. When I can look at the bigger picture in this way, it seems to me that all things are ultimately moving in the direction of Enlightenment. It's sometimes very subtle and easy to lose sight of this at times but when we have even a little glimpse of it, it's quite mind-blowing. All pain is naturally moving towards resolution, which is the reason for rebirth. Beings are reborn, or bits of unresolved karma are reborn. Because of the great compassion of the Unborn, Undying no one and nothing is left out in the cold, no bit of unresolved karma is abandoned; everything is eventually brought to liberation.

Rev. Master Jiyu used to talk about the fact that if you look at human history carefully, you can actually see overall progress that we've made in the area of following the Precepts. It may not always be apparent, of course. We tend to hear about all of the horrible things happening in our world on the news; these stories are usually at the top of the page,

aren't they? They're sad and it may be good to know they're happening; on the other hand, there are usually myriad numbers of people who are going to the rescue and offering generosity and kindness every day in the midst of very difficult situations, which you don't hear nearly as much about. It's true, if you look carefully: in the past it was not uncommon to hold executions in the streets and there were very few laws around that – or they were ignored. Certain kinds of cruelty that we would now consider as completely unacceptable these days were commonplace less than a century ago – in most countries that is, I realize not in all places and not at all times. It helps to reflect on this and to be careful of what we might over-expose ourselves to, to be careful of 'doom-scrolling' on the internet, for example. As Buddhists, we transfer the merit of our meditation and training to all those we hear of on the news caught in disasters and conflicts, wishing that all will become free from suffering and know true peace.

I remember as a young person when I lived in London, England, in this vast city, seeing even in the midst of street-to-street concrete, little flowers and grasses, live things, popping up in the cracks of the sidewalks. One such time there was a little “aha” moment, when I realized nature is going to keep doing its work no matter what we get up to. It was a moment of hope, an encouragement to continue in faith.

It's important to look at our own practice and to take heart in and have confidence in progress that we have made, not being full of pride obviously but allowing the awareness

of positive change in our training to enter our minds and strengthen faith, giving us courage to keep going. I find that my outlook on life always brightens as a result of our ‘just sitting’ practice, it seems in spite of myself sometimes. We have a choice to either go with this or to block it and hang on to resentments, opinions and despair. The former clearly works; the latter doesn't. I also find that, as I go on in my training, I see kindness in others and all around me more and more. It is our work as bodhisattvas in training to not only practice kindness but also to acknowledge and support it in everyone we meet. This is an aspect of benevolence, which this universal law points to. Great Master Dōgen says in his *Shushōgi*: “The stupid believe that they will lose something if they give help to others, but this is completely untrue for benevolence helps everyone, including oneself, being a law of the universe.” And Rev. Master Jiyu encouraged us to “give ourselves over to It”.

In Buddhism we do not consider there to be an ultimate source of evil. There is no sort of absolute devil that operates in opposition to an absolute god. I believe this is very significant to understanding this law of the universe and to trusting our meditation practice and daily training. Yes, harmful impulses may arise, however there is not a fundamental badness that we can never get rid of. In a fraction of a second, such an impulse can vanish in just sitting and we can settle into and give ourselves over to the flow of benevolence. Ultimately the Buddha Nature will make use of everything.

Finally, The Fifth Law of the Universe is: the intuitive

knowledge of Buddha Nature occurs to all.

When I was working as a tutor for a period of time in the past, paying off debts, I found contemplating this law of the universe very relevant. It was helpful in my work with students and with myself, of course, because I wasn't always sure of how best to help. Education is an interesting subject, and I often thought, "What are we educating our young people or ourselves into?" Of course, certain skills and knowledge are needed to live in our world, but I also felt it was important to stay grounded in this understanding that the intuitive knowledge of Buddha Nature occurs to all. I noticed that one of the main things I was often dealing with wasn't just providing information, skills and resources for students but pointing them to their own intuition – their own good instincts and sense of what was good to do – what was worth exploring and spending time with, encouraging confidence in who they were at heart and that they could safely trust and live from that place. When we are sitting still in our own practice, getting self out of the way, letting go of judgements, learning to listen more deeply, we can offer immense support in very simple, practical ways in the ordinary daily lives of those we work with.

I remember as a young person beginning to discover this intuitive knowledge. I'd been wondering what direction my life should take and how not to continue creating grief and suffering – questions about career and family. I was somewhat at sea and was experimenting with various therapeutic and eastern religious practices. When I stumbled upon just sitting meditation from the Sōtō Zen perspective, even though it occurred in a

somewhat strange environment, I began to have a sense that this was the Way for me. There was no bottom and no top to it, no limit, in other words it would go all the way. I had no real idea what that meant at the time and I'm still discovering it; however, I realize now there was a breaking through to a spaciousness then; an intuitive awareness of the path opened up quite naturally. It no longer seemed so important what exactly I decided to do with my life, but became apparent that there was always the next step, what needed to be done, that the external aspects weren't as important as how I went about the doing – with greater presence of mind and kindness. It began to matter more that I looked for the root of suffering and trusted the compass of meditation that I'd found, however wobbly I felt in my practice.

Some time ago I was asked to offer a class on Buddhism at a local community college. A young woman came up to me at the end of the class and said, “So, you mean there is a Buddha in my heart that I can listen to and learn from?” And I said, “Yes!” and I thought, to myself, “Oh, how nice, somebody actually heard me! She's not making it complicated.” It wasn't an academic question. It was lovely, delightful. And then she had about six other questions – very straightforward and refreshing.

I've also found the teaching of this universal law particularly helpful in pulling myself out of difficulties in my training at times when it was hard to see the way forward. By just tuning in, that little niggler is heard that says “just sit still a little longer” or “just take the next step...go to lunch!...have a cup of tea!” or “talk to somebody” or “well let's go to sleep and see what happens by morning”. One of the ways I've

experienced this is that we have a best friend in our hearts whom we can learn to trust and take refuge in and who will guide us through light and darkness. It doesn't stand against wise guidance from good friends, and the Sangha Refuge is always vital, of course. We do have to allow ourselves to get quiet enough to hear this often unspoken guidance that naturally arises from just sitting practice. I find that more often than not by just getting on with what is in front of me, bowing and doing the next thing, what seemed to be a problem has evaporated. I find myself often recalling Rev. Master Jiyu's advice to not create clouds, problems in a clear sky.

So in just sitting practice, not grasping after thoughts, feelings and things, and not pushing them away, this intuitive knowledge of Buddha Nature arises naturally. We don't have to hunt for it or think of it as such, it's just as it is and brings great comfort and relief - a great remedy for worry, although that isn't the only reason we sit. One of the great joys arising from the practice is the deepening kinship we come to know with all sentient beings; yes, we share in their sorrows too, however from a very different perspective now. By trusting the awareness of Buddha Nature or simply That Which Is, we naturally – often unknowingly – appeal to and support this intuitive knowledge in others, those known to us and unknown. To my mind this is the most powerful cause for bringing about positive change in our world.

Rev. Master Jiyu says about the fifth law of universe:

All beings have the intuitive knowledge of the Buddha nature – hence the creation of religions and

Precepts down the centuries. When man does not heed this intuitive knowledge, body and spirit separate and the cycle of birth, old age, disease and death becomes as a binding cord from which he or she cannot be free until he or she again decides to heed the still, small voice within which is the voice of that intuitive knowledge which comes directly from the non-personal Buddha Nature. As a result of modern thinking, man educates his children away from this and with the spread of materialism, man is increasingly looking for the cure of physical and mental illness outside of himself rather than within and the young become steadily more confused at an earlier and earlier age.

I should end by saying that in Buddhism we don't have any sort of cosmic police or somebody who is enforcing these laws. Laws in this sense means Dharmas – just the way things truly are. These teachings are expressions of direct experience in meditation and daily preceptual training on the part of Buddhist practitioners and masters down the centuries. They are not presented as a creed of belief, but rather an encouragement to pay attention to and learn from our own experience and to motivate us to practice. It is my experience and great joy that this wonderful just sitting practice allows us to know these truths for ourselves, the acceptance of which brings ever-growing unshakeable peace of heart and mind.

Notes

1. *An Introduction to the Tradition of Serene Reflection Meditation*. <https://www.shastaabbey.org/pdf/IntroSRM13.pdf> Shasta Abbey Press, 2000. [This volume includes The *Udana Sutra* and *Shushōgi*, also referred to in the article – Ed.]
2. Murcott, Susan. *The First Buddhist Women, A Translation and Commentary of the Therigatha*. Parallax Press, 1991, p 145.
3. Narada Thera, *A Manual of Buddhism*. The Buddhist Missionary Society, Kuala Lumpur. 1971, p 80.
4. “Sange”, the Japanese word for contrition, confession, repentance. The sincere recognition of all that is wrong with one and the acceptance of one's past karma. Sange is the true source of religious humility and a principal gateway to enlightenment. In *Zen is Eternal Life* by Rōshi P.T.N.H. Jiyu-Kennett, Shasta Abbey Press 1999, p 328.

Aspiration for a Higher Life

Rev. Master Seikai Luebke

— Pine Mountain Buddhist Temple, Santa Paula, CA – USA —

This article was originally published in the Pine Mountain Buddhist Temple Newsletter in January 2023.

The following dedication comes from Lama Shenpen Hookham's book *There's More to Dying than Death: A Buddhist Perspective*:

Through the power of the truth of the true nature of our
being,
The indestructible essence of the heart,
Through the power of the truth of our inherent
qualities
Of openness, clarity and sensitivity,
Through the power of our inescapable connection with
each other
And the all-pervading Truth of the Buddha,
Through the power of all the good we have done,
Do or ever will do,

May you and all beings always find your way on the
path to Awakening,
Without fear, obstacle or hindrance.
May you be protected from fear—be relaxed and
fearless;
May you be protected from grasping and clinging—
remember, everything passes;
May you be protected from anger and hatred—let go
of everything, good and bad.
With thoughts full of love and joy,
Thinking of how we will all meet again and again,
Determined to repay the kindness of all beings
And repair the harm we have ever done or will do,
May we pass in peace from this life into the next.¹

At the point in a year when our star, the sun, dips to its lowest point in the sky at noon—the winter solstice—it seems appropriate to reflect on what the deeper meaning of our life is, and what exactly we truly aspire to. The minimum amount of daylight is reaching us at whatever latitude we live, and so it is naturally a time of death and renewal, of looking inward and thinking of what aspects of life we find troublesome, and what aspects we would like to cultivate.

Ancient cultures throughout the world have marked this point in the year with some sort of returning-of-the-light ceremony or festival—it seems to be an innately human thing to do, particularly for people living some distance away from

the equator where there are marked seasonal changes. “Saturnalia, held in mid-December, is an ancient Roman pagan festival honoring the agricultural god Saturn. Because of when the holiday occurred—near the winter solstice—Saturnalia celebrations are the source of many of the traditions we now associate with Christmas, such as wreaths, candles, feasting and gift-giving.”² In Buddhism, the festival marking the Buddha’s Enlightenment has traditionally been held in December, either on the 8th or on the full moon day.

The above dedication of intent, or declaration of aspiration, seems to summarize into one short stanza how we, as Buddhists, view our lives and what gives meaning to them. It starts by invoking our higher nature and our loftiest qualities as human beings. The indestructible essence of the heart is something that we can actually experience by sitting still within ourselves, allowing our attention to reside in the heart. For a person new to such a practice, it can seem daunting if not impossible, because the human mind is so full of distractions, worries, fears, misgivings. It takes a certain level of determination and persistence to learn to just sit still in the warmth of your heart. Lots of feelings and emotions show themselves, seemingly to divert us away from such a simple but important human experience. The true nature of our heart, its inherent qualities of openness, clarity and sensitivity, allows us to embrace all such experiences and allow them to fade away.

The human heart does speak, but it speaks softly. In order to hear it, the brain has to quiet down enough so that our

higher nature—our better judgment—can tune in to what it has to say. What the heart has to say might well be contrary to what we are hearing all around us, or what society as a whole would like us to believe. Thus, for those who decide to look for something deeper, it is necessary to face the resistance that we are likely to encounter. All of us have a comfort zone within which we feel relatively safe, and that usually means we are not going to encounter too much resistance to the path we have chosen, but once we start listening to the heart, the decisions we make and the path we follow may be unpopular. While it may be easier to follow the crowd, on the other hand doing so might very well prove to be an unsatisfactory way to live. That is the choice: choosing a more difficult path based on the knowledge of your heart versus the safe path of doing what everyone else does.

The “power of our inescapable connection with each other and the all-pervading truth of the Buddha” points to the benefits of being part of a Sangha, those who band together to practice the teaching of the Buddha. There is a collective energy that is created by such a group, not just in Buddhism but in any religious tradition, and this too seems to be an innately human thing to do. If the aspirations of the larger group are pure, i.e. not tainted by desires to wield power, accumulate unnecessary wealth and money, or give in to any one of a hundred other human desires, we will benefit from the collective energy. A lot can go wrong, and often religious groups create more suffering than they alleviate, which leads many people to want nothing to do with organized religion. I completely understand why. So here again is another point of

having to make a choice: choosing a religious path in life which involves both listening to your heart and sharing space with other people whose aspirations and behaviors may not be completely pure, versus going it alone.

The Buddha himself faced exactly this choice, and on at least one occasion he walked away from his own religious community and went to live alone in the forest. Human nature is such that there are always going to be moments of friction and difficulty whenever people live and practice together, and we should not expect that it will ever be otherwise. So, taking this fact of life on board, we can nevertheless create what we call in Buddhism a “harmonious Sangha”, a group of relatively like-minded people who put their devotion to a well-established, liberating path ahead of their own individual desires. The “all-pervading truth of the Buddha” takes all of this into account. It is a truth which holds everything in a delicate balance and is forgiving of human error. And, first and foremost, if we really look honestly within ourselves, it quickly becomes apparent that what we all need to do is purify our own hearts. That is the real on-going work; a religious group’s primary function is to facilitate that work and shed light on how to go about it.

Another way to look at our inescapable connection with each other is to recognize that as human beings living on the same planet, together with all other forms of life, we are interconnected. There is both individuality and inescapable interconnectedness. All beings depend on other beings for their continued livelihood and wellbeing. We cannot really go

it alone no matter how hard we try: we are part of an immense interwoven fabric of life forms, pulsing with an inconceivable number of interactions, births and deaths. The question is whether we can be individuals in a way which benefits all other beings, or whether selfishness takes over and we live from that self-centered place which has the aspiration of greed: more stuff, more money, more power, more, more, more. So our most fundamental task as human beings is to transform greed into generosity; learning to give as well as take; learning to care for other beings as well as ourselves.

At one end of the human spectrum there are amazingly generous, altruistic people who make it their purpose in life to help others; conversely, at the other end, are troublemakers, people who have nothing but their own selfish interests at heart. Most people lie somewhere between these extremes, trying to do a little bit of good but mostly just getting by, and not above a bit of lying and cheating to get what they want. The overall impetus of the modern world is to get more, to have more, to achieve some sort of status in the hope that it will make you happy. The most fundamental shift takes place when you realize that this just doesn't work. If you sincerely aspire to a deeper inner peace, tranquility of mind, you have to realize that, "wait a minute. By some miracle I'm still alive and have a functioning body and mind. However I live, however I relate to other people will come back to me in the course of time. Now I wish to move in the direction of awakening from this dream state and do good both for myself and others."

When you reach this point, the universe steps in and offers you innumerable opportunities to make this happen. It is almost always challenging, but then again, what is life without that challenge? Usually either boring or meaningless. Your own heart will also step in and offer quiet but sound advice on how to move forward. To this end, it is extremely helpful to allow your brain and your heart to be on good terms and communicate with each other. Rather than having your brain run the show all the time, it is better to train it to consult with the heart on any matter of importance. The ego-driven brain is always wanting something, always a little bit unsatisfied, always in a hurry to get somewhere. Just look at how people drive their cars. The heart tells us to slow down, take the time to do things right, don't try to get ahead, just be with whatever you are doing and let it take time. If you take this step of listening to your heart, it will be a radical departure from how the world currently works.

Good things happen when you live this way, when the brain and the heart are on good terms. Most of all, you can be at peace within yourself. And you will be helping others around you by exhibiting a sense of calm in an ego-driven, competitive world. This is what Zen practice really is: to stop chasing after stuff, to settle down within yourself and just be with things as they already are. It is not a magic formula, it is not all that popular, it doesn't get headlines, but it does radically change how you experience life.

Being a force for good generates its own energy, which we call merit. The dedication goes on to invoke all the good

we have done, do or will ever do—a sea of merit—and through the power of that merit makes the wish that we will find our way on the path to awakening. That is essentially how awakening is arrived at: through the accumulation of merit and the positive, wholesome effects of it. I recall an exchange between a fellow trainee and our Zen teacher, Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett, in which the monk stated her desire to arrive at a deeper level of awakening than the level she had already experienced. Rev. Master Jiyu said, “Well, my dear, then you should generate a lot of merit.”

The dedication makes the wish that all beings find their way on the path to awakening without fear, obstacle or hindrance. I haven’t yet met anyone on a religious path who has not met with and had to overcome fears, obstacles and hindrances, and although it is a nice thing to wish for, on the face of it, it seems like magical thinking. Is there really a way to wave a magic wand and have obstacles disappear? No, but on the other hand there might be a different way of looking at it. Suppose that when you feel afraid, something in you recognizes that “this is just fear: I don’t have to be ruled by it.” Then you can take a breath and start to relax within the feeling of fear. Then you have entered into a transformative process which takes fear and turns it into confidence. Similarly with an obstacle or a hindrance, at first we will usually regard the situation as standing in our way, preventing us from moving forward. But again, something in you says, “don’t worry, this is temporary; it is an opportunity to learn something,” and the transformative process continues. In the *Heart Sutra*, a Scripture we use in our daily practice, there is

a line which says: “In the mind of the Bodhisattva, who is one with great wisdom, the obstacles dissolve.” Dissolve is the key word. Time, effort and patience dissolve obstacles. And that is one of the ways to create a lot of merit.

One practice which I’ve found invaluable in my life, and which has to do with this transformative process, is to have gratitude for everything. I’m still not able to do it immediately in the face of any and all difficult situations, but the inward discipline of bowing to everything radically changes life for the better. The sooner the better. Normally we feel we are justified in complaining about unfairness, of being mistreated in some way, of being wronged. But there actually is a fleeting moment in which we choose, one way or another, to complain or harbor resentment versus accepting things as they are, bowing to them, and then deciding to do the best you can, whatever that might happen to be. Bitterness is the accumulated habit energy of choosing to be bitter; contentment is the accumulated habit energy of acceptance, bowing to difficulty. It is very easy to live in denial of this and to try to blame somebody else for our problems. The road to happiness begins with accepting that at every step of our life’s journey, we have made little decisions which have accumulated into the state we currently occupy.

May you be protected from grasping and clinging—remember, everything passes. May you be protected from anger and hatred—let go of everything, good and bad.

These two sentences are pointing directly to how the human mind works, and how we essentially go through our lives creating our own unhappiness and frustration. Reaching the point I mentioned above of thinking that “this just doesn’t work” is to recognize that the key to everything is how we use our own minds. There are two polar opposites: at one end, grasping and clinging—innate human tendencies—and, at the other end, anger and aversion—also innate human reactions. Grasping and pushing away. What my Zen teacher called “the third position”, i.e. a neutral place in between grasping and aversion, is the place of acceptance and meditation. An easy mistake to make within any spiritual discipline which includes the practice of meditation, is to try to achieve something in your meditation. Trying to reach a place of bliss. This only works for a while, and then you will run up against an immutable truth, which is that the trying itself gets in your way. Our society is totally goal-oriented; it is simply how we think about everything. So to let go of goal-orientation itself is not easy to do. It means coming back again and again to the neutral position of just being, just accepting, just observing the way things are. Let go of everything, good and bad does not mean to adopt an apathetic, “whatever” attitude. Rather, it means putting your efforts in the direction of doing good for others without holding on to the results. Real letting go means accepting our human limitations, giving up our insistence that a particular happy outcome is always reached. Fairy tale endings are nice, but they aren’t always reality; reality is far more complex.

With thoughts full of love and joy, thinking how we will all meet again and again, determined to repay the kindness of all beings and repair the harm we have done or will do, may you pass in peace from this life into the next.

This is really a dedication of your own life to work for the benefit of all beings, which in Mahayana Buddhism—the branch of Buddhism practiced in the Far East—is a Bodhisattva Vow. Giving up a purely selfish orientation to life, recognizing our interconnectedness, and then doing what you can with your own particular set of abilities and talents to help other beings is a Bodhisattva Vow. On a doctrinal level, this vow is usually expressed as vowing to help all other beings to realize their own unity with all of creation not just in this life but for an indefinite number of lives into the future. My own thinking in this regard is that we can only live one life at a time, and so it is probably not helpful to most people to think beyond this life. We might very well meet again and again, but the main point is to do the best you can do in this life, right here and now, and to not worry about the indefinite future. In fact we can only live one day at a time, and within a day, you can only ever live from one moment to the next. So on a purely practical level, a Bodhisattva Vow is to live in the moment, giving up grasping and aversion.

Sooner or later we will all have to face death. It may come suddenly or it may be a slow decline as the body simply wears out. Most of us simply don't know how this is going to

play out, and when we die we will take nothing with us of a material nature; all we take with us is the merit we have created by living unselfishly, or the reverse – the ill effects of being a grasping, selfish human being who does not care much for anyone else. All of us will enter the ocean of death with a mixed bag, but what is of utmost importance is the aspiration we have cultivated as a human being. Our aspirations and intentions set the tone for the whole of our lives. They will have a direct bearing in determining what sort of life we will enter into at the end of this one.

One of my favorite dedications within the liturgy that I've been exposed to as a monk comes from the Pure Land tradition of Buddhism, which is widely practiced in the Far East, and in sheer numbers is a much bigger school than the Zen tradition. The dedication, which is normally sung at the end of a ceremony, is as follows:

May we meet the end of life without impediments
And may the Great and Holy Ones come from afar to
receive us.

May the holy water held by Avalokiteshwara be
sprinkled upon our heads
And the golden platform of Mahasthamaprapta be set
beneath our feet.

May we leave this world and its five kinds of pollution
in the twinkling of a second,
And in a flash, reach the sea of the lotuses; after our
lotuses have bloomed

We shall fully see the Kind, Honored One and, in person, listen to and hear his voice clearly.

Having heard Him we shall rest in peace beyond rebirth: this is our true belief.

Without abandoning this holy place we may, if it so be His wish, re-enter the human world,

Thereafter being well versed in those expediences to enlighten sentient beings and adroitly to

Convert all earthly toils to Buddhist service. These are our sincere wishes and are, of course, known to Buddha.

Because of our sincerity of purpose they will finally be realized in the future.

Wholeheartedly we honor the One Who preached the truth, Shakyamuni Tathagata,

Together with his thousands and millions of Nirmanakayas

And all Buddhas throughout the Dharma World.³

Notes

- ^{1.} Lama Shenpen Hookham, *There's More to Dying Than Death: A Buddhist Perspective*; Windhorse Publications, Birmingham, UK, 2006; p. 166.
- ^{2.} <https://www.history.com/topics/ancient-rome/saturnalia>
- ^{3.} PTNH Jiyu-Kennett, *The Liturgy of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives for the Laity*; Shasta Abbey Press, Mt. Shasta, CA, 1990; pp. 201-204.

News of the Order

USA & Canada

Shasta Abbey

— *Mount Shasta, CA - USA* —

We passed a relatively peaceful winter season at the monastery. On December 1-8 we observed our week-long winter retreat culminating with the Abbess's Dharma Ceremony and the Ceremony of the Buddha's Enlightenment. We were glad to share the retreat with Rev. Jisen Coghlan of the Boise Zen Center in Idaho.

During the late fall and winter we appreciated visits by Rev. Master Kōten, Rev. Master Hugh, Rev. Master Leon, Rev. Master Vivian, and Rev. Veronica. A Korean Zen nun, Rev. Cheong Eong Sunim, also spent time with us.

During January we closed the monastery for our usual time of rest and renewal. Two of our older monks met with misfortune: they both fell and fractured bones. They are both undergoing rehabilitation in a nearby nursing center, and the community is visiting them most days.

On February 2nd we re-opened for lay guests and began the spring training term. The next day, February 3rd, we sadly said farewell to Rev. Master Serena, who is going for health reasons to live with her daughter in the Bay Area (photo opposite). Rev. Master Serena was a resident for twenty-five years and served most of that time as Bursar. We are grateful for her many years of practice and we will miss her. We wish her well and look forward to seeing her from time to time.



On February 17th we had another departure, although be it temporary: Rev. Master Haryo left for a family visit on the East Coast and on to England to spend a year at Throssel Hole Abbey. We are grateful for the many things he does for us, in addition to being Head of the Order. We will miss him, too, and look forward to his return.

Before he left, Rev. Master Haryo had the pleasure of naming Rev. Vivian and Rev. Helen as Masters of the Order. Our hearty congratulations go to Rev. Master Vivian of Still Flowing Water Hermitage, and Rev. Master Helen at Redding Zen Buddhist Priory.

— *Rev. Master Oswin*

Redding Zen Buddhist Priory

— *Redding, CA – USA* —

5 years! On February 5, 2023 Redding Zen Buddhist Priory celebrated five years of offering a place for quiet sitting in downtown Redding. Over the past five years, including the COVID years, the Priory has offered the Dharma through meditation,

ceremonies, retreats, and spiritual direction, in-person and via ZOOM as we accommodated the demands of COVID.

Many thanks go to the Priory Sangha who – from the very beginning and today – support the Priory with deepening practice, in-kind offerings of food and material items and professional expertise, and generous financial donations. Great Master Dōgen tells us that ...when the Buddha does all, and you follow this doing effortlessly and without worrying about it, you gain freedom from suffering and become, yourself, Buddha. In the hands of the Buddha, may the Priory's next 5 years of offering the Dharma to the Redding Zen Sangha benefit all those, known and unknown, in need of merit in our world.

On February 5th Rev. Master Haryo announced Rev. Helen's naming as a Master of the OBC to the Redding Zen Sangha, via Zoom, at the Priory's Fifth Anniversary Ceremony.

On the afternoon of Sunday, February 5, Rev. Helen gave the Precepts to Shonna Lea Snyder in-person at the Priory with Lay Minister Susan Place as chaplain. Shonna and Jeff were married at the Priory in October, 2022.

— *Rev. Master Helen*

Wallowa Buddhist Temple

— *Joseph, Oregon – USA* —

Connecting with the Order: A recent hour-long Order-wide monks' video meeting was deeply appreciated by both Rev. Master Meidō and Rev. Clairissa. The two of us drove down from our foothills of the Eagle Cap Wilderness (where internet is slow) to log on from the home of a Lostine congregation member who kindly loaned us his living room for the morning.

Serene Reflections Podcast Launched: We are pleased to offer the Dharma now in the form of a new podcast called *Serene Reflections: From the Heart That Seeks the Way*. This new

Dharma podcast can be accessed via our Wallowa Buddhist Temple website page here: [Serene Reflections Podcast](#).

The podcast's graphic icon (below) is called "Reflection on Great Compassion: Hearer of the World's Cries." It was created and offered by one of our local congregation, illuming a close-up view of the life-sized carved wood statue central in our temple's Kanzeon shrine. Photo by Adele M. Buttolph.



The *Serene Reflections Podcast* offers spoken Dharma from Rev. Clairissa. Episodes are prepared and recorded here at the Wallowa Buddhist Temple especially for individual audio listeners anywhere. Sound processing is generously offered by local congregation member Bob Webb at the Mountain View Recording studio.

These gentle, introspective teachings flow from one monk's personal reflections on the myriad facets of living Zen practice in our tradition of Serene Reflection Meditation. Each episode lasts about half an hour, or less. A sample archive of past episodes is

posted for now, with new episodes and more past episodes to appear in the future.

Individual Retreats: One of the main purposes of the Wallowa Buddhist Temple from its beginning over two decades ago has been to offer individual retreats. Currently, we have resumed scheduling 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 directly at wallowabuddhisttemple.org.

— *Rev. Master Meidō and Rev. Clairissa*

Canada

Lions Gate Buddhist Priory

— *Lytton, British Columbia – Canada* —

Here in the mountains, winter arrived with a deep freeze, with temperatures in December dipping to -30C. We managed to



keep warm with our wood and propane stoves, and it was pleasant to hold our winter retreat in early December. The retreat ended with the Buddha's Enlightenment Ceremony on December 11. During the Christmas season, we welcomed a few visitors, who braved the cold and the icy roads. The CPR Christmas Train resumed its annual trip across Canada after several years of Covid. This is a train that stops in the small towns across the country, and puts on a

live show to brighten spirits, and we were happy to attend. Also, a Korean Christian Church from the Vancouver area delivered Christmas hampers to the entire community around Lytton. Their boxes were very generous and we deeply appreciated it.

We rarely receive many visitors in the winter, and we were delighted to welcome two people in January, one from the United States, and one from Australia. Our Australian visitor was only intending to come for a week, but the entire community came down with Covid, so he was quarantined with us for three weeks. No one was terribly sick, and we all recovered. Rev. Master Kōten had left for a month-long visit to Shasta Abbey a few days prior to this, and he missed contracting Covid.

Reverend Chizen Matyszewski, a Sōtō Zen monk who was ordained in Poland several years ago was training with us since last June. He returned to Vancouver at the end of January. We were grateful for his time here and for all his help, and we wish him all the best in his continuing practice.

Rev. Master Aurelian continues to slowly recover from the major concussion he sustained on Christmas Day after slipping on some ice.

We continue to hold meditation and services on Sunday morning, followed by a community lunch. During the winter we usually get a few people attending from the local area. Visitors are always welcome: for tea, for a day, or for longer visits. Please contact us if you would like to visit.

— *Rev. Master Aurelian*

News of the Order

UK and Europe

Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey

— *Northumberland, England – UK* —

Funeral for Rev. Master Saidō: Rev. Master Finnán and Rev. Wilfrid travelled from Throssel to Telford on 18 March to attend the funeral of Rev. Master Saidō Kennaway, who died on 3 March. Rev. Master Mugō, who is currently in residence at Telford Buddhist Priory, was celebrant. Rev. Master Saidō's contribution to the growth and flourishing of Throssel, through his skills and hard work in the maintenance department to his wisdom and compassion as a teacher, is inestimable; he was a pillar of the Community 1982-1999. We offer condolences to the congregation at Telford Buddhist Priory where he will be as sorely missed as he is here. We echo the tributes paid in the two articles at the beginning of this *Journal*.

Head of the Order's Visit: We were pleased to welcome Rev. Master Haryo, head of the O.B.C., to Throssel in early March. We very much appreciate his presence, and anticipate his staying with us for approximately one year.

Winter Sangha Retreat: For the first time since 2020, we had the pleasure of lay helpers participating this January. It was a great help to have their efforts with the day-to-day practicalities of keeping the temple running, especially the kitchen duties, whilst the monks took a step back to concentrate on study and spiritual renewal. We also enjoyed Rev. Master Daishin's presence for the month – he gave a series of lectures to the community based on Nagyaarjyuna's teaching on emptiness. These were live-streamed, enabling monks from priories to join the sessions, which was an added delight.

Since resuming our normal schedule, a number of major projects have been completed, with help from contractors: The solar panels on the zendō roof have now been installed and commissioned, and they can generate a total of 9.6KW in ideal conditions. It is projected that the panels will generate around 9600 kilowatt hours per year, about one-sixth of the total needed for all our buildings. The project was mainly funded by a legacy from Rev. Master Alexander who died in November 2022, together with generous donations from our lay sangha following an appeal last year.



Woodstove: A new wood-burning stove has been fitted in the Meeting Room. This is partly a contingency for possible future power outages – during which there would otherwise be no heating in the Abbot's House. It is also helping to minimize the problem with damp which have long been an issue in that ageing former farm building.

New Phone System: In preparation for the nationwide switching-off of the PTSN phone lines, our telephone network was replaced by a digital system in early March. Once the teething troubles have been resolved (apologies if you've had difficulty getting through) this new VoIP functionality will provide a more reliable and flexible infrastructure – much more in keeping with

modern technology. More details can be found on the ‘Contact Us’ page of our website.

Visiting Monk: We have been joined for a six-month period by Rev. CheongEon, a monastic from a temple in Ulsan, South Korea, who has spent time training both at Shasta Abbey and Tōshō-ji in Japan. We warmly welcome her presence in the monastery; it is a rare pleasure to receive a residential visit from a monk who grew up in East Asia, and who was ordained and has trained in another branch of the Zen school.



At the time of writing, preparations are under way for the induction ceremony of the new abbot. Rev. Master Berwyn will make the formal commitment to keep the gates of the temple open for all beings, and perform the Dharma ceremony, inviting all monks present to question him on an aspect of the Teaching, thus demonstrating his willingness to share the truth with all who seek the Dharma. We anticipate several monks from other temples attending the day's events, as well as many lay trainees. A full report will follow in the next *Journal*.

— Rev. Master Roland

The Place of Peace Dharma House

— *Aberystwyth, Wales* —

On the 3rd of March a Ceremony of Gratitude and Farewell was held for our dear Dharma brother, Reverend Master Saidō Kennaway, who died that morning. Rather than writing more in the news section, an article, called 'A Lamp Unto The World', is offered in his memory in the main body of the *Journal*.

In December we celebrated the Buddha's Enlightenment. A talk was offered on how Shakyamuni's teachings arose within his own body and mind, they did not come from any external source, and that we too can have direct insight into the living Dharma of the moment. We thank Heather Walters who baked lotus cookies for our altar.

In Memory of, and Gratitude to, Alan MacCormick: At 9.30 am, exactly as our Buddha's Enlightenment meeting was starting, Alan MacCormick, of the Nottingham Meditation Group, died. In the early 1970s Rev. Master Myōhō met Alan when they were both working at Nottingham Castle Art Gallery and Museum, resulting in Alan giving her meditation instruction and introducing her to the Order.

In circa 1972 Alan took Jukai with Reverend Master Jiyu at Throssel and hosted an event led by her, at his house. He was instrumental in making the practice of Buddhism available in his area, and the Nottingham Buddhist Society met every Monday night at his home.

He bought the material for Rev. Master Myōhō's first robe, made a generous donation when The Place of Peace opened, and maintained contact until his death. His kindness, generosity, support and friendship were deeply appreciated. We meet people along the way who change our lives, and a Ceremony of Gratitude was held for him here, at The Place of Peace. He will not be forgotten.

In late December our garage had a new roof, paid for with a donation from the late Dilys Harris, Rev. Master Myōhō's mother, who was always so pleased when she could help the temple.

Over the festive season we received gifts of festive biscuits, chutney, toiletries, books and some welcome donations. Thank you to everyone concerned. Rev. Master Myōhō was also offered a meal by a neighbour.

Our usual New Year Ceremony was held on the 31st December. This is always a profound way to end one year of training and begin the next.

January was Rains Retreat time, with a slower pace. This month of putting things down, and entering into a more contemplative period of offering oneself to see what arises from the sitting place, and gentle pottering about, is always fruitful. It also allows for a physical rest.

Recently we have been looking at the symbolism of the noble elephant in Buddhism and have acquired a beautiful vintage one. If you wish to have Buddhist items in your home, but traditional statues are not appropriate in the communal family area, an elephant will serve you well. They represent over-coming all obstacles and negativity, endurance, the wisdom of inner reflection and the strength to never give up. They are also serene in appearance, have good memories, show gratitude, and remind us that all the beings we share this planet with reveal different aspects of Buddha nature.



The new year is now underway and our first guest has been. Zoom Dharma Meetings continue and the life of the temple flows on, with Dharma talks being sent out monthly as MP3s.

— *Rev. Master Myōhō*

Reading Buddhist Priory

— *Reading, England – UK –*

Festivals and Ceremonies: The Buddha’s Enlightenment Festival was held on Sunday 4th December 2022, and was well attended, both in person and on Zoom. Sangha members from the London Group visited for this occasion, and a joint celebratory lunch was held afterwards.

The annual New Year Retreat and Ceremony to welcome in 2023, had to be cancelled due to Reverend Gareth departing at short notice to attend to a family matter. On his return, he completed a private retreat during January.

Visits: On 25th January 2023, Reverend Gareth was once again invited to The Kennet School in Thatcham to participate in their annual Faith/worldview week. This event is for sixth formers (17-18 years) and he and a panel comprising a Muslim, a Christian and a Humanist representative came together to answer pre-arranged questions. Reverend Gareth reported back that the questions were extremely searching, and there were only 90 seconds to give an answer. He found it interesting and educational to hear how differently the questions were approached by those on the panel. When a round of questions had been answered, the students were given the opportunity to come back at one of the panellists as a follow up. After the session, the sixth formers could approach panel members individually for a chat. Reverend Gareth said that he found it very joyful to interact with the students and let them experience first-hand what Buddhism is and can mean in an individual's life.

— *Gina Bovan*

Turning Wheel Buddhist Temple

— *East Midlands – UK* —

Day Retreat in Nottingham: On Saturday the 12th of November we had a very nice day retreat at the library in Beeston. Seven people came for the morning and eight for the afternoon, and we had some lovely warm sunny weather for the day. The room we were in was much larger than the one we used for the previous retreat in July, and was also very quiet which was much appreciated.

Funeral Ceremony for Alan MacCormick: We were very sad to hear that our great friend Alan MacCormick died on Sunday the 18th of December.

Alan was a long-established member of our Nottingham Meditation Group, and a great supporter of Buddhism throughout the East Midlands for many decades. He had recently been in hospital and was recovering well, but then got a chest infection and was taken into the QMC hospital in Nottingham. He died peacefully with his family by his side.



Alan's funeral took place on 13 January in Nottingham and was attended by 80 to 100 people, including family members, friends and work colleagues of Alan, and many members of the Nottingham Meditation Group. There were several Sri Lankan Buddhists from the Leicester Buddhist Vihara there too, as in the 1980s Alan was a founding trustee of the charity which supports their temple.

Rev. Aiden was the celebrant together with Rev. Alicia from Sitting Buddha Hermitage. At the ceremony the dead are given the Precepts and are ordained into the Sangha just as is done in the ceremonies of Lay Ordination and Monastic Ordination. During the



ceremony Alan's son, daughter and son-in-law offered moving remembrances of Alan and his life. We are very grateful to Alan for his practice, and for all his support of Buddhism over many decades. It was lovely to have so many people attend his funeral so that we could give him a fitting send off, and offer our gratitude for his life of practice.

— Rev. Master Aiden

Wolk-en-Water Hermitage

— Langelille (Friesland) – The Netherlands —

Acknowledgement: I would like to offer my gratitude to Rev. Master Myōhō Harris of The Place of Peace Dharma House for reading the early drafts of my *Precious Mirror* article which appeared in the Winter 2022 *Journal of the OBC*, and identifying sections which could benefit from some clarification. With her advice, the text was made more easily comprehensible, thus honouring the author of the Scripture, our Ancestor Tōzan Ryōkai, and helping myself and others in their study and practice of Zen. Thank you Rev. Master Myōhō.

Current Activities: Since the pandemic, the hermitage has developed into something of a virtual temple. Monthly and weekly meetings are offered to the international lay sangha, as well as to

our Dutch trainees. One daily evening meditation here in the temple still continues, as do the weekend retreats with several of our long-term lay trainees.

In addition, I am working on a few texts from our Chinese Ancestors that have not yet been translated. Working at translation is rather time-consuming but very rewarding. Our young dog Citta takes me for long walks, thus helping to provide me with the oxygen and energy needed to do sedentary work.

I am currently looking forward to a short trip to Throssel where I have not been for a while, so hope to see many old friends.

I am also pleased to report that the temple website: www.wolkenwater.nl has recently been refreshed and upgraded.

Finally, here is a photo of our Founder's Shrine altar.



— Rev. Master Hakuun

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, Shasta Abbey in the USA and Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey in England.

More information can be found via the Order's website at: <http://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.

To receive a notification via email when a new issue of *The Journal* is available for download, sign up here: <http://journal.obcon.org/e-newsletter-sign-up>