

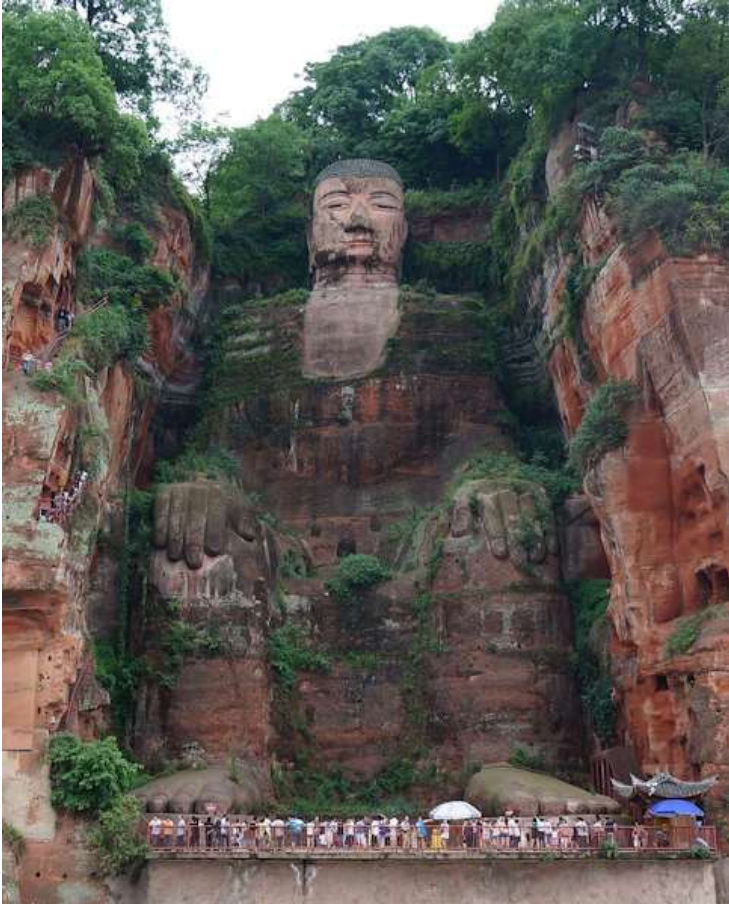


The Journal
of the
Order of Buddhist
Contemplatives

*Serving Members and Friends
of the Order Worldwide*

Volume 38 Number 2
2565 B.E. (Summer 2023)
ISSN 0891-1177

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The Leshan Giant Buddha, Sichuan Province, China – the largest and tallest stone Buddha statue in the world.

Summer 2023 Issue

Editor: Rev. Roland

Proofreading: Thanks to Lynne, Gina Bovan, Eldridge Buultjens, Chris Hughes, Eric Nicholson and Eric Xuereb.

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In Memoriam

Reverend Master Jishō Perry, M.O.B.C.

— 7th August 1941 - 3rd May 2023 —

After many months of declining health, Reverend Master Jishō Perry passed away on May 3rd, 2023. He had been a monk of the Order for fifty-three years, since the very early years of the monastery, having been ordained by Reverend Master Jiyu-Kennett on 14th May 1971, and given the name Reikō Jishō, meaning “Self-Shining Truth.”

At the beginning of January, Reverend Master Jishō fell in his room at the Abbey, fracturing his pelvis and



necessitating an Emergency Room visit. Later that week, he was transferred to a nearby long-term care and rehab facility a few miles away from the Abbey. He fell again while at the rehab center and had surgery for a broken hip. He was soon back up and about in a wheelchair or with a walker, and always had a smile and

cheerful hello for his visitors and the staff. Monks along with friends and several of his lay disciples visited with him regularly. In mid-April, he suffered a stroke, leaving him with partial paralysis on one side. However, he continued in good spirits and had been visited by an Abbey monk and one of his lay disciples shortly before he passed away.

Although his health had been steadily declining, even before his fall, he continued his monastic duties at the Abbey, offering the benefit of his years of monastic training to the community through being the Chief Monastic Instructor and Chief Lecturer. He was the Refuge Monk for a number of lay ministers, along with having several lay disciples. In April 2013, he gave the Dharma Transmission to his monastic disciple, Rev. Veronica Snedaker. Reverend Master Jishō was a prolific writer: the *O.B.C Journal* published many of his articles throughout the years, most recently one entitled, *Persimmon* in which he used his experience while Prior at Santa Barbara to offer some excellent teaching on patience and generosity. He also edited two Shasta Abbey Press books, *Sōtō Zen* and *Beyond The Pale Of Vengeance*.

He went to Throssel Hole Priory in the mid-seventies where he served as Prior for a few years, subsequently returning to Shasta with the first group of British monks to train at the Abbey. He remained a Trustee of Throssel for many years. He had received the Dharma Transmission from

Reverend Master Jiyu in 1972 and was named a Master of the Order in 1977.

His university education and his law degree were both done at University of California, Berkeley, and he worked as an attorney up until he entered monastic life. During those early years at Shasta Abbey, he provided Reverend Master Jiyu with legal assistance and later on was the legal consultant for both the Abbey and the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives. He established the Santa Barbara Buddhist Priory in 1979; in 1999 he was joined there by Reverend Master Phoebe van Woerden as Co-Prior. The Priory later relocated to Maricopa and became Pine Mountain Buddhist Temple.

Resigning as co-Prior of Pine Mountain, Rev. Master Jishō returned to Shasta Abbey in 2002 where he quickly resumed being an active senior member of the monastic community, giving Dharma talks, offering spiritual counselling, and undertaking various monastic assignments. He was appointed Corporate Secretary of the Order and continued in that position up until his death. He traveled to many temples of the Order, including Dharmazuflucht Schwarzwald in Germany where, in May 2018, he offered a week-long retreat giving teaching based on the *Shurangama Sutra*, (his talks are available on-line at <https://shastaabbey.org/senior-teachers.>)



Several of his lay disciples visited to provide help with his care during his final months. We offer our grateful thanks to them, and our sympathy to both them and to his family – his daughter Eryn and her husband – for the loss of this remarkable monk. On the evening of the day he passed, monks offered a meditation vigil in the Buddha Hall at the Abbey. The service at his cremation on May 11th was attended by both monks and laity. A public funeral is scheduled for July 1st at Shasta Abbey.

For those of us who had the privilege of training with Reverend Master Jishō, or reading his *Journal* articles, or listening to his Dharma Talks, we will long remember his devotion and daily practice of the Dharma, his welcoming smile and gentle sense of humor. We offer merit and the wish that Reverend Master Jishō (James Keith) Perry be at peace in his own True Home.

— Rev. Masters Oswin, Scholastica and Margaret

The Secret of Life Is Will and Words Are Its Key

Rev. Master Jishō Perry

In honour of the memory of Rev. Master Jishō, and with gratitude for his life of teaching, we offer this article which is an edited transcript of a talk given at Shasta Abbey in 2007.

I do have a title for this talk. Whether I have the rest of it or not remains to be seen! “The Secret of Life Is Will and Words Are Its Key.” We’re celebrating Achalanatha’s festival today, and his mantra is: “By our own wills and vigilance may we our fetters cut away. May we within the temple of our own hearts dwell, amidst the myriad mountains. Hail, Hail, Hail.”¹

Probably the hardest thing we have to do in life is to see how it is that we create suffering for ourselves and once we see that, then we have to figure out how to *not* do that. So that’s what I’m going to be talking about today, how we have to see it. It isn’t the external circumstances that create the suffering. The external circumstances simply provide the opportunity, and we either take the opportunity or we don’t.

I just got back from the hermitage, and it was very easy to practice patience there because the trees weren’t making any demands. You have all these billions of trees, all sitting still,

giving you a good example of how to train. So I get back here and I get 319 emails (everyone gasps). Yes, that's the way I felt! (laughter). And about a hundred of those came from the bank, so I had to log on to my bank account and they asked me all these security questions, but I misspelled my mother's maiden name. So they said I had to go into the bank, and I didn't immediately see this as an opportunity to learn patience! I wanted to. My thought was: "I hope the next 200 don't require as much patience as this one."

Every day we are offered opportunities, and Achalanatha – also known as Fudō – looks really fierce; he looks really mean. But the will and the vigilance that we're practicing here is that of the Buddha's Middle Way. Shakyamuni tried all sorts of teachings, and the last but one was extreme asceticism. If you tried to look like Fudō all the time you'd be in extreme distress! It's important to see that the will we exercise in training is the will of willingness. It's a much softer thing than will power. Somebody was describing recently how he, through his will power, could simply stop his thoughts by suppressing them. That was a kind of suffering in itself. When you try to repress something that is difficult or unpleasant, it's just the same as indulging it, it's just the other side of the pendulum. What we have to do is change our relationship to the thoughts, change our relationship to the difficulties. So my getting upset with the banker was simply a habit. When somebody tells you that you can't get what you want and you've got to go to town to correct this, then it's: "Aargh!" (laughter).

I'm programmed to be impatient. I notice this all the time, well, not all the time, but I'm very prone to being impulsive about stuff – even as a child. Thich Nhat Hanh talked about learning patience in every step. When he was four years old, his mother would bring him home a cookie from the market where she would shop. And he would spend the next half an hour eating that cookie as slowly as he could – and playing with the dog, sitting in the sun, and making it this beautiful, fun thing. Well I don't think I've had a meal last more than 15 minutes. I just slurp it down! What we have to do is see through this kind of behaviour, and change how we do things, because when we act on compulsive, emotional reactions, we are acting out old karma. We can learn to see with compassion – that's the crucial thing. If you look at something with judgment, you simply can't *really* see it. The judgment is already the end of the road. You've already come to a conclusion, and what you've learned from that situation is: "Bad person", right? So you can't do anything more than that.

I learned this from an old horse. When I was seven, my sister wanted to get this horse, and she was, of course, older and wiser than me, and she wasn't afraid of horses. But I was even afraid of a goat! I looked at this horse and it was huge! Seven year-old kid and a 20 year-old horse who had been taught all sorts of things – you could ride him either with an English saddle or a western saddle, and he would break into five trained, gaited things every once in a while.

Anyway, one day, when I was eight years old, I had gotten over my initial fear of this horse, I came home from

school and nobody was home, so I said, “Oh! I’ll go for a horseback ride.” And I got the saddle on, then got the bridle on, and I was standing right next to the horse and he stood on the toe of my boot, not actually on my foot fortunately, just on the boot. Well I couldn’t push him away. I didn’t think about taking my boot off, but anyway, I finally got really impatient and really angry, and I picked up the only thing I could reach which was some little twig, and I started hitting him on the shoulder – I was really angry. It was some sort of signal and very slowly he lifted up one knee and he put his knee down, and he lifted up the other knee then put that knee down, and he put his head all the way down and he bowed. And the screen came down in front of my face, I could see it to this day: “Bad person”. My mother said you shouldn’t hurt animals. You could fight with your brothers and sisters, and we did, but the animals? No, you have to respect animals and treat them kindly.

So I simply blocked that memory out. But 25 years later, my mother had just died, and I was in England. I was doing some memorial ceremonies for her, and the memory of this event came, it was such a beautiful teaching. This is what you do with anger. You bow to it.

But at the time the judgment had already concluded that there was nothing more to learn, so I just blocked that out. And what you have to see is that the judgment keeps you from learning from these mistakes, learning from your past actions. If you judge yourself there’s nowhere more to go, and training is about opening ourselves up to things and seeing where we break the Precepts, seeing where we get impatient, angry or

frustrated. Thich Nhat Hahn's definition of patience is the *Ship and Three Drums*, it's the Chinese character which is the heart-mind on the bottom and a sharp knife on the top, and his way of interpreting that is you have to open up your heart wide enough to hold those sharp or difficult things. And that opening of the heart is what we are learning in meditation.

This is what Achalanatha is teaching us – how to be still. Open your heart. Keep the Precepts. He's holding this rope in his hands which is the Precepts; the sword in the other hand cuts through the delusion of self, and we learn to see that we always have a choice. So we sit, although we've made a mistake, or we've gotten angry or fearful, whatever it is, whatever has come up – just *be there* with that. Know *that's* the truth, *that's* what's happening. Don't try to pretend it's not happening. How many times have you shouted: "I'm Not Angry"? We have to open ourselves up to the truth. And the truth is that the mind chatters; we act impulsively; we've got all this old karma – our greeds, angers, fears, frustrations and all of that, and we have to change how we deal with these things. We have to change our perception. Can you welcome the man on the telephone that tells you that you have to go to town? Can you say: "Thank you very much"? – I didn't then, but I'm learning! Maybe next time, I thought. And this *did* happen – when I went into the bank and he fixed the problem.

The kōan arises naturally in daily life. The things that happen mean we run into the self every day. We just have to look at these things with kindness *towards ourselves*. The discipline in Buddhist practice is not this harsh asceticism; we

don't have to beat ourselves up. We have to learn what it is to be kind to ourselves. The Precepts are not some sort of restraint, well they are in a way, but they are not a restraint that is going to keep you from being at peace with yourself. They are a restraint that shows you how to act like a Buddha. The Precepts are not demanded of us by God. We undertake this practice so we can learn how to convert our suffering into compassion and loving wisdom. It is up to each person to make the effort of will to do that. The secret here, is that we already have the Buddha nature.

We don't have to 'get' something. Western society has this assumption that there is something wrong with us just because we're born. In Buddhism we believe in the fundamental goodness of humanity, not fundamental badness. So that fundamental goodness means that every one of us has the Buddha nature. Everyone has just as much of that Buddha nature as we need to deal effectively with this conversion of suffering.

One of my favorite stories, and I've said this in a number of talks, is the story of Yakusan² who studied with Sekitō for twenty years and he wasn't getting it. And he was getting frustrated. Sekitō finally sent him over to his friend Baso. Baso undoubtedly knew the problem, but Yakusan told Baso: "Well I've studied for 20 years and I've read everything I could of the Buddhist teachings. I just don't get it." And Baso looks at him with a little grin on his face and says: "Sometimes I raise the eyebrows of old Shakyamuni and I blink. And sometimes I don't. And sometimes it's good to do

and sometimes it's not. So what do you think?" Well, the penny dropped. Yakusan realized that he was trying to *get* something. He later said: "When I was with Sekitō, I was like a mosquito trying to bite an iron bull." He wanted to get blood out of this iron bull, rather than saying that his training was the manifestation of the blood of the Buddhas. And in doing his training he had actually been acting on his own enlightenment without realizing it.

Dōgen talks about training as enlightenment, and the doing of the practice is, in fact, an enlightened act. To sit in meditation, to keep the Precepts, to do the very best you can with these difficulties in daily life, even if you fall down and fail a hundred times. If you still get up and do it, this is enlightenment. It's not something that you have to get, or add on, you have to open your heart. It's there already but the self is putting a kind of filter on top of that, so you can't get to that unless you choose to make the act of will to open the heart.

And all of you have done that because you are here. Everybody who comes has had to listen to something inside themselves or they wouldn't be here, because we don't go beating people over the head saying: "You have to go to Shasta Abbey and meditate or we'll beat you some more." It took me years to come to the Zen Center because I didn't want to be hit by a stick. What is the use of going to a place where they're going to go around and hit you? I had to be desperate enough. I finally got desperate enough, and when I did, Reverend Master Jiyu was there.

This practice is the door to the unknown. For me, it was when I lost my job. I was upset. I walked around San Francisco for five hours or so, and I came across Zen Center. So I tried to go in, but the door was closed. They said go away, come back in a week. I got half a block away and I remembered the story by Franz Kafka about the man from the country who comes to the Gate of the Law. The door is open and the man looks intimidating like Fudō. He explains that through this door there are a thousand other doors and each one has a guard that looks just as mean and ugly as he is. If not worse! And the man was scared away. He keeps coming back but he keeps getting scared away. And finally he is about to die and the guard comes over and says, “That door was meant only for you.” So I thought I’d better go back and try again.

So I went to another door and there wasn’t a sign on it. They invited me in and I had a cookie and a cup of tea and was told I could come back at 5:30 the next morning, which I did. After the sitting they told me that Rōshi Kennett, as she was known then, was giving a talk – which I went to. She talked about a man in Germany who, during World War II, was an SS officer, whose job was to mete out sentences for people who had been convicted of espionage. He had two doors behind his desk, both painted black, and he said: “Behind one of the doors is a firing squad, and I can’t tell you what the other one is – and you have to choose between them.”

And this is our choice in life. We can just do the same old thing, go to the firing squad and die at the end of our life

and do it all over again. Or, we can go through the door to the unknown. She said that this is Zen practice. And I was thinking, “What kind of torture can be worse than a firing squad?!” Well it turns out behind the second door was a car with its engine running, waiting to take anybody across the Swiss border who had the courage to try it. And I don’t know how many of those people took it, but this is our choice in life. We were born with a bunch of karma and we can either convert that, and do something about the self, or we die and come back again and do it again. Firing squad or whatever, it might be cancer next time or anything, you can’t tell.

And our choice is to decide: “What am I going to do with my life? How do I see my purpose?” Because we *do* have a purpose. And the spiritual purpose is opened to anyone who has the courage to go through the door to the unknown. But you’ve got to confront Fudō there, and he does look fierce, but he is an aspect of compassion – we like compassion to look like this beautiful lady in the painting in the Kanzeon Shrine, but compassion is sometimes the traffic jam when you are in a hurry; the man at the bank who tells you that you have to come in. We can see these little difficulties as an opportunity to learn, rather than: “Somebody’s getting at me.”

I was at the hermitage once and I saw this really big snake catch a fish, and I just couldn’t leave it. So I quickly got the snake grabbers which have a padded thing that goes around the snake’s neck. I got him in the grabbers and he dropped the fish, which fortunately got back in the pond. But the snake was angry – I had just taken his lunch, probably his

dinner too, and he was wriggling and he was real long, longer than I am tall, but I got him in the special bucket that had a hole in it so he could get air. I nipped into the house to get the car key so I could drive him away, and I came back out and I was a bit stressed, you know – this was a big snake! Unfortunately I tripped and knocked the bucket over, and he got loose. I had to go back, get the snake grabbers and find him again. I managed to get him in there eventually. He clearly didn't want the lid on; he was not at all happy. I had to ride in the car with this snake that was upset, and I knew that there was a little hole there in the lid. Of course I didn't want this big, angry snake to be loose in the car. So I chanted the *Invocation for the Removal of Disasters*³ that we did at this ceremony, over and over, for about 20 minutes, and I took him far enough away so that he wouldn't come back. I went down this forest path, it was a very narrow little path, and when I opened the lid up there he was, totally relaxed. He was very happy to be in this little cave. He was all curled up – more relaxed and at ease than I was! And he was teaching me: “Cool it, there's no problem here.” So, I said, “OK buddy”, but he didn't want to get out at that point! So I turned the bucket over and planted him on the ground. But – I had put him between me and the car! So I had to get a stick and I just kind of urged him to find another place to play. But this was all teaching. Everything is there teaching us. We're the ones that have to learn. Whether it's the man at the bank, whether it's the snake, whether it's the bad weather, whether it's losing a job, whether it's not knowing what to do with my life – whatever the dilemma happens to be, we can learn from it.

Lately I've been hearing people talking about how their mind is racing, and they can't sit still because they can't stop that. Well, you can't. You can't stop that mind, and you don't have to try. You have to shift your attention. It's like thinking that you own your mind and you can do something because it's there inside of you, and you think you own it. Well you don't. You don't have a deed to it. You don't have a mortgage on it. You don't even have a registration certificate! What's important is to recognize that that mind is just babbling on, and the more you train, the more you meditate, the less energy you give to that mind. And what you're doing in meditation is just sitting. Instead of focussing and thinking, you just sit. Let that mind do its babbling over there and don't get involved with it.

You can't actually make it go away. It's like Yakusan being able to see the Buddha Nature not only in himself but in all beings. He couldn't, and you can't do it perfectly. Sometimes the will is adequate and sometimes it's not. Sometimes the words are adequate, sometimes they're not. Sometimes both will and words are adequate, sometimes neither are so. And you can't depend on anything, either inside or outside. Everything is in the process of change.

Ajahn Chah used to teach that you can't understand the Dharma through words. You can only understand it when you put it into practice. When the Buddha taught the Kalamas, they asked him: "How do we know what we should believe? We've got all these different teachers coming here, and they all have different teachings, and we don't know how to deal with that." And he said: "Well, take the teaching and put it

into practice and see if it works.” That’s frequently translated as the Buddha having said: “Don’t believe anything that I say just because I said it.” That’s not what he actually said. He said: “Put it into practice because this is how you will understand the Dharma.” You hear the words, but the practice is something else. If you practice with those words, you’ll start to see those words differently. There’s a shift in perception that accompanies the doing of this practice. Because you learn when you can shift from, “I don’t want this to happen” to, “OK, let’s try this out.”

For example, for 20 years I was in the temple at Santa Barbara and I figured that by the time I got back here I’d washed enough plastic bags. So on kitchen clean-up I said, “I don’t do bags.” Some years into this I got this very clear message that said, “You’re missing out on something here.” It still took me another five years to change back, to actually admit that I do bags, because I do them at the hermitage, or anywhere I have to.

When there’s something you don’t like, or don’t want to do, that’s a clue that there’s ‘self’ involved. You have to see how that’s still holding onto some anger. In my case it was more like impatience. I don’t like plastic bags because they’re collecting in the Pacific Ocean in areas as big as Texas, and somebody’s going to have to figure out how to deal with these billions of plastic bags that are there. I was thinking about that the other day and realizing that I added one. In 1984 I scattered the ashes of a friend who had died, and his family wanted me to open the bag, out in the ocean, and scatter his ashes in the ocean. I did that, and I did a little prayer, but I wasn’t sure what to do with the bag.

And I realized I had just dropped the bag in the water because I didn't know what to do with it. That wasn't a good thing to do.

It's useful to notice, whether it's from 30 years ago, or from yesterday, or just this morning – noticing, “That wasn't a good thing to do”, but noticing it in a compassionate way. Not, “You're a bad person – you put that bag in the ocean.” It's, “Oh, I don't want to do that anymore.” And this is the shift in perception from “bad person” to, “Oh, I can learn from this.” We have to be able to make this shift. It's a bit like being in a place where your car is in reverse, and you have to put it into neutral. Meditation is neutral. So you've got to bring stillness to the situation, and then see if there's another gear you can put the car in. One that says: “I'm not going to act out of anger here, I'm going to let go of that fear.” I made a list of my fears once, and you know what? They weren't so bad. But still, a snake in your hand that's wriggling around, and bigger than you are...! Fear comes up, OK?

Sometimes the will is adequate and sometimes it's not. Sometimes words are adequate and sometimes they're not. Sometimes will and words are adequate and sometimes they are not. The secret here is that you have what you need to realize your full spiritual potential as a human being. It's in there already and you can access it. And you access it through the practice. Fudō looks really scary and mean, and so does the snake, or so does whatever it is you don't want to do, or don't like.

Ajahn Chah made a big thing out of, “If you don't like something, do it.” If there's something you haven't dealt with

in terms of letting go of the self, well it's going to keep coming up until you look at it. And you've got to look at it with compassion. You've got to see that you can change how you view it. You can't change the person that you don't like, but you can start to see with the eyes of the Buddha. That person has the Buddha nature even though some Buddhas teach us what not to do. They're still Buddhas.

Reverend Master Jiyu used to say that about a certain President. Well, we have another current example, he's helping us learn that some Buddhas are teaching us what not to do. They're still Buddhas, and they're still making their mistakes publicly which is actually a gift to us because when somebody makes mistakes like that we know instinctively, "Oh, I don't want to do that." It can encourage us to realize: "If I am concerned only with myself, how can I help all beings? What do I have to do to help all beings?" Well, you've got this 'filter self'. It's like living in a cage. And you can only see as far as the bars of that cage, and you're the one that has the key to that cage. You can change what it is that you do. You can change how you think about things; you can change how you deal with the stuff that is difficult or unpleasant. You can avoid getting too excited about the good things, and too angry about the bad things. You can find the Middle Way. And this is what the Buddha's teaching is. It's not ascetic, you don't have to beat your head against the wall in order to find the truth. You don't have to starve yourself like the Buddha tried to do. You have to find the Middle Way – what's reasonable, what's helpful. We think: "How can I learn to be at ease because I can't help others until I can find the Buddha nature within myself?" But it helps to try! Even if you don't

feel like you have the Buddha nature, do something for somebody else. Give to the person on the street with the sign that says he's out of money, give him some money or give him whatever, give him a smile. Treat him with respect. Treat him with kindness. Treat yourself with kindness. See where it is that you create suffering, but see it with kindness, because until you do that, you can't change it.

Karma is created by volition. It is your intention that is important. The Buddha's teaching about karma came out of a teaching of karma in India. At the time, some people believed that if you accidentally stepped on an ant, you killed it and you had the same karma as if you had intentionally tried to kill it. And he said, no, if you don't have any intention of hurting the ant or anything else, that is a different karma. You might see it later and realize it wasn't a good thing to do, but it doesn't create the karmic consequences of intentionally, volitionally trying to create harm. And we do it just by reacting. Recently a mosquito was on my wrist and I just went like that. (Brushes arm.) Just instinct; just a jerk reaction. And I realized that it was, in a way, intentional. I wanted him not to bite me. You have to recognize that. Just be honest with yourself. It's actually such a relief when you don't have to pretend this didn't happen. But it's not always easy to be that honest. You have to train yourself. This is what our practice is about. It comes out of compassion.

Rev. Master Chūshin's phrase in his hymn, "...the radiant Buddha mind which fills and contains all things." This is a clue. Everything, every being, everything is filled with compassion, love and wisdom. It fills us, it fills the universe

but we don't necessarily recognize it, because we are not seeing with the eyes of a Buddha. We don't realize that this little cage of self is keeping us from realizing this infinite compassion, love and wisdom that fills the universe and fills us – fills everything.

This is about the secret of life. The secret is that you don't lack for anything. The secret is that you have all you need and you have to practice to find that. You have to do the training that opens the door so that happy meeting can take place.

Notes

- [1.](#) P.T.N.H. Jiyu-Kennett, *The Liturgy of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives for the Laity*, Mt. Shasta: Shasta Abbey Press, 1990, p. 263.
- [2.](#) *Denkōroku or The Record of the Transmission of the Light*. Rev. Hubert Nearman, O.B.C., translator, Shasta Abbey Press, 1993. Ch. 37, p 191.
- [3.](#) *The Liturgy of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives for the Laity*, p. 266.

Pure Seeing, and What Makes it Possible

Rev. Master Fuden Nessi

— *Dharmazuflucht Schwarzwald, Germany* —

Offered in loving memory of Reverend Master Jishō and Reverend Master Saidō.

There is that within each of us which sees what is here with openness and without doing anything with it, adding something to it, turning away from it or forming views about it. It is pure seeing, and is an attribute of our true nature. Our effort to keep returning to this open seeing from the heart is an integral part of our taking refuge in Buddha, I feel.

However, when we perceive what is happening in our life and what is going on inside us, or when we look at others and their actions, we generally and almost automatically enter into our perception with the thinking mind. The mind then almost inevitably generates solidified views about what is perceived.

Most of the time, we then inwardly abide on the level of the mental constructs that the mind has given rise to. We identify ourselves with them, without actually being aware of this. We take these mental constructs, which are quite provisional and have no absolute reality, as the true reality on which we then base ourselves in life.

The thinking mind fulfills a crucial function for us of course. It's important though that we inwardly abide in such a way that makes it possible for it to function in the service of our true nature. This is only possible when we don't allow our attention to be constantly drawn into the various mental constructs that the mind has created.

I realize that this brief analysis is rather incomplete. I have tried to formulate in a condensed form an area of spiritual training that seems increasingly important to me.

Here is a simple example of how this can play itself out in daily life: Some time back, after a very difficult night, I was feeling disoriented and lost in the early morning. As I lay there in bed exhausted from the night, I found it difficult to recognize my familiar inner world. It all seemed rather foreign. It would have been so easy at this point to meet this distressing state with the critical mind, concluding that there must be something wrong with me.

In this confused state, I did my best to turn towards Buddha in the heart. After a while, almost in the background of the distressed feelings and disconcerting mental images that were there in the foreground, I became aware of that which simply saw what was there, without assessing or judging any of it. I perceived this innate faculty of simply seeing, as something most precious, imbued with an unconditional goodness. It wasn't that I was wholly unfamiliar with it, but on that early morning, I noticed this pure awareness particularly with awe and gratitude.

Pure seeing is always here for us, and, we have to keep choosing to join it, instead of allowing it to be continually covered over by our habitual mental responses to what is given to us in life. When we catch it when the discriminative mind grasps after things, we can gently let go of the mental constructs that it creates and offer them up. In this way, we can align ourselves with that which sees and recognizes the worries, self-doubts, fears, insecurities and other difficult states of mind without any judgement. This dissolves the glue with which the mental constructs tend to stick to our feelings and emotions.

Over time, this pure way of perceiving can become more familiar to us. As a result, we also identify a bit less with the images that the mind creates. We see them for what they are, provisional and passing constructions. What arises from this, is a firm intent to turn towards whatever happens to be here for us and openly look at it, but without holding on to it tightly.

Fear and worry are good examples of complex emotional states where the evaluating and often even judgmental mind tends to take over, although one could use many other examples to illustrate this. When there is fear, it is so helpful when, instead of dwelling on what gives rise to the fear and losing ourselves in the related mental images, we are able to just be with openness with the fear itself. All that may be here then at first, is often just the perception, “I am really afraid”, without anything else superimposed.

Sometimes we are not able to clearly identify the cause of the fear that is in us – it can just be there as a diffuse but almost all-pervading anxiety. If at such times we can acknowledge what is in us with an inner Gasshō, without doing anything with it, it often happens that behind the threatening fear, an unconditional “Yes” of the heart to what is here appears. When we remain with this “Yes”, after a while the fear gets enfolded in our intent to take refuge in Buddha. This amounts to bringing the fear to the altar of the heart.

This process also reminds me of what is depicted in the illustration of the 4th column in Reverend Master Jiyu’s book *How to Grow a Lotus Blossom*,¹ where a person (here depicted as a monk) is carrying some beings to the eternal, healing fountain of Compassion. One of the ways to understand the beings that the monk is bringing to the



fountain, is as symbolizing aspects of ourselves that are pained and confused, and that need help. In this sense, they could also stand for fear and worry.

Sometimes, sincere trainees have expressed to me that they are very afraid of what will happen to them, should their loved ones pass away before them, and told me that they were deeply worried when thinking about how alone they would then feel in this world. Others spoke to me about their recurring strong worry of not living up to what is asked of them in life and in their spiritual training, and how this would often seem to get in the way of their intent to do what is good.

Our fears and worries are often quite understandable and very human. It's important not to immediately just try to counteract these powerful feelings with something that might mentally provide a positive counter-balance for us. If instead, we are willing to consciously be here with all these feelings with an open heart, this tends to provide an entrance into something which is not affected by these difficult inner states.

What then appears, is difficult to put into words. The fear and the worry may still be there, and at the same time, something in us intuits that which is not bound by them. We recognize – which is so liberating – that which is not dependent in any way on passing states of feeling or circumstances. It is our True Refuge. It's what ultimately brings healing to what needs help in us, if we turn towards it.

From this new perspective, we see the difficult facets of our life, and the painful feelings and emotions these evoke in

us, in a different light. The difficulties and the suffering are no longer felt as something independently existing on their own, apart from the fundamental Goodness in existence. This changed perspective helps us to turn towards, and not away from, what is in us and what we are given in life, even when it is imbued with much suffering. It also helps us to recognize that nothing can ever separate us from our True Refuge.

In connection with all this, I have sometimes thought of what is expressed in the *Scripture of Avalokiteshwara Bodhisattva*. The scripture relates all kinds of very dangerous situations that beings can find themselves in. It then states that, by calling and relying on Avalokiteshwara, we shall be protected from all grief and care, and that all the pain that comes from birth, old age, disease and death shall pass away.

For me, this links in to what I've tried to express: No matter how threatening the circumstances in which we find ourselves in life may be, no matter how difficult that which is now within us is, by willingly being with the difficult aspects of life and turning with them towards the true Refuge in our heart, the Compassion that is at the heart of life and death can show itself to us.

Aligning ourselves with pure awareness not only has a profound influence on the way we perceive what is in us, in time we are also more able to see what is going on with our fellow human beings from a truer and purer perspective than

the one we were used to beforehand. When we think about others, we then do it with more empathy and understanding. When we meet them, we don't just see the mental images we have of them, but see from a deeper place that recognizes their fundamental as well as unique preciousness.

It is something so precious, when someone views others in this way. When spending time with Reverend Master Jishō and Reverend Master Saidō, one could often witness how, each in his own particular way, this would express itself in how they related to others and how they treated them, and in their love for beings.

Note

1. P.T.N.H. Jiyu-Kennett, *How to Grow a Lotus Blossom, or How a Zen Buddhist Prepares for Death*. Shasta Abbey Press, 1977.

A True Heart Exists

Rev. Clairissa Beattie

— *Wallowa Buddhist Temple, Joseph, Oregon - USA* —

A transcript of a Recorded Dharma Talk for Wallowa Buddhist Temple Congregation, November 6, 2020.

From west to east, unseen, flowed out the Mind of
India's greatest Sage
And to the source kept true as an unsullied stream is
clear.¹

So begins the *Sandōkai*, the medieval Chinese Chan scripture which sets in motion the recitation of the Dharma in the Morning Office, sung in plainsong at daybreak by the monastic community. It follows directly on the Kesa Verse, with which we enrobe ourselves with our daily vow to train, our promise to do our best to follow the Buddha's example:

How great and wondrous are the clothes of
enlightenment,
Formless and embracing every treasure;
I wish to unfold the Buddha's teaching,
That I may help all living things.²

The *Sandōkai* is also the Scripture with which we begin the yearly Festival Memorial for the Founder, the ceremony which sets in motion the liturgical season for giving thanks. Here at the Wallowa Buddhist Temple we honor Reverend Master Jiyu Kennett as our temple's Founder, because Reverend Master Jiyu was Reverend Master Meidō's teacher, and thus it was in her name that Reverend Master Meidō established this temple.

During our daily Morning Service, the celebrant visits the Founder's Shrine and does deep bows to the Eternal, the Founder, and the Ancestors, giving thanks that they have appeared in this world. She appeals to them for help with all decisions throughout the coming day "owing to the recognition within oneself of one's humanity."³ Each day, the entire community offers gratitude to the Founder and all the Ancestors by reciting the Ancestral Line, distinctly speaking each name of the eighty-five generations, dozens and dozens of human beings reaching back to Shakyamuni Buddha, and even further endlessly back to those before him, expressing gratitude for passing on the teaching. So, here in this transient, wandering world of gain and loss, praise and blame, fame and disgrace, elation and sorrow – what does this "passing on" really mean?

Reverend Master Jiyu-Kennett was an Englishwoman who in her thirties crossed the seas to train as a monk in a Zen monastery in Japan during the 1960s – quite unusual for anyone, let alone a woman, in her day. She came back from Asia to settle at the base of a massive volcano halfway along

the west coast of North America, where she established a training monastery at Mount Shasta. There, Reverend Master Meidō first became a Buddhist in 1974, was ordained as a monk by Reverend Master Jiyu in 1980, and was given Dharma Transmission by her in 1983. Reverend Master Meidō had been training at the foot of that mountain for twenty-two years when she found herself deeply prompted to venture out on her own to Wallowa County where, opening her heart, she established the Wallowa Buddhist Temple.

At the yearly memorial for a temple's founder, the day is dedicated to remembering with gratitude what has been offered through the life, training, and teaching of the master who has spread her bowing mat wide in an invitation to all beings to join her, and who was joined by a disciple who did the same in her turn. So, we all know Reverend Master Meidō, our teacher, well. Who was her teacher, this woman whom we honor as our Founder?

Much can be learned about Reverend Master Jiyu's life and training by reading her book *The Wild, White Goose*⁴ which tells the story, in the form of her personal diaries, of her travels from Britain to Asia, to train with her teacher, The Very Reverend Keidō Chisan Kohō, later the Founder of Shasta Abbey. The dedication to *The Wild, White Goose* reads "To all women seeking Spiritual Truth and especially to those who have ever entered into Zen training."⁵

Reverend Master Meidō has said that upon first encountering Reverend Master Jiyu, she realized that there was no excuse whatsoever not to do her own spiritual work

fully – Reverend Meidō knew that her being a woman did not mean that she could not become a monk (which was the form her spiritual calling took for her). This understanding was thanks both to her own deep sincerity and to the appearance of her Teacher in the world, because Reverend Master Jiyu was so clearly, so fully, living the practice that any doubt in this regard dropped away.

Of course, the teaching is offered to both monks and laypeople, the Dharma is offered equally to both men and women, in order to help beings, who all have equal Buddha Nature; this was how the Buddha himself offered the teaching back in his day. This book dedication of Reverend Master Jiyu’s “to all women seeking Spiritual Truth” is not intended to exclude men; it’s just that historically women have had something of a struggle to get to this now given place of “training equally” that my generation, in this culture, in this lineage, could just walk right in to, once Reverend Master Jiyu had gotten it freed up from where it had become encumbered.

It so happens that shortly after the yearly Founder’s festival, Reverend Master Jiyu died peacefully on November 6th, 1996, and so we gratefully remember her twice this time of year. And because I happened to be at her monastery on the mountain, amongst the great tall pines, during the week of ceremonies following her death in 1996, and because the events of this time made a deep impression on me, I personally tend to remember her as the season sometimes pauses in its turning from fall to winter snows.

Here at the Wallowa Buddhist Temple this week, Reverend Meidō has set out our little harvest of sunflower heads to dry in the sun. The yellow aspen leaves shower down in windy gusts and skitter down the hill of the gravel drive, whispering “fleeting, fleeting.” Our Segaki Toro⁶ has turned to ash, burn piles smolder in the fields around the county, the skeletons of deciduous trees are laid bare, and the carpet of dead pine needles is being raked into piles. It is the time for the tart taste of apple and plum, and warm pumpkin soup, fried garden tomatoes and sweet onions up from the root cellar, and hazy golden light and sun-shadow clouds and change, change, change, in the dusking air. As usual, at this liminal, shifting hinge before the colder days to come, in my own way I think of Reverend Master Jiyu with gratitude, and I will tell you why.

It’s hard to believe that it’s been twenty-four years, since she died! Back in ’96, I was in my late twenties. I had been training several years as a lay Buddhist, working away at various jobs to pay off my student loan debt to be able to become a monk, driving up to visit the monastery about every month, and attending my local meditation group weekly, doing my spiritual work as best I could. And, as I had when I first stumbled onto the practice, I was suffering.

On November sixth, word went out on the phone tree that Reverend Master Jiyu had died that morning, and within twenty-four hours I had traded away my shifts at work and was heading north up the interstate together with the older

couple who led our meditation group in their home. Over the following week, the three of us stayed near the monastery with a family in the Mt. Shasta congregation, while the monks prepared and performed the many solemn ceremonies for the death and burial of their teacher, abbess, and founder of our Order. The temple was closed to the public as the monks went into the traditional seven days of retreat; nonetheless, our sincere offering to be of assistance “however was most needed” with no expectations, was graciously accepted by the monastic community.

This older couple and I would enter the monastery gates around dawn each morning, then leave again at dusk that evening to return rather tired to our lodging. Each day we three laypeople quietly offered our help, which consisted mostly of food preparation in the monastery’s enormous kitchen in silent working meditation, freeing the kitchen monks to go about their duties related to the week-long ceremonial, meditation, and other necessary tasks that accompany a death.

The monks generously invited us to join them for a number of the monastic ceremonies. Somewhere in the swirl of events that week, I recall quite vividly climbing the steps up onto the main altar and approaching, in my turn, Reverend Master Jiyu’s very dignified open casket with two chaplain monks sitting there utterly still in meditation on either side, as I bowed before her and made a promise from the bottom of my heart.

In all that transpired that week, virtually all of it in a most profound silence even when discussing necessary details, I remember the real and respectful grief of the congregation, and I was struck by the caring, practical determination of her disciples, as everyone went about doing all that needed to be done, in steadfast harmony.

I remember the deep stillness pervading all corners of the monastery grounds, the great bell tolling, tolling, tolling... An image comes of the strongest monks – including Reverend Meidō, the only woman in that stalwart group – serving as pallbearers, hefting her solid wooden casket in the large procession to the new gravesite beside the monks’ meditation hall, and then the sound of the chanting of *The Scripture of Great Wisdom*⁷ accompanied by the fresh earth falling onto her sarcophagus below, as we each in turn offered three shovels-full.

And I recall most distinctly that when we three had first arrived there on the mountain, the air was warm and the leaves and needles gently falling; and that over the course of the week, the wind picked up and blew colder; and that as we pulled away from the monastery gates on the very chilly evening of the twelfth, turning to look back over my shoulder from the back seat of the car as the first snow fell softly, I recall thinking “Oh, the season has shifted now, and Reverend Master Jiyu did not see it change,” and at that moment I knew we all would go on, and that we all had everything we needed – even I had everything I needed – to carry on doing the spiritual work to be done.

These lines from the offertory for the Founder's Festival Memorial give wings to our gratitude:

Her Dharma Eye was as bright as the moon and her Light of Wisdom lit the darkness of those in delusion. Because of her deep Meditation, she knew true freedom and her heart was as constant as an iron rock; she could not help but to rescue all the deluded and spread the Dharma. Just as Indra pointed a blade of grass at the earth and a magnificent temple sprang up on that very spot so, wherever a True Heart exists, the Dharma springs up also; in the same way has our Founder made possible this temple as our training place... The followers of our Founder spread as the branches of a tree and the Wheel of the Dharma continues to roll; the temple prospers and its gate shall always stand wide open for all who truly seek the Way. The offering that we place in the fathomless begging bowl is formless and unlimited in weight and flavour for it is the offering of our own Buddhist training that we bring today.⁸

So, what did I promise Reverend Master Jiyu, in her casket, there on the main altar? As I walked up the steps, I had nothing particular in mind, I was in a long line of people, respectfully taking my turn as it came around. Then, there she was, all laid out with such great care by her monks. I realize now that it wasn't only she, it was also all that surrounded her as if growing out of her very existence – the altar, the ceremony hall, the monastery, and the good people all doing

their very best – all possible because she followed the deepest promptings of her heart, and responded to the example offered by her teacher.

This is how doing one's spiritual work helps others – this is the power of example. She had done her magnificent best. When I heard the call that example makes, I very naturally responded. Quite unexpectedly there came the clearest realization that she had given her life. It just struck me all at once and so completely, that she had literally given her very life - every last bit of it - wholeheartedly, for all beings. She had laid her very life and the lives of all beings carefully and firmly and reverently upon the altar of the heart, *and we were there upon it at that very moment.*

And that priceless offering somehow actually included me, and drew forth something from me. So what else could I do? Silently, with my bow, I promised her (simply, from my heart) *that I would do my very best.*

Looking back, I think of what I was like, then. I was young, and I was very caught up in my own suffering. Now, I am older, and while I still do get caught up, I am learning, with Reverend Master Meidō's help and example, to do my very best to get on with what needs to be done, to offer my life for the good of all living things, every day and every moment.

The longer I go on, the more grateful I become that Reverend Master Jiyu opened her heart, and let her teaching

shine for so many others – especially her disciples, most especially my own teacher – who have carried on offering it, “as an unsullied stream is clear.”

Notes

1. P.T.N.H. Jiyu-Kennett, *The Liturgy of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives for the Laity*, Mt. Shasta: Shasta Abbey Press, 1990, 59-61.
2. Jiyu-Kennett, *Liturgy*, 57-58.
3. Jiyu-Kennett, *Liturgy*, 80.
4. Rev. Rōshi P.T.N.H. Jiyu-Kennett. *The Wild, White Goose: The Diary of a Female Zen Priest*. Mt. Shasta: Shasta Abbey Press, 2002.
5. Jiyu-Kennett, *Wild White Goose*, dedication page.
6. “The Ceremonial Burning of Wooden Tombstones, Etcetera, at the Time of the Ceremony of Feeding the Hungry Ghosts.” See Jiyu-Kennett, *Liturgy*, 178-182.
7. Jiyu-Kennett, *Liturgy*, 72-74.
8. Original text P.T.N.H Jiyu-Kennett, “Festival Memorial for the Founder,” *The Liturgy of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives* (Mt. Shasta: Shasta Abbey Press, 1987), 356-362. Modified for use at the Wallowa Buddhist Temple.

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The Spiritual Path

Rev. Kinrei Bassis

— Berkeley Buddhist Priory, Albany, CA – USA —

This article was first published in the April–June 2023 Berkeley Buddhist Priory Newsletter.

The whole purpose of Buddhism is to teach us how we can transform our lives. Buddhist training is actually a step by step process in which we are trying to see better what we are doing in our thoughts, in our speech and in our actions and then adjusting what we are doing in an effort to be in harmony with the teachings of the Dharma. The first step on a spiritual path is to first recognize our need to make real changes in ourselves and then find the commitment to pursue that transformation. It is normal to begin Buddhist practice with just the wish to make our lives a bit better. We hope for more peace and happiness and less fear, worry and anxiety. Often people will find that doing some meditation, studying the Dharma, doing some Buddhist practice, does help them. However, this usually only has limited value as it will not deal with deeper underlying causes of our discontent and suffering. Real progress happens when we begin seeing our Buddhist practice in a broader context. Buddhist activities

such as meditating, spiritual reading, hearing the Dharma, attending a temple, going on retreats, are all positive activities that can help us. Yet the real progress will not be made until we recognize our deep need to change and take responsibility for how we are choosing to live our lives and how we are actually causing ourselves to suffer.

Spiritual life requires us to see that there is a better approach than just trying to grasp as much happiness as we can and trying to avoid all conditions that make us suffer. In Mahayana Buddhism the beginning of spiritual path is sometimes described as ‘Awakening the Mind that seeks the Heart of Buddha’. This is growing our awareness that there is a positive spiritual direction that we can take our lives. Great Master Dōgen gave this essential teaching on the spiritual path:

One who would train in Buddhism must first believe completely therein and, in order to do so, one must believe that one has already found the Way, never having been lost, deluded, upside down, increasing or mistaken in the first place.

The way we make spiritual progress is trying to find full acceptance of wherever we find ourselves and then the willingness to do whatever seems to be right and take the next step. The problem is often the next step may be something we find hard and painful and we all have the normal human tendency to want to do that which feels good, to do that which is comfortable and easy. Practicing in this Sangha for so many

years, I have had the opportunity to speak with many people who tried being a Buddhist monk and left after a short time. Frequently, years later, they describe to me having this same difficulty. They had felt clear and certain about becoming a monk but then they found that after they became a monk, that their Buddhist training had become harder and they had found themselves less willing. They lost their faith that being a Buddhist monk is what they wanted to do. Doubts had filled them rather than faith and they usually doubted both their ability to be a Buddhist monk and doubted that this Dharma teaching would work for them. Instead of feeling like they were making progress, they would sometimes tell me how everything went wrong when they became a monk. Naturally, for some people becoming a monk is not right for them and their specific karma. Yet I felt it was a shame that some of these former monks had clearly not taken refuge in their teachers and understood the reality of what it felt like to be following the Buddhist path. Buddhist training should help us to come face to face with all our difficult karma. To see all that is wrong with us, our selfishness, our burning desires, our fears and our inadequacies, can feel like it is all too much. It is complete normal that at times, we feel overwhelmed by the enormity of what we need to change in ourselves. It is an expression that is used in Buddhist teaching that we have a mountain of karma. It would be unusual not to feel overwhelmed at times.

When I was in college, one summer job I had was in a summer camp in which I took children on hiking and backpacking trips. I quickly recognized that it made the hike

much more difficult if I gave an overly optimistic report on how soon we would reach the mountain top. It always seemed helpful to keep saying that the summit was still distant and then when we did finally reach the summit, everyone was then surprised and pleased. Climbing a mountain is used in all spiritual traditions as a symbol of the spiritual journey. When we are climbing a mountain, we need to have confidence that the path will take us to the summit. Then we can relax, just concentrate on taking the next step and have faith that our efforts will take us to the summit. I have experienced the difficulty of wondering if I had wandered off the hiking path and then a few minutes seemed like a long time and I would be filled with worry.

It makes the spiritual journey hard if we are spending a lot of time and energy wondering if we are on the right path or if we are capable of climbing this spiritual mountain. The monks who left had doubted the path they were on. This problem is not unique to monks as we all need to trust the path if we want to make real spiritual progress and deeply transform our lives.

One of the main ways we get stuck is getting caught up in how we are feeling. An idea that we often hold and do not question is that spiritual progress should mean that we will be happier and more peaceful. That is true in the long term sense just as climbing a mountain means we should eventually be getting higher. Yet when I hiked up many mountains, the path may take you on long stretches of going downhill in order to

get to the best path to ascend the mountain. The following teaching is from the *Sandōkai*: “Light goes with darkness as the sequence does of steps in walking.” This has definitely been my experience. At times I can experience feeling deep faith, peace and gratitude. Yet at other times, I can be experiencing spiritual darkness, filled with doubts and finding my Buddhist training and my life difficult and depressing. Yet it is vital to realize that when I find my training and my life easy and straight forward, this will change. It is just a passing state, flowing through my life like the weather.

When I am happy I have not attained anything I can grasp, rather I am just experiencing something that is the product of my good karma, the merit of my past right actions. The Buddha taught “Volition is the doer of karma, feelings are the reaper of karma.” It is good when we experience our good karma and feel better about ourselves and our life, yet from a Buddhist perspective, all these feelings are transient and all our positive feeling will flow out of our life like a dream. When spiritual darkness fills us, we need to recognize it is just passing feelings and thoughts and if we do not cling to them, they will also pass through our life just like a day or a week of gloomy weather. The darkness in our lives is actually flowing out of our unenlightened way of viewing ourselves and the world and this often causes us to make the wrong volitional choices. Whenever I am finding life difficult and I am feeling bad, this is a Dharma teaching for me, directing me to look at what is causing me to envelope myself in darkness and what changes I need to make so that I can

keep walking on the path and follow my real heart. Unlike the metaphor of the path up the mountain, the Buddhist path is how we deal with our own personal difficult karma. When we take the Dharma to heart and follow the Dharma, we are then pointing ourselves to that which will solve our suffering. We need to see that suffering is telling us that in some ways, we are not fully following the Dharma.

In the *Sandōkai*, it teaches us, “Should you lost become, there will arise obstructing mountains and great rivers.” Suffering is not getting in our way, it is directing us to look at how we are relating to our life and gain a better understanding of how we are creating this suffering. And although it seems unfortunate, our suffering will keep arising in various ways until we learn how we are generating this difficulty. Our suffering is always giving us a Dharma lesson. Unfortunately, often we do not want to hear what it is teaching.

Our whole life and how we relate to everything we encounter, is the ground of the Buddhist path. Zen Buddhism has always put great emphasis on developing the proper spiritual relationship to all our mundane and worldly activities of our daily life. How we work, how we eat our food, how we wash ourselves, how we clean our home; how we interact with the people in our life, they all have deep spiritual significance. The true source of our suffering comes from the way we do not embrace the whole of our lives, but instead we cut our lives into pieces, grasping the parts we like and pushing away that parts we dislike. The worldly mind is often

lost in our loves and our hates. The Dharma is not telling us that we should not have preferences, but rather, we should not to cling to our preferences. The Dharma is pointing us to fully recognize the transient nature and to see that in the deepest sense, the relative unimportance of whatever we are trying to grasp.

The spiritual path is seeing that our whole life is a Dharma lesson: I want this. This bothers me. I fear this happening and I am filled with desire for that to happen. The Christian mystic, Saint John of the Cross drew a famous drawing of how to ascend the spiritual mountain. Whatever you encounter, all things of the world and all various spiritual experiences; they should all be seen as ephemeral and without the deep importance we give them. That is the only way we can ascend the spiritual mountain. We become stuck wherever we are, whenever we choose to grasp what is happening. Saint John said we must see everything we encounter in life as fundamentally empty, as nothing, in order to keep going up the mountain. It is like when we go through some great difficulty or when we have some experience that went wonderfully. When we look back, they both now can have the substance of a dream. Intense suffering always makes our difficulties seem so real and solid. Yet when we look back on our life, it is clear that much of the great suffering we experienced can now be seen, with older and wiser eyes, as ephemeral and without the importance we gave it. If I am hungry today, a good meal last week will not feed me. The emptiness that Saint John of the Cross is pointing us to

seeking, is that which allows us to let go of our grasping and open ourselves to what is unbounded, the Buddha Heart. The path to Buddhahood is open, we just need to see what is getting in our way, preventing us from following the path.

The Path is open and goes straight to the Source.
The Real Heart is boundless and enfolds everything.
Darkness is a dream since the Light shines
everywhere.
Since the whole universe is our home,
How can our hearts ever express our gratitude?

Renunciation

Rev. Gareth Milliken

— Reading Buddhist Priory, Berkshire – UK —

A transcript of a talk which was given after the Renunciation Festival at Reading Priory in January 2022.

One of the more powerful statements of the Renunciation is the begging bowl or alms bowl. It forms one of a set which monks use for formal meals. These bowls are called *oryoki* in Japanese and this translates as ‘the bowls that hold just enough’. Monks receive these at ordination as one of what are called their requisites. The begging bowl is part of this set of nesting bowls and they are all tied up with cloths which are spread over the lap; laid out over the pure place on a *tan* for the bowls to sit on, and also an absorbent, drying-up cloth. There is a small bag for the cutlery and also a stick for cleaning the bowl. The uncovered end is used for placing a small piece of food on, taken from the begging bowl, which is an offering for the Hungry Ghosts.

So what has this to do with renunciation? Well, it is the cleansing of karma. The cleansing of karma looked at in this way is renunciation. The willingness to look at our lives, now, today and see what it is we are clinging to.

The begging bowl on the one hand is what contains the food we eat which has been donated. That which has been given freely as alms to the service of the Buddha. To hold out our bowl, for a monk or lay trainee, is to be open to receiving the Dharma. It shows our connection to the food that we need to sustain us so that we can do this work. Old Chinese monasteries had a direct route from the firewood which was used to heat the food which was mostly, if not all, produced on their lands.

All of you who have gardens and raised beds and grow some of your own produce will of course know that there is a deep connection with the cycle of growth in this way. During formal meals in the zendō monks hold out their bowls and food is placed in it. They take only what they need, and eat and drink up everything to the last crumb and swallow of water. At the end of the meal the washing-up water is served and the bowls are cleaned thoroughly, and the water is offered to the Hungry Ghosts. The bowl is then dried using the drying cloth. There is a formality of the actions and of course the formality includes within it the spiritual purpose.

The bowl represents the body and the food the Dharma that we ingest. The cleaning is the cleaning of karmic residue which is then returned from whence it came. The careful attendance to the cleaning shows that we need to be equally meticulous and careful over observing karma. The cleaning of the bowl is also similar to this, in that if we over-think or are too mindful in a self-conscious way, it gets in the way. We

fall over ourselves because too much of *us* is involved. When cleaning the bowl becomes more about us thinking about what it all means and trying to do it properly, it is usually a sign that we are making ourselves more important than the doing of it. I'm not sure we can get out of the way completely here, as we are involved and it is us that takes care. Importantly though, it doesn't have to limit the scope of the action.

It is good to reflect on merit here, and the fact that the doing and cleaning are universal and not specific to us doing it. It isn't to do with not thinking. It would be hard to do any of this without engaging the thought process, it is just a different type of thinking that is involved. Someone, many years ago, told me about their experience cutting an onion. Their perspective was that no thinking was involved and that it was a pure action, in other words it just flowed and that there was no intermediary. I found that difficult to concur with then and still do. Let us not be afraid of thinking. One is thinking when picking up the knife, when peeling off the skin of the onion and also discarding the waste.

On another occasion, which may shed some light on this, I was on a two-month retreat in a hut. It was breakfast time and I was preparing something to eat. I became aware that much of this was routine, and very little analytical thought was involved. It was very much as the previous person was saying, but also I became acutely aware that I could trace each movement. The salt, the oats, the pan etc. were where they

always were, I didn't have to figure out where they were and yet I was conscious of picking them up and adding to the pan etc. These are thoughts yet they don't get in the way of the flow. In sitting, as we all are aware, there are thoughts, they come and go. They don't get in the way unless we interact with them. When the thoughts become aspects of 'why', 'what' and 'me' then they can become more troublesome.

I said earlier that the eating and cleaning are done in the service of the Buddha and in this it encompasses everything. So thinking is in the service of the Buddha if kept to that which isn't just 'I'. Quite often I'm not aware that I am musing on something. One door opening and closing on itself, like those swing doors you see in cowboy movies. Or like a soup that is simmering and slowly and gently softening the ingredients and absorbing the herbs and seasonings to make a combined flavour that becomes digestible. We must all have experienced going on a walk or sitting in an armchair and some thought arises but we haven't really been in control of the process i.e. thinking it through. Nevertheless we can move forward in a way that can be surprising. It is as if we wouldn't have got there by actively thinking it through to a conclusion.

All of this is a part of renunciation. The bowl is filled, we silently and carefully eat, it is digested and a transformation takes place beyond our conception. Nothing is rejected – all is taken in. Rich, plain, sweet, sour. The Dharma also, in all its combinations and flavours. The begging bowl that is our life also doesn't discriminate. Here we live by

simply knowing that each moment is full. We can live in repose by looking deeply into that which wants to add and fill up from a well that is outside of ourselves.

Renunciation is possible because there is no hole to fill. We re-join that which is replete. To renounce is to express fearlessness as our lives unfold. We can see through the limits we have imposed on our potential. To judge ourselves and our efforts is to claw back that which has dissolved in the renouncing. This we all can do here, now, today. Whether we are a lay trainee or a monastic we can all gently and confidently turn towards that which is facing us. Only we can do that for ourselves, and in doing so we do it for all living beings.

We need to find what this life is and express it fully. All sorts of memories and judgements may arise which can sow seeds which turn into great doubts. Just look at the arising and let it be. There is a frightened self there that will always be hanging on and trying to grab it all back. Leave it alone and the grip will loosen over time.

To follow the ways of the Buddhas and Ancestors is to learn how to listen and follow. Just watch when it all tightens up and we cling to a known form or way of being and responding, and can't hear the teaching of the moment. Eating, swallowing and digesting is teaching us this in a very ordinary way, so it is with our other everyday situations. Whilst our pain can be unique to us in some way we can only fully experience it if we know it isn't only ours and that it is

a shared experience, a common experience of being alive. If compassion is to be compassion then suffering isn't owned like that. Look around on any given day at any given moment and you will not be far from a mirror which is showing us the way.

The Buddha showed that there is an end to suffering and that the end was expressed through a thorough understanding of the eightfold path. The activity of our lives is the expression of this. The eightfold path, like the Precepts, shows that how we live expresses to the world that there is a way to renounce that which binds us. To give like this is to free ourselves in the way of the Buddhas and Ancestors.

So when you next eat or drink you can maybe bear in mind that one of the beautiful things about Buddhist symbols is that they are there right in front of us on an actual material basis. These are not empty symbols but ways of living it. What it expresses and its expression are not separated.

Last Words

Reverend Master Saidō Kennaway

Introduction:

Words said at the time of death can be significant and as precious jewels. Fortunately, just days before his passing, when he knew his days were short, we were able to record some of Reverend Master Saidō's extemporaneous voicings of the Dharma. They held a poignant significance, as well as important Dharma truths conveyed with Reverend Master Saidō's characteristic simplicity, light touch, and frequent humorous expressiveness!

Even though Reverend Master Saidō was gravely ill, and passed away within days, his brightness of heart and twinkle of eye were evident as he gave voice to the Dharma with obvious delight, and yet with earnest, serious intent.

The topic was close to his heart and reflected much of his later life's heart wish and work: that of encouraging harmony and understanding – not only in his own training, but in whichever sphere he was involved.

In the following edited version of his words Reverend Master Saidō paraphrased, in the vernacular, the essential part of the story of the Buddha's visit to Kosambi, where a quarrel amongst the monks had reached a point of division and violently hurled words! The Buddha attempted to awaken the monks by various means including recounting the tale of Prince Dighavu, who had witnessed the death of his parents at the hand of rival king Brahmadata. (Mv 10.2.3-20) Prince Dighavu's father's last desperate words to his son were: "Vengeance is not settled through vengeance. Vengeance is settled through non-vengeance."

In brief, as time passed, Prince Dighavu became close to King Brahmadata, and even became his attendant. This was possible because his identity as the son of the murdered king and queen had not been detected.

— Rev. Master Mokugen Kublicki

Reverend Master Saidō's Dharma talk:

This big King (Brahmadatta) so to speak, knows that the Prince is a threat because he is still around, and his parents have been killed, and he still has some title to the lands. Time passes. The young Prince gets himself into the court of the King, and because he's, you know, hot stuff, good at all kinds of things, he gets promoted to eventually being the King's assistant. He's slowly positioned himself so that he is now with the King: he's trusted around him, he is his personal assistant, and he bides his time. However, the cycle of the harbouring of grievances, resentment and revenge had been around for a long time...

Then one day the King and his retinue are out in the forest – a hunting party or something like that – and everyone else goes off belting through the undergrowth. The Prince is left alone with the King who is snoozing and he thinks: “Now is the time! I can take my revenge!” He gets out his knife and just as he is about to strike, the King wakes up. Prince Dighavu suddenly remembers his dying father's last words: “Hatred is never solved by hatred, it's by non-hatred.” In a change of heart, he says to the King: “You must spare my life if I spare yours.” In other words (Rev. Master Saidō

elaborates): “You must no longer see me as someone who is a threat to be destroyed and I will no longer see you as someone I have to kill.”

So they must give up something very deep in order for the matter to be put to rest – so that it does not continue. If not, the killing and revenge continues...this is how all such conflicts carry on...

And so, there is this great insight! Both sides must take things much deeper. This is interesting. Usually we think: “I am right and they are wrong”. Whereas both sides must give up the thing which drives them – fear of a threat, and revenge or resentment for something that is a deep hurt. Each must look to their own heart.

(Rev. Master Saidō continues): Of course, he marries the King’s daughter, and they all live happily ever after. It is a story, but it conveys an important idea. When I first realized what it was on about, I realised it was quite radical! You know, we tend to think very much in terms of, you’re right and I’m right, and my right is righter than your right. Whereas we could see that we both might be right, and we both have something else that we must get beyond or open up to. Not being willing to do so, is so often the basis of conflict.

One of the ways that people work on conflict reconciliation is that they have someone say something good about the other person or say something good about what another country does. You know, such as: What is a good quality of the Israelis? What is a good quality of the

Palestinians? Can you acknowledge something, can you just admit something good? ... It slowly breaks apart the idea that the other party is completely off the wall. It makes a bit of an opening.

(Rev. Master Saidō now goes on to explain that the monks' argument at Kosambi started from something seemingly insignificant that then grew...)

The Buddha comes and attempts to wisely soften the quarrelling Kosambi monks. I won't tell the whole story, because basically, what happened was – I mean, it's the equivalent of not changing the toilet roll after it has run out! (smiles) This is probably heretical in certain circumstances to reduce the Buddha's teaching to this kind of thing, but issues so often do start at this sort of level! The monks had water which they used to wash themselves in the latrine, which was to be replaced after use, or something like that. So, one person had gone into the latrine and had made use of whatever it was, emptied it, and hadn't filled it back up. In other words, he'd used the last bit of toilet paper and hadn't changed the roll! And he comes out – and he's the absent-minded professor-type person who knows all about the Scriptures (mimics his face and voice playfully). And the person who is following him in is, of course, the one who is dead hot on all the rules and regulations, the Precepts, all the Vinaya etc. And he says, "Did you know you just made an error? You! Did you know!?" (Playfully then mimics absent-minded monk mumbling) ... "I just went to the toilet." According to the rules it was along the lines of: if you were not aware it was a rule, or a breakage of a rule, then it wasn't one. If you did know it was, and wilfully did it, then it is! So, there then

followed a whole thing about it: did he know he was breaking the rule or did he not? (Rev. Master Saidō sighs, with a gentle smile.)

The situation developed. The absent-minded monk did not admit one way or the other. So, the monk hot on the Vinaya excludes him from the Sangha. I mean! Over the top! Completely bonkers! So, then factions develop who are saying, “Well, did he know, or didn’t he know?” And there’s an argument, and the monks start hitting each other eventually and “came to blows.” Kosambi was apparently a place with people whose temperament was prone to get hot under the collar. Sometimes there are people like that. That’s probably incorrect to say and un-pc, but never mind. There was a certain element of that in them because it may not have happened exactly like that in other places. But it did in Kosambi!

And the point is, that this argument dragged on! The Buddha heard about the argument and came to try to sort it out. The Kosambi monks said, “No, this is our quarrel. Go away, nice Buddha, and we’ll sort it out.” But, of course, they didn’t.

Another story, often linked, tells how the Buddha went to visit another group of monks – he would travel about and teach and not be in just one place – and those monks were living in harmony. If the water needed filling up, they would fill it up. They would share the alms food. They were practising together in a very harmonious way, helping each other. There was none of this kind of quarrelling going on. The Buddha could say: “This is how it should be done.”

The argument dragged on so much at Kosambi that the local population got fed up, having probably heard about it at length! They said, “We’re not feeding you guys anymore, we’re not going to make offerings anymore, forget it.” It took something like that for those quarrelling folks to pay attention! And that’s another quite interesting thing! It often takes not being fed by your group or something dramatic happening, for you to get to the point that you’re going to have to change or do something or get help. Sometimes it takes something quite extreme for us to look more deeply. It can take quite a bit to get to that point!

So, (Rev. Master Saidō continues) the monks of Kosambi all clump off to the Buddha for help. Ananda is there to prepare for their visit. The next day they are all refreshed and the situation calmer. They’ve sat down and the Buddha turns to the elder guy – the one who is a bit absentminded and had forgotten what he should have done – and says: “Look! You’ve been in the Sangha long enough to know what we do. Can you admit that you are at fault?” (Because he hadn’t really admitted it.) And he said to the other guy who is a stickler for the rules, “If he admits his fault, will you let him back in?” He replies (Rev. Master Saidō playfully mimics reluctant face and muttering – it is like Mr. Bean – mimics again): “Yes!” The Buddha continues to the absentminded monk: “Right! Good! You really should know these things; you’ve been around long enough.” Then turning to the other monk he says, “Now you’re an expert in the Vinaya and all the rules and regulations. Please don’t exclude someone for something like this! It is over the top. Can you agree to re-admit him and sort of back off a bit?” And the

monk, after mumbling a little, ends with a whispered: “Yes, my Lord.” And so, the issue gets resolved. They both have to give a bit, and then both go on their way happy. And.... (Rev. Master Saidō playfully pauses and smiles with wry dramatic effect): the Buddha never again went to Kosambi!

I think that’s true, but gosh, if someone, if anyone reads, hears this, they better take some of these things with a pinch of salt, because it’s my extemporaneous version of it, which I quite like to tell the prisoners I visit. It is a great story, because they’re always having this kind of thing, because they live in a pressure cooker, with lots of conflict about tiny details. And it’s also very apt for monastics – and larger monastic communities, or any groups, or anybody... (Smiles)



News of the Order

UK and Europe

Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey

— *Northumberland, England – UK* —

Abbot's Induction: At the end of March, Rev. Master Berwyn led a procession of monks and lay trainees up the lane to the monastery gate, and recited the time-honoured verse: “The Gates of Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey stand open wide. Whilst I remain within this place this gate shall never be closed to any living thing.” thus officially becoming the third abbot of the monastery.

The proceedings continued in the ceremony hall, with Rev.



Master Berwyn visiting all the shrines and pledging his commitment to serve the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha to the best of his ability. There then followed the Abbot's Dharma Ceremony where he answered Dharma questions posed by all monks present.

Our thanks go to all the monks and lay trainees from our Sangha who came for the day and offered their support.



Memorials for monks have featured prominently in the past few months, due to the deaths of Rev. Master Saidō and more recently, Rev. Master Jishō. We held a public memorial ceremony for Rev. Master Saidō on 3 June for which people came from all over the UK, including a group from his temple in Telford. We are grateful to everyone who attended this poignant and memorable occasion (photo below).



We also commemorated the 20th anniversary of the death of former Head of the Order Rev. Master Daizui with a short memorial on 4 April, and we are planning a ceremony to remember Rev. Master Jishō, who was a key figure in the history of the monastery, especially in its formative years, in early July.

The Jukai retreat was held in April, resuming the traditional scheduling following three years of disruption due to the pandemic. Our congratulations go to Alasdair, Kerry, Mary and Mark who received the Precepts from Rev. Master Berwyn. A

sizeable group of lay trainees who had been ordained before also attended which added to the joy of the occasion.

The annual Family Weekend was a great success, with a good number of children and their parents enjoying the activities organized for the Saturday, including art & craft projects, the now-traditional barbecue, and the ever-popular Frisbee Golf.



Rev. Elinore was celebrant for the Wesak Ceremony on the Sunday, with Rev. Master Berwyn giving the Dharma talk afterwards, a recording of which is now on [Throssel's website](#), along with many more talks which have been given recently.

We are happy to see more youngsters attending our Sunday Festivals than in recent years, and plan to resume some form of 'Dharma School' next year. This sees the children taking part in a Dharma-related activity led by the monks, whilst the adults attend the lecture which follows the Festival Ceremony.

In May the monastery closed for the monks' sesshin which was a precious opportunity to devote ourselves to a week of silence and stillness, and also time to rest and renew, before the busy programme of retreats and other events which got under way during an unusually long, warm and sunny spell of early summer weather.

— *Rev. Master Roland*

Great Ocean Dharma Refuge

— Pembrokeshire – Wales —

At Great Ocean Dharma Refuge we have been remembering with gratitude and prayers, the life and contribution of two dear Dharma brothers who have recently passed away: Reverend Master Jishō Perry and Reverend Master Saidō Kennaway. Words cannot express the helpful impact they made on those around them. Their purposeful lives, teaching and generosity of spirit were so very helpful for us all, and their legacy will bear merit for many years to come.



Reverend Master Jishō's kindness was instrumental in helping many of us to travel over to Shasta Abbey in the 1970s to train with Reverend Master Jiyu at her invitation. Also, his support was invaluable at the time of the founding of Great Ocean Dharma Refuge.

Reverend Master Saidō was a dear monastic friend and helpful refuge over many, many years. Sangha connections forge unbreakable, meaningful links that are part of the fabric of the love, support and respect that we all have for each other. For this we are deeply grateful. Both will be missed but remain in our hearts with love and appreciation.

Over the winter months we had an extended visit from Reverend Master Hector van der Marel from the Netherlands. It was a great pleasure to have him here, and we thank him for all the help he offered during his stay.

In May it was a joy to welcome Reverend Master Meidō from the Wallowa Buddhist Temple in Northeastern Oregon for several weeks. Reverend Master Meidō is a dear Dharma Sister and old friend, and it has been a blessing to share some fruitful time together.



Maintenance projects continue with recent work on fixing the chimney stacks that were leaking after some particularly severe storms. Ongoing attention to some of the failing window frames is the next project in hand!

Spring has brought light and colour for us all. What a joy to see spring blossom and the returning swallows fly adeptly in and out of the garage to their nest!

We continue to welcome both lay and monastic guests for visits and periods of retreat. For more information, please write or phone [Great Ocean Dharma Refuge](#).

— *Rev. Master Mokugen*

The Place of Peace Dharma House

— *Aberystwyth, Wales* —

In March Rev. Master Myōhō attended the Private Funeral of Reverend Master Saidō, in Telford. It was an intimate and tender occasion, enabling offerings to be made before the open coffin of a

much loved and valued Dharma Brother. Reverend Master Peter kindly undertook a long drive to take her there and back.

Offerings of Gratitude to Reverend Master Saidō have been made here, at The Place of Peace, and there have been meditation vigils, sitting with the profound nature of his passing.

On May 6th we celebrated Wesak, which is always a deeply significant and uplifting ceremony. This year the theme of the talk and discussion was of how the Birth of the Buddha is constantly happening within the 'always going on, always becoming Buddha'. We thank Heather Walters who, once again, made lotus shaped biscuits for the altar.



We continue to offer monthly Dharma Talks, on MP3 files, to any who would like to receive them.

Thanks are offered to Ceri Jones who looked after the temple whilst Rev. Master Myōhō was away in May.

This year has passed so quickly. We continue with the regular Zoom Dharma Meetings and have had 'in person' guests as well. Every day seems full as the life of the temple continues to unfold. Thank you to all those who help, in so many different ways, with various aspects of temple life, especially John Adams, Steve Roberts and Gordon Jones. The willingness to share your expertise and to offer your time, is much appreciated.

— *Rev. Master Myōhō*

Telford Buddhist Priory
— *Telford, Shropshire – UK* —

Following the death of Rev. Master Saidō on March the 3rd, Rev. Mugō has been staying at Telford Buddhist Priory to deal with Rev. Saidō's affairs and act as our interim prior. We are very grateful to her for the care she has taken with these tasks and for keeping the Priory functioning during the past three months. During this time, we have continued to hold our regular Wednesday, Friday and Sunday meetings, and are soon to resume several of our pre-Covid activities, such as Rest and Repair Sundays, day retreats and festivals. Rev. Mugō has now agreed to stay at the Priory longer term. We are delighted to welcome her as our monk-in-residence.

In early May, we were visited by pupils from a local special educational needs school. The children enjoyed looking at the altar, offering incense, trying out some of the gongs and learning to meditate.

On Friday the 2nd of June, Rev. Mugō, John Bamford and Di Bodley travelled to Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey with Rev. Saidō's ashes, to attend a memorial ceremony for him. A portion of Rev. Saidō's ashes will be interred in the Priory stupa, which Rev. Saidō constructed himself, this coming autumn.

Finally, we would like to thank everyone who has sent cards, gifts and messages of condolence following Rev. Saidō's death, and for the ongoing support, in myriad ways, which we have received. We are all extremely grateful.

— *Karen Richards*

Norwich Zen Buddhist Priory
— *Norwich, England – UK* —

On Sunday 19 March, we held a memorial for Rev. Saidō Kennaway, who was a trustee of the Norwich Priory until his death in early March. The ceremony was an expression of our gratitude for the life, teaching and example of this gently inspirational monk. At the tea afterwards, some of us recounted anecdotes and

exchanged memories of ways in which he had encouraged us, guided us and affected our lives.

On Sunday 30 April, the Priory celebrated its first double lay ordination, when Andy McConnell and Bonny Downing (pictured here) committed themselves to live by the Precepts and became lay Buddhists. It is always a pleasure to see trainees take this important step in their lives. It is also a valuable opportunity for those of us who attend the ceremony to recommit our-selves to a life of medi-tation and following the Precepts. Our good



wishes go to Andy and Bonny as their lives of training continue to unfold. Congratulations also to Kerry Purcell who took the Precepts during the Jukai retreat at Throssel earlier in the month.

Our Wesak Ceremony this year took place on Sunday 14 May. It was lovely to have several Sangha members turn up to celebrate the Birth of the Buddha and join in expressing gratitude for our Buddhist practice and the opportunity to train.

Thanks: I am particularly grateful to the garden group that meets on Tuesday afternoons and the wonderful work they do maintaining and enhancing the outdoor areas of the Priory. Thanks also to those who offer their help and expertise with: cleaning and housework; DIY and maintenance jobs; bookkeeping and accounts; and solving computer and IT problems. In addition, I would like to say a big “thank you” to the Sangha members who very kindly helped with providing me with transport between Norwich and London in January.

— *Rev. Master Leoma*

Rev. Master Leandra writes:

Since retiring as abbot of Throssel I have been living in a small bungalow in Haslingfield, Cambridgeshire. I am visited regularly by members of the congregation, either individually or from meditation groups - this is very welcome as it helps me to play my part in the Sōtō Zen tradition and encourages me to continue to



find a monastic way of life which is of benefit to other beings in this setting which is very different to the life I had in the monastery.

I also visit the meditation group in Cambridge which is led by the lay minister Richard Potter. The group meets in person twice a month at the Quaker Meeting House in Cambridge and one of the participants offers me a lift. On alternate Tuesdays I don't join their regular Zoom meeting but visit one of the group members who lives in a nearby village. It is good to be able to meditate with him and his wife, and also to enjoy time with their two daughters.

I keep in touch with many Sangha friends via email, and I receive numerous phone and Skype calls from both monks and laity who are either unable to visit or live further afield e.g. in America or the Netherlands. I am happy to be contacted, and would welcome visits from lay trainees and monks so please get in touch if you would like: sallyleandrarobertshaw@gmail.com +44 (0) 1223 662 424.

A recent development is that some lay trainees, who are older than me, have asked if I would be willing to be with them when they are dying. I, of course, say yes, and am deeply touched by these requests.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank members of the Throssel community who took such good care of me when I was abbot. I realise how much was done for me now that I have to do my own cleaning, cooking, ordering food, washing and ironing! I don't think I could manage these tasks without the help of my beloved daughter who lives in a nearby village.

Dharmazufucht Schwarzwald
— *Gutach (Black Forest) – Germany* —

The death of two dear Dharma-brothers: After Reverend Master Saidō was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, I booked a flight to the UK, in the hope to still be able to see him. Unfortunately, it was too late for this by the time I got there. Together with Rev. Master Myōhō, Rev. Master Mugō, Rev. Master Peter, Karen Richards and several other lay ministers, I was able to attend the private part of the funeral ceremony in Telford though, for which I am very grateful. A big thank you to lay minister Paul Taylor who drove me down to Telford. Shortly after the private funeral ceremony, I got a strong cold and had to postpone my journey back to Germany, and stayed for over two weeks at Rochdale Zen Retreat with Rev. Master Peter. I am grateful to him for looking after me so kindly while I was ill.



When I first moved to Germany in 2004, Reverend Master Saidō helped me a great deal, driving me with all my belongings from Throssel to southern Germany on several occasions, and staying for several weeks to help me move into our first, rented temple place. Since that time, he had been one of the main trustees of our charitable organization. We are deeply grateful to him for all he has done for us, and for his great kindness. Above is a picture from 2018, when Rev. Master Saidō last visited us in our temple.

Two months after Reverend Master Saidō passed away, Reverend Master Jishō died too. He was the first senior monk of the Order that I met when I first went to Throssel Hole Priory in 1976, and has so helped and supported me ever since in my training.

He visited us on many occasions in Germany, both in our previous temple and in our current one, and many in our lay congregation got to know and greatly appreciate him. Rev. Clementia and I are deeply grateful to him for all he did for us. Over the next while, we will be doing the Surangama ceremony on a weekly basis. Reverend Master Jishō



was very fond of the *Surangama Litany*. Our long-standing lay minister Andreas had translated it into German some years back, and showed it to him when he last visited us in 2018.

Rev. Master Mugō's and Rev. Clairissa's visits: Rev. Master Mugō came to stay with us for a while in the second half of March. It was very good and helpful to have her here. As it happened, three of our lay ministers – Susan, Benjamin and Ute – were in our temple at the same time, as well as David and Margaret, who came over from Switzerland.

In April we also had the pleasure of welcoming Rev. Clairissa, the disciple of Rev. Master Meidō, in our temple. She flew over from her home temple in Oregon, USA to stay with us for about three



weeks. We deeply appreciated having Rev. Clairissa here with us.

Change from oil to pellet heating: In Germany, heating with oil or gas heaters is getting more and more difficult, as the government is encouraging house owners to switch to

more environment-friendly ways of heating. Because our oil heater is quite old, we have decided to change to a pellet heating system. We have taken this step at this particular time because the government is partially subsidizing such changes at the moment

Monthly retreats, Wesak and online Dharma-meetings: We are again having monthly group retreats that generally last from Thursday evening to Sunday after lunch. In May we had our yearly

week-long spring retreat, ending with the Wesak ceremony. Several lay ministers were able to participate in the sesshin.

We also continue to have an online Zoom Dharma-meeting once a month. In addition, Ute and Irene, two of our lay ministers, are continuing to offer an online meditation every Wednesday evening, followed by a social tea that gives people the opportunity to exchange news. These meetings seem to be much appreciated by those who attend.

— *Rev. Master Fuden*

News of the Order

USA & Canada

Shasta Abbey

— *Mount Shasta, CA - USA* —

Revs. Oswin and Kōdō offered Dharma talks and discussions via Zoom and in person as part of a retreat on The Scripture of the Buddha's Last Teaching in early March. The event was well-received. We were joined for part of the retreat by 20 nuns and 10 lay people from Duc Vien Temple in San Jose. They brought abundant offerings, including enough food for three meals, which they prepared for the community and lay guests. For many of them it was the first time they had seen snow. Their visit included a gathering around Rev. Master Jiyu's stupa.



Early in April we also enjoyed a short visit by Rev. Quang Tue, a novice monk currently living in Vietnam who joined the Order last fall as part of the Shasta Abbey community. We hope to see him again in the fall.

We had an unusually cold and snowy winter and spring, at times over five feet of snow, including a heavy snowfall in late March. We are looking forward to warmer weather and the return of many of our lay friends.



On April 28 we said farewell or “until later” to Rev. Kalden Wangmo (formerly Rev. Berniece) who departed for India and other destinations in Asia. She has been of immeasurable help caring for Rev. Master Jishō and filling other vacancies around the monastery. We will miss her bright spirit.

Rev Master Jishō, the longest ordained monk in our Order and the Shasta community, died on May 3 after a long illness. He had been in a nearby care home since the beginning of the year, receiving visits from monks and lay congregation most days. Because of the danger of contagion in the care home, we had a ‘Viewing of the Body Ceremony’ with his portrait. Then on May 11 he was cremated in Yreka. Most of the community and over a half a dozen lay trainees, including many of his local lay disciples, participated, which included a robust



chanting of *The Scripture of Great Wisdom* and the *Adoration of the Buddha's Relics*. Rev. Master Jishō will be much missed in the community.

In May we had our annual Ten Precepts Retreat (Jukai). Nine lay trainees received the Precepts for the first time: Megan Ann Conn, Marin Djendjinovic, Maria Domenech Florit, Thomas David Gibson, Louthea Lazay Griffin, Russ Patrick Honea, Gregory James, Arnold Lade, Monica Eden Payne, and Joseph Raymond Zaragosa.

— Rev. Master Oswin

Redding Zen Buddhist Priory

— Redding, CA – USA —

Congratulations to Priory members Megan Conn, Thomas Gibson, Maria Domenech Florit, and Louthea Griffin who received the Precepts during Jukai at Shasta Abbey this year. Also in attendance at the week-long retreat was Panda Jerry who had received the Precepts via Skype in 2019. She had travelled from Thunder Bay Ontario Canada to participate in the full Jukai ceremonies. We wish them all the best as they take this significant step in their training. The photo below shows Thomas Gibson receiving his *wagesa* from Rev. Master Meian at the Lay Ordination Ceremony, 2023.



Rev. Helen was celebrant for the Cremation Ceremony for JoAnn Keifer on April 6 at Allen and Dahl Funeral Home in Redding. JoAnn’s partner, as well as her brother and sister-in-law, were in attendance as were Rev. Master Meian, Rev. Master Andō, Rev. Master Enya, Rev. Master Amanda and Rev. Kalden. All came back to the Priory after the ceremony to enjoy a delicious lunch organized by Sangha members Megan Conn, Jeannine Gillian and Gary Solberg. JoAnn was a long-time friend of the Abbey.

During the month of May, 2023, the Redding Priory Sangha was delighted to offer hospitality to visitors Rev. Kalden Sykes, Rev. Master Oriana LaChance, and Panda Jerry from the Thunder Bay Meditation Group.



The Priory’s beloved Nadia Kitty died suddenly on March 5 as a result of heart failure. Rev. Helen was with her when she died. Nadia and Nicholas, sister and brother kitties, were with Rev. Helen since they were about 6 months old. Nadia was a source of great joy and a gentle presence wherever she was. She is very much missed. May she be in her own True Home in peace. The Priory Sangha was incredibly kind in their offering of sympathy and support.

— *Rev. Master Helen*

Wallowa Buddhist Temple

— *Joseph, Oregon – USA* —

Connecting within the Order: Recent reflections have prompted both monks here to continue deepening our in-person connections

with the wider monastic Sangha within our Order. This has grown out of an increasing sense of the preciousness of the living Sangha Refuge within our Transmission line.

In that direction, each of us was drawn and was welcomed to travel to another O.B.C. temple for a longer period of time than has been possible in many years. In April, Rev. Clairissa journeyed to stay for three weeks with Rev. Master Fuden and Rev. Clementia at their temple, Dharmazuflucht Schwarzwald in the Black Forest, Germany. Shortly after her return, Rev. Master Meidō travelled for a month-long visit with Rev. Master Mokugen at Great Ocean Dharma Refuge on the coast of Wales, UK.

The main purpose for each of these visits was simply to practice together with our dear fellow monks. For the younger generation (Rev. Clairissa and Rev. Clementia), who have been teaching now for some time and who are taking on increasing responsibilities for our respective temples, it has been a chance to get to know each other and learn what Refuge may be offered and received from each other going forward in our lives of training.

Both Rev. Master Meidō and Rev. Clairissa found such time together rejuvenating and inspiring, and are deeply grateful to our three kind host monks in helping us get to their temples and back, and for all that they offered while we were with them as their guests. Photos from both visits overseas appear in this Journal's temple news from Dharmazuflucht and Great Ocean; we hope you will have a look at them there.

Life at the Wallowa Buddhist Temple: There has been steady interest in our new podcast, *Serene Reflections*. More talks are being posted monthly, and all episodes can be accessed on most podcast platforms and at our temple website here: <https://wallowabuddhisttemple.org/serene-reflections-the-heart-that-seeks-the-way/>

This beautiful spring in the Wallowa Mountains has seen the emergence of many people from years of isolation, and friends old and new have been coming by our temple to connect in person in various ways.

The monks decided to travel successively so that the temple could remain open throughout the spring; visitors were greeted, weekly services continued, a guest came for an individual retreat, and seasonal projects on the grounds carried on. We are grateful for the caring support offered each ‘lone’ monk by our local congregation and by Mei Mei the temple cat.

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 temple monks, you are most welcome to contact us directly at <https://wallowabuddhisttemple.org>

— *Rev. Master Meidō and Rev. Clairissa*

Lions Gate Buddhist Priory

— Lytton, British Columbia – Canada —

With the opening up after the pandemic and the warm weather returning, we have been welcoming many new and old friends from all over Canada, as well as visitors from the local area. We are



delighted to have visitors, whether for a short tea visit or for longer stays. We continue to hold Zoom meetings on Thursday evenings and Saturday afternoons. If you are interested in attending and don't already receive reminders, just drop us a line at lionsgatebuddhistpriory@gmail.com

On Sunday May 14 we held our Wesak Ceremony. There were many attendees. It was a bright and sunny Spring day, and everyone participated in pouring water over the Baby Buddha on the altar. Afterwards, we enjoyed a lively festive meal at Bodhidharma Hall. It was wonderful to have so many attending.

That same weekend, on Saturday May 13, we held our Annual General Meeting in person and via Zoom. Rev. Aurelian and Reverend Master Kōten presented the financial statements for 2022 and answered any questions that arose. We are in good financial shape at the moment. The same Board of Directors was elected for the upcoming year.

— Rev. Master Aurelian

Further Information

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

The main offices of the OBC are at the two training monasteries in the Order, 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.

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