

NEW CHAN FORUM

禪

No. 30 Summer 2004

Dharma Adviser

*The Venerable
Chan Master
Dr. Shengyen*

Teacher

*Dr. John Crook
(Chuan-deng Jing-di)*

Editors

*John Crook
Marian Partington
Simon Child*

Artwork

Helen Robinson

Price: £4.00

Thirty Years Of Meditation In Wales

It seems incredible that thirty years have passed since I began to offer meditation retreats at the Maenllwyd. We began with Enlightenment Intensives held in a ruin of a cottage remote from the world. One of them was led by Jeff Love who taught me how to master this process. This was all part of the programme of the Bristol Encounter Centre which I had created earlier with psychotherapeutic friends following my return from California. Gradually we moved to presenting Soto Zen meditation and eventually Shifu came over to support my endeavours and the Western Chan Fellowship was formed.

So much history, so many feelings and states of mind embedded in those well juiced walls! It's odd to remember holding full retreats in the Buddha Room which seems so small today. Old hands have much to remember and be grateful.

This issue is a celebration of these thirty years. It looks ahead with accounts of the training of Guestmasters, important book reviews concerning Buddhism and both therapy and social engagement, and a response to our recent articles on Buddhism and science. Shifu returns us to our roots with an account of the foundation teachings of the great Master Linji. Enjoy!

The Three week Celebratory Retreat	John Crook	2
The Recorded Sayings of Master Linji	Master Shengyen	3
Lo And Behold...	Jake Lyne	7
Guestmasters in training	John Crook	10
Shabkar's Guest: The Breath of the Dragon	Fiona Nuttall	11
Maenllwyd	Pat Simmons	14
Science and the Middle Way	John Senior	15
Loving Kindness	Peter Reason	18
Long-Life prayers for HH the Dalai Lama		19
Ordinary Mind: Exploring the Common Ground of Zen and Psychotherapy	Eddy Street	20
Not Turning Away: The Practice of Engaged Buddhism	Ken Jones	22
Retreat Reports: Fixing the Separator, Finding the Fullness of Myself		25
Opening The Heart	John Rowan	28
My Karma ran over my Dogma	Jo Horward	32
A Man on a Moped Coming From Llanidloes	Eddy Street	33
A Day For Young People	Iris Tute, Alysun Jones	34
Buddhist Films	Michael McLoughlin	35
On Meditation	Peter Reason	37
The Land Of The Dawn-Lit Mountains	John Crook	38
Three Principles	Master Shengyen	40

Three-Week Celebratory Retreat

To celebrate our thirtieth anniversary year we are trying an experiment. We propose a Three-Week Retreat in which we will present the key fundamental methods for which our Fellowship's retreats at the Maenllwyd are becoming known - Silent Illumination, Koan and Mahamudra. Each retreat will be a week long with changeover days between them. The full event offers Fellows and others an especial opportunity for deep practice of the Dharma with two of Master Shengyen's Dharma Heirs functioning as Retreat Masters under the overall direction of John Crook (*Chuan-deng Jing-di*) acting as "abbot" for the occasion. We will present a fine opportunity to create a Zen monastic atmosphere for an exceptional period of training.

Priority, and a discount, will be given to those who can undertake the whole three weeks of retreat. It will however be possible for some to attend one or two of the retreats during the series. It is recommended that these should be Silent Illumination and Koan, or Koan and Mahamudra.

In Silent Illumination we calm the mind and open ourselves to insight into its nature. The addition of work with Koans, in our new WCF style suited for Westerners, increases the opportunities for insight and deepens Dharma understanding. In the Mahamudra retreat we warm the heart in the mellow beauty of evoking the tantric "deities" of compassion and wisdom. This is the training by which Bodhisattvas walk the way. Those who wish to teach or promote the Dharma will be especially welcomed.

Details

Dates: *April 30th - May 21st*.

Direction: John Crook.

1. Silent Illumination. Retreat Master: Simon Child.
2. Koan Retreat. Retreat Master: John Crook
3. Mahamudra Retreat. Retreat Master: John Crook.

While old hands are especially welcomed newcomers may also attend providing they have experienced a Western Zen Retreat. Those with other backgrounds may write to us in application.

The Three Week period will end with a Fire Ceremony of Blessing and Empowerment.

During the three week retreat John offers Winterhead Retreat House to a solitary retreatant who will act as Caretaker for the property during his absence. No charge will be made for this retreat. The form of the retreat will be agreed in advance and conform to the specifications for Solitary Retreats already published.

In addition John is sometimes away abroad and during these times free Caretaking Retreats may be offered. If you wish to take advantage of these offers please contact John (teacher@westernchanfellowship.org). Enquiries will be gratefully received.

John Crook. *Chuan-deng Jing-di*

The Recorded Sayings of Master Linji

Master Shengyen

This talk was given on May 9, 1997, the fourth day of a retreat given in Poland. It was edited by Ernie Heau.

This evening I will comment on the first section in the recorded sayings of Master Linji (Rinzai). I will speak on the first few paragraphs:

Constant Attendant Wang, head of the prefecture and his various officials requested the Master to step up to the lecture seat.

The Master ascended the hall and said, "Today, having found it impossible to refuse, I have complied with people's wishes and stepped up to the lecture seat. If I were to discuss the great concern of Buddhism from the point of view of a follower of the sect of the Chan patriarchs, then I could not even open my mouth, and you would have no place to plant your feet. But today I have been urged to speak by the Constant Attendant, so why should I hide the principles of our sect? Perhaps there are some valiant generals here who would like to draw up their ranks and unfurl their banners. Let them prove to the group what they can do!"

A monk asked, "What is the basic meaning of Buddhism?"

The Master gave a shout.

The monk bowed low.

The Master said, "This fine monk is the kind who's worth talking to!"

Someone asked the Master, "Whose style of song do you sing? Whose school of teaching do you carry on?"

The Master said, "When I was at Huangbo's place, I asked a question three times and three times I got hit."

The monk started to say something. The Master gave a shout and then struck the monk, saying, "You don't drive a nail into the empty sky!"

The Constant Attendant that the text refers to is a government official, accompanied by fellow officials as they ask Master Linji to speak on the Dharma. In these paragraphs, Master Linji is asked about the meaning of Buddhism. There are three points to be made. First, there are no fixed teachings in Chan, and if there were, their usefulness would be questionable.

Second, Linji replies with a shout when asked about the basic meaning of Buddhism (translator shouts). My attendant shouted on my behalf, but is this shout the basic teaching of Buddhism? I am not sure this was useful as teaching either.

Third, the Master replies to the question about his style of teaching by saying:

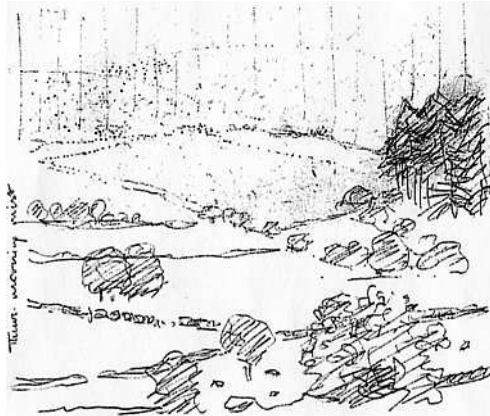
When I was studying with Master Huangbo I asked a question three times and three times I got hit.

Despite the stories, ancient masters like Huangbo or Linji would have been insane if they always hit disciples. A genuine master only takes such actions when a student is ripe, and on the way to becoming a fit Dharma vessel. If a master inappropriately hits or shouts, that's like hitting or shouting at a dead dog - to no useful effect. The conditions must be

auspicious for helping a student that way. When I said in America that a Chan master would sometimes hit people to jog them into awakening, I was told I could get sued or jailed for that. Would that be true in Poland?

Now let us return to the first point. The Master said:

If I were to discuss the great concern of Buddhism from the point of view of a follower of the sect, then I could not even open my mouth.



The great concern of Buddhism is enlightenment. If someone told you what enlightenment was like, even if they meant well, they would be deceiving you. This is like asking a mother what it is like to give birth. It is impossible for her to convey the true feeling; you have to personally experience it. Two mothers may be able to share the experience, but a non-mother listening would never be able to really know, just from hearing about it.

Can one person guide another toward enlightenment? Yes, but only a deeply enlightened master has the skills to encourage and guide students to realisation. This teacher must also have the power to kindle and nurture the trust, faith, and confidence that the student needs to work on this great concern of Buddhism, enlightenment.

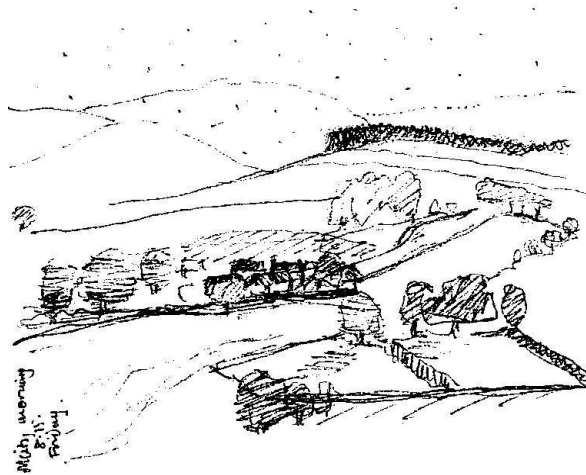
In mentioning generals, Linji likens Chan to the art of war. In ancient China generals would study war manuals to learn strategy. A great general must inspire his soldiers to enter battle and give everything, even their lives. A great Chan master must inspire students in the same way, except the battlefield is the student's own mind and body. But even if a general studied all the manuals and the strategies, success in the field depended on responding to what is happening on the spot, at that very moment. So it is with teaching Chan. This free functioning responsiveness comes from experience, not books.

If someone memorises and understands all the gongans, that doesn't mean they can guide another to enlightenment. A great general who wins every battle is rare. A great Chan master who helps enlighten a lot of people is also rare. A general who wins an occasional battle is not so rare. Likewise, a Chan master who now and then guides someone to enlightenment is not so rare. Now, a Chan master who can bring enlightenment to everyone he meets, that is impossible in this world.

To be enlightened is one thing, to guide others to enlightenment is another. Master Mazu awakened 130 disciples, but only 10 percent of them became Chan masters. So even though people may be enlightened, they may lack the skill to help others do the same. If Mazu could come and help, there being only 42 of you, he should have no problem, right? Too bad I am not Mazu.

So let's see how Linji helps others. Linji says that if he were to discuss the great concern of Buddhism, which is enlightenment, he could not even open his mouth - he would have nothing to say. On the other hand, he muses, being a Chan master, a teacher, why should he hide the teaching? So he challenges the "generals" in the hall to ask a question. A monk asks:

"What is the basic meaning of Buddhism?"



The basic meaning of Buddhism is that all sentient beings are capable of being enlightened. The monk almost surely knows this already, so he is probably looking for some additional words, perhaps how to become enlightened or what it feels like. Instead Linji just gives a loud shout. Even though Linji didn't say anything, just shouted, he did reply. The monk upon hearing this seems to have understood Linji's meaning. So he just bowed. Linji was pleased, saying, "Hmm, this fine monk here, he is worth talking to."

Linji's reply is in fact a very good one. If this monk, hearing this kind of reply for the first time, responded with a deep prostration, he was probably enlightened. At least he understood what enlightenment was. Or, if after hearing Linji's shout he spontaneously shouted back, this also meant he was probably enlightened, that they gave the mind seal to each other; in other words, transmission took place.

In Japan, I attended a Zen retreat, where I witnessed practitioners competing in shouting to see whose voice was louder and more powerful. I was just stunned, because all I saw was people shouting at each other. I thought these people must be greatly enlightened, but for all I knew, they could also be just parroting. But it was also good for those young people to get a taste of being a Zen master. If that was the extent of their training, it would have been meaningless, but of course, that was not the case. We can try this tomorrow: I will shout at you and you can shout back, and we will see if it is useful. Do you think it would be useful? Or just fun?

The third point is about this passage:

Someone asked the Master, "Whose style of song do you sing? Whose school of teaching do you carry on?"

The Master said, "When I was at Huangbo's place, I asked a question three times and three times I got hit."

This monk is asking Linji, "You are a Dharma heir of Huangbo; what did he transmit to you?" Linji then relates his story about being hit by Huangbo. As it happens, the question Linji was asking was, "What is the meaning of Bodhidharma coming from the West?" This question also means "What is the meaning of enlightenment?" or "What is this Dharma of enlightenment?" And every time Linji asked, Huangbo just gave him a hard blow.

After Linji related this, he probably saw from the monk's expression that the monk was at a loss to do or say something. He knew then that the monk lacked realisation, and shouted at and struck him, saying, "You don't drive a nail into an empty sky," thus concluding the exchange on a note of futility. Was this useful to the monk?

Tonight all you heard about was old Chan masters hitting and shouting. Very strange, yes? I doubt whether there is much use in this. Do you think it was useful or useless?

Its usefulness lies in the teaching that to reach enlightenment, you must put aside conceptualising and rationalising, and you must just practice. There comes a point when you just stop asking questions, stop talking. You must put these aside to reach enlightenment. You make progress, then you confront what seems like an iron wall. You tell yourself you must penetrate this wall even if it costs your life. You should practice with this kind of determination, this kind of will, and courage; no matter what happens you must burst through the iron wall. Only then will you realise awakening. If you ask, "Why should I go through the wall?", you are already a defeated general. You need complete confidence and faith in Chan and must go all out.

You need a clear understanding of the concepts of Buddhism, but they cannot substitute for the real experience. You must actualise the ideas through practice, taking each step to the goal, by yourself. Chan talks about sudden enlightenment, which implies that there are really no stages. A teacher can't say, "At the first step you should do this, at the second step, you should do that, and at the third step, eventually and gradually you become enlightened." Although we talk about stages of practice, these stages only give us the general direction.

The whole point of practice is to drop attachment to self. At that moment, that is enlightenment; there is no stage. In talking about stages, we are only describing the sense of self in different circumstances, to give you an understanding of the self as you experience it in practice. We speak of stages - concentrated mind, unified mind, and no-mind - but when you actually let go of the self, there are no stages that can be talked about. It can only be experienced personally through determined and continuous practice.

Lo And Behold...

A brief History of the land of Lo, the Kingdom of Mustang, Nepalese Himalayas.

Jake Lyne

In 2004 a bold party of Western Chan adventurers set off on foot and horseback from the remote mountain airstrip of Jomsom in northern Nepal on a long trek through the Kali Kandakhi Gorge and over the Himalayas by way of several high passes to the ancient Tibetan land of Lo. Visiting villages and monasteries along the way, we were warmly welcomed. We "sat " in a number of monastic shrine rooms and gossiped with lamas in residence. The awe inspiring scenery kept us going through long hard days on trek but when one of us succumbed to illness on arrival in the little capital we had to send for a helicopter. It came buzzing through the enormous mountains like a little bee and safely reduced our party by two.

The ancient walled city stands in its own bleak plain just short of the Tibetan border. It encloses numerous residences as well as the Kings Palace, two monasteries with extraordinary murals now under repair by experts, and a monastic school. We were so impressed by the School and the kind hospitality we received there that we have formally adopted a young monk and will see him through his education. More of this anon. Jake has kindly reviewed the history of this remote land for us as a reminder to our travellers and as an inspiration for others to follow. Eds.

Lo is the ancient Tibetan name for an ancient kingdom within modern Nepal that was renamed Mustang in the mid-16th Century when it became a vassal state of Jumla, another small state to its west. Mustang is a corruption of Mon-thang, the district around the capital, which is now called Lo-Monthang. By renaming Lo as Mustang, the influence of the kingdom was symbolically reduced to that of a small district.

The dominant geological feature of Lo is the Kali Kandakhi gorge. This is the deepest gorge in the world and passes between the Dhaulagiri and Annapurna mountain ranges. An old trade route passes through Lo and down the Kali Kandakhi gorge; this was an important route allowing relatively easy passage across the Himalayan range from Lhasa via Nepal to India. Consequently, Lo has been of strategic, commercial and religious importance and for most of its history a vassal of one or another of three nearby warring states. Even so strategic alliances with Ladakh and Parvat (a district to the west of Pokhara), together with its geographical isolation were helpful to Lo in maintaining a degree of independence throughout.

Tradition has it that Guru Rinpoche (Padhmasambhava) made his way to Tibet via Lo in the 9th Century, and spent a year or so there, founding Lo Gekhar Monastery. This was one of the 12 or so Gompas and caves that we visited, and was particularly beautiful and moving. Whether the tradition is accurate or not, it seems likely that Indian Buddhism found its way to Tibet via the Kali Kandakhi at this time, and would have made contact with the Bon religion which was already established in Lo.

When Buddhists were escaping the sacking of the great Buddhist Monasteries in Northern India due to the Muslim holocaust in the 12th Century, there was a quickening of religious activity across the Himalayas including Lo. At this time the most powerful Tibetan Buddhist sect was the Sakyapa. They had assumed political control of Tibet, based on an alliance with Mongol warlords; this sect was also dominant in Lo.

It was not until the 15th Century that Lo became a significant power in the Western Himalayas - this occurred because the three powers that had traditionally fought for supremacy in the region all collapsed for various reasons, allowing a brief period during which smaller kingdoms could flourish. Lo was one of these. Ama Pal, the governor of Lo gave himself the title of king and he, followed by his son and grandson established regional control over Lo and surrounding areas through a series of campaigns. These kings initiated a line of succession that has continued to this day, assisted by the practice of kings retiring and passing control to their successor before they die.

At this time Lo was not an ally of Tibet, and therefore the dominance of the Sakyapa sect in Lo was not threatened by the rising power of the Gelugpa sect in Tibet. To this day the Sakyapa sect is predominant in Mustang, although there are also some Nyingmapa and Gelugpa practitioners and Gompas.

The 15th Century was a time of cultural and religious renaissance in Lo - the kings had sufficient resources to win wars and build palaces, temples and stupas. They paid for Nepalese or Indian master artists to decorate Thugchen Gompa in Lo-Monthang with extraordinarily beautiful artwork, which still survives over a significant portion of the walls, and is currently being restored by a specialist Italian team funded by the American Himalayan Foundation.

The golden years passed swiftly, and the fortunes of Lo began to decline again in the 16th Century as other small states of the Western Himalayas, in particular Jumla, grew in power. Internal conflict, between upper Lo (near the capital) and lower Lo (closer to India and what is now central Nepal), fuelled by conflict over financial control of trade through the Kali Kandakhi gorge, weakened the state and reduced the power of the kings in upper Lo. However, the royal line survived. For the next two hundred years their fortunes were mixed, depending on Western Himalayan micro-politics, and the varied success of royal incumbents in achieving military or political control within Lo/Mustang through forging alliances with other Western Himalayan states.

In 1789, when Gorkhali forces carried their military campaign to the Western Himalayas, the incumbent king of Lo/Mustang was wise enough to co-operate with them. By 1789 the Jumla state, which dominated and controlled Lo/Mustang, was vanquished and incorporated into Nepal. Lo/Mustang was also incorporated into Nepal, and the king or Raja of Lo/Mustang was duly rewarded for his co-operation by political support from the Gorkha administration. This was not entirely altruistic since the Gorkhas continuing campaign for territorial expansion relied on the assistance of the various Nepalese kingdoms. After 20 years, when the borders of Nepal were finally settled, the government of Nepal ceased to court the king of Lo/Mustang.

In Lo/Mustang fortunes fell again and the Rajas' influence was once again confined to the northern area of Lo, with little or no control over much needed trade between India and Tibet. Instead levies were exacted by powerful families based in Kagbeni and Jomosom in southern Lo, who followed the age-old tradition of undermining the authority of the Raja, by forming alliances with his powerful opponents. This time the alliance was with the Nepalese government, which, whilst not officially deposing the Raja, was more or less indifferent to him.

In the early 1950s, following the Chinese occupation of Tibet, trade along the Kali Kandakhi gorge dwindled. This had a very significant effect on the economic circumstances of Lo/Mustang. In addition, following a revolution in Nepal, the political climate from 1951 was particularly unfavourable for the Raja of Lo. Religious festivals were banned and

peasant families no longer deferred to the Raja, bringing to an end feudal arrangements for tending the Raja's fields and the tithe system.

The Raja of Lo hung on through these thin times, and after the Nepalese Royal coup in 1961, King Mahendra reinstated the Raja, together with religious festivals, the Lo/Mustang justice system, and feudal agricultural customs. The early '60s was a time of considerable political importance for the Raja of Lo because one strand of the US policy of Chinese communist containment was to fund Tibetan Kadampa guerrillas. After defeat in Tibet itself, these redoubtable warriors were based in Lo/Mustang conducting raids northwards against the Chinese in Tibet. This was finally brought to an end in an aggressive campaign of pacification by Nepalese forces securing their own political territory against the plausible risks of Chinese interference.

The royal function continues to change - in addition to his other roles, the Raja has become a tourist attraction and most treks (not ours!) have an audience with him. When we were in Lo Monthang (the capital), one of the main topics of conversation was the road that is being built between it and Tibet. This is being funded by the King Mahendra Trust and the American Himalayan Foundation (AHP) against the personal wishes of the Raja, but supported by many of his people. This will bring all the usual changes, but the very pleasant and energetic Country Director of the AHP that we met in Lo Manthang, is striving to ensure that the road will not damage the fabric of the fragile city, and that the inevitable bars and shops will be across the valley and as far from the ancient city as practicable.

Travelling through upper Lo, there is plenty of evidence of population decline; villages have disappeared and the area cultivated around most of the villages and the capital has decreased. One cause of this may be the diminishing water supply associated with receding glaciers, and natural disaster from burst glacier lakes. However, the history suggests that Lo has been declining for the last 500 years, and at least one village had disappeared despite what appeared to be an adequate water supply.

All along the mid-upper Himalayas throughout Nepal, the same population decline, reduced cultivable area, abandoning villages, is going on. This is not usually linked to water loss so much as to declining rural populations, education and changing aspirations and expectations. We were told that agriculture provides for about half of the needs of the population. The rest is through trade conducted by the people young enough to leave Lo during the winter months to travel to India, and returning to conduct the harvest in summer. Many of the 'Tibetans' selling sweaters in the tourist markets of Sarnath during winter months come in fact from Lo. Such are the changing times.

Main source and further reading:

Dhungel, R.K. (2002). *The Kingdom of Lo (Mustang): A historical study*. Publ. Jigme S.P. Bista for Tashi Gephel Foundation. Kathmandu, Nepal.

See also:

Matthiesen.P 1995. *East of Lo Montang in the land of Mustang*. Timeless Books. New Delhi. Photography by Thomas Laird.

Peissel, M. 1967. *Mustang: a lost kingdom*. Book Faith India Delhi.

Jackson, D.P. 1984. *The Mollas of Mustang*. Library of Tibetan Works and Archives. New Delhi.

Thapa, N.P. 1996 *A Short History of Nepal*. Ratna Pustak Bhandar. Kathmandu

Guestmasters in Training

We now have in place a policy for the training of Guestmasters on our retreats. Here I outline the way whereby I am seeking to create retreat officers of distinction who will eventually continue the intensive work of the Fellowship well into future years. It feels appropriate to share these issues as part of our celebratory journal.

As most readers will know our Training Policy envisages inviting willing people to function first as Time Keepers or Workmasters in which roles they gain a thorough knowledge of how the retreat is presented, its schedule, timing and stages of development over the period of the retreat.

The role of Guestmaster is undertaken by invitation. It means working closely with the Retreat Master in the detailed organisation and monitoring of a retreat. There are two main aspects of this job. Firstly there is the care of the participants, ensuring they are comfortable in their lodgings and understand the rules, answering any questions, encouraging the faint hearted and levelling the pompous or misguided. The second aspect is that of Disciplinarian who, gently at first, but with ultimate severity, corrects any failures in retreat procedure or rules on the part of a participant. A truly problematic participant will be interviewed by the Retreat Master and may be requested to leave.

Guestmasters develop their own style and usually welcome the greatly increased insight into the whole process that comes from caring for others. It can be a worrying job especially perhaps on the first days of a WZR when many newcomers to retreat may be present. The Guestmaster shares with the Retreat Master all aspects of the retreat as it unfolds and the two will often confer together, sharing their impressions.

After several retreats functioning in this way, a Guestmaster may be asked to participate in the interviews of participants, first as an observer and then in trying their own hand under supervision at interviewing participants and facilitating their process. This interviewing process lies at the heart of a successful retreat both in terms of a participant's new understanding and in terms of the communal experience of all. Training here must be highly critical and responsive. For example, psychotherapists may have problems in adjusting their skilled techniques to the demands of running a Zen interview. The purpose is not the same.

Ultimately a senior Guestmaster may be entrusted with Mastering a retreat under supervision and eventually alone relying on their own experience and training.

The principles are the same for all types of retreat. In the course of such training the trainee is faced by the powerful authority of the Retreat Master and this can easily give rise to fantasies and projection which sometimes take quite strong forms that the Guestmaster-trainee has to understand and control. All strong teachers are used to the mildly Oedipal reactions their best students commonly manifest and both Master and Guestmaster need to share these to undo any possible misunderstandings.

Guestmaster and Master form a strong team and the ultimate success of a retreat depends on their skills in managing the shifting moods and styles of experience revealed by participants. Although any one person's realisations are a result of their own willingness to work hard, there is no doubt that skilful interviewing and precise Guestmaster intervention can often bring a troubled practitioner through to realisations he or she might not otherwise have had.

In NCF 25 we presented a retreat report from Jake Lyne in such training, and in NCF 28 Nigel Jeffcoat presented his report on Guestmastering a Mahamudra retreat. Here we present Fiona Nuttall's report of her first experience as a Guestmaster. Others no doubt will follow. Good fortune to them all!!

Shabkar's Guest: the Breath of the Dragon The Mahamudra Retreat, December 2003

Fiona Nuttall

This was to be my first experience of guestmastering for John. I had guestmastered for others; notably for Hilary, but this was assisting the 'big cheese'. It had the formal label of 'training', even though all retreats; in whatever capacity one participates in them, are training. I was really looking forward to it, but I was also slightly apprehensive. Normally when I sit a retreat with John there are other 'senior ' people, old hands, if you will, acting as a buffer between him and me. This time there would be just John and me, although Pam's comforting Cook's presence was solid and familiar. So, what was all that about? I suppose it was partly that I don't really know John that well, and this, despite coming to Maenllwyd for years and spending a month in China with him. I suppose I kept John separate. Hmmm. But also I didn't really know what was expected of me beyond bashing several pieces of wood together at various times of the day and night. Anyway, 'not knowing' is always potentially a good place of learning.

So I arrived early, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed to find that John had already set the place up. We had some chit-chat and later I voiced my 'lack of knowing'. "Look, you'll just have to tell me what you want me to do, because I don't know how you work this." So, that was fine.

First job, help Pam unload the car of consumables. Second job, look out for arrivals and be welcoming. Desperately trying to memorise first names. Everyone was listed by surname on the sheets. I carried a piece of paper with me all week with both people's first and surnames on it, to try and remember them. We were expecting a full house and most of them were new to me. The form of the retreat was new as well, my first Mahamudra. I arrived with visual memories of Chimid Rigdzin Rimpoche and aural memories of bells and drums and Phurbas being plunged into sand. Some people arrived late, having got lost. This was the opportunity to be Mother Hen and check that they were OK and set up for the morning. We opened the retreat. Everyone sat well.

First night I was anxious about missing the alarm and awoke several times in the night, pressing the bright, blue, back-light on my watch to check the time. One of these checks was a few minutes before the alarm and so I got up and started lighting lamps. It's amazing how clumsy one is at the start of a retreat, crashing about without a good economy of movement. And how that lack goes when one settles into the place, the routine and the mind. I could see lamps already going in the house. John was ready for the off.

Crack, crack, crack. Three strikes on the Han. Get up, you lot! We've got stuff to do! Shufflings, coughs, groans. Poor lambs. Some looked as though they hadn't slept. Exercises, tea, sitting, chanting, breakfast. Some of them had not slept at all. Time for some gentle rearrangement of bed spaces and distribution of earplugs and reassurance. No, really, you'll sleep better tonight. You'll be so tired that you'll just drop off. This said with fingers crossed that what worked for me might also work for them. Oh dear. I cared about these people. Was that right? How to attend to their stated needs without interfering in their process? And a workmaster to integrate with as well! That was novel. Actually it made things easier as there were fewer people asking for information; how to, where is, when shall, why?

Then there was 'my' retreat too. In the "Why am I here?" session, I had said that I had come to help out, that I loved the place and remembered things here and so on. But actually, I had

picked this retreat for a purpose, even though that purpose only became manifest when I was on the ground, so to speak.

I had come to ride with Tibetan dragons. I didn't even know what that meant, but Maenllwyd has often held a sense of dragon-nature for me. If I rationalise it, I can probably attribute it to the hills, the wind, the fires and the smoke. But there is something more primeval about it than that. Some sense of what is beyond the usual sights, sounds and smells. Where even one's own insignificance disappears in the cavernous, smoky nostrils of "what is" in the face of the 10,000 things. Some ride!



So we started to go through Tipun's notes and do some mind calming. People settled into their jobs at various rates, some more easily than others. Some were fighting with their 'not wanting'. I was worried about the new axe handle coming away from the axe-head until one of the wood guys said that he'd trained as a chippy and handling axes was the first thing that they had learned. OK. I can leave it. Just let things take their course. Just let things take their course.

On the first day's walk, I stood under a birch tree looking at the hundreds of fallen leaves. I wanted to weep. It was a representation of the vast numbers of fallen humanity. Fallen angels, all of us suffering together. Unfettered compassion. Look! This is how we are! The hills in the frozen winter sunlight, setting into pinks and violets against the greens, with an almost full, translucent moon. Compassion just "was", there. Pain, beauty, peace, cold, colours, just there regardless of whether anyone noticed.

It froze one night. The next day everything had that sparkly quality and looked different to its usual format. During that day's walk, I wandered down the lane to see whether the ditches had frozen. Near an icy cleft in the woods, I stood for a time and watched a small, brown, sparrow-like bird with a fluffed up grey breast and a white rump as it busily searched through leaf litter. It picked over each individually. It was focussed and industrious. Not that one, not that one. Nor that one. Looking, looking with attentive searching. It seemed like a metaphor for meditation. The sheep and birds seemed undeterred by my presence. Good. Perhaps I was treading more lightly on the earth, both in terms of my feet and my mental and emotional presence.

The visualisation was amazingly strong, as was the 9-step breathing. I could feel the movement of what? Something more than just attention. Something visceral. Third eye fizzing, buzzing, bubbling. And four armed Chenrezi so palpably present. Moving from thumbs to palms to beads to flower so easily. Where did these other arms come from? Or why had I never noticed them before?

On one walk I had some kind of blockage. How could I fit this Chenrezi into my heart? Even as the size of a drop of blood, when my heart is so full of attachment? I was missing someone badly. There was not exactly a sense of 'I'm not good enough', but more, 'Look how my life and the way I live it restricts how open I can be to the practice'. But Chenrezi as an archetype, is not limited by my physicality. What is impinged upon is my willingness to accept the archetype in the form of the representation. If I release, just let go and stop trying, stop controlling, then there is no resistance to the acceptance of that gentle smile on his face. Yes, of course we can merge. There is nothing to merge. There is only remembering. Of course there is non-judgemental acceptance and empathic relation to the joys and sufferings of all. Of course. How else could it be?

The landscape was achingly beautiful in the December winter sunlight. I was interested by John's talk when he mentioned Daido Looi's studies on the love of nature. Was the landscape at times, too perfect to look at? Was there too much love? Could such a state exist? Where was the open heart then? Perhaps that is 'holding on' again. The heart, as metaphor, lets in and pumps straight out. No holding on. I watched two ravens cavorting in the air. They were flying in complete synchronicity. Twisting and turning, gaining and losing height, always absolutely together, watching, following, responding with motion. I was moved by the sight in a way that I find difficult to express. It was another metaphor, but it was more perfect than mere metaphor. Is this Dharma learning? This degree of closeness and response? This fusion of physicality and attentiveness? Is this what yab-yum thankas represent? Is this why one should be so careful of choosing a teacher?

I was shocked, really, by the sheer physicality of the practice. One time I experienced my chest opening out and the body mass from the ribs upwards becoming insubstantial and seeming to be some kind of crystal light sensation. Then both disappearing, no movement, no pain, no sensation. Just completely open. The bell rang and summoned and I did not want to come back, but knew that I must.

John was ill on the retreat and lost his voice briefly. I read from the words of Shabkar, Tibetan monk of Bird Island in the inland saltwater lake of Kokonor in what is now Qinghai Province in China. I loved his words. So clear. So direct. So exact. Shabkar became the translator for me. Shabkar had been there, done it and made sense of it for himself (and as he says for the benefit of others). All this physical experience. All these people doing their thing. And me in the middle of it all. All and nothing. Nothing much.

I have to say that I didn't crack compassion. I was still pissed off when things went wrong when I hadn't made my instructions clear enough or whatever. The minor irritations were still getting to me. But I could tell that something was working away inside me about all of this. Something indefinable that was going to make a difference in the long term. That was why I decided to go with the empowerment. It is something that I need. If people around me are lucky, maybe it will make me a little kinder!

It was another of those experiences that one can't make sense of yet. Maybe it will dawn on me in three years time as these things do. In the meantime, I'll listen for the rustle of dragon scales and make prostrations of gratitude for the teachers and the teachings.

Maenllwyd

*So this is home:
This quiet decorum,
Clean spaciousness.*

*Wind and light lie back
Calm together,
Backs of hands resting on
Contemplative hills.*

*And a strange decency
Blesses still heads.*

*Ecstasy is at odds
With stone's ordinariness.
Love is just
Noticing.
Truth seems enough,
Or clarity.*

No bliss needed.

Pat Simmons

Science and The Middle Way

John Senior

Two articles in NCF 29 have provoked quite strong reactions of both approval and of remonstrance. We select here John Senior's balanced reflections arising from these texts. We do not of course accept responsibility for our authors' opinions which remain their own. Metaphysics and Science do not always mix well but we have to remember that even the most favoured paradigms of science are ultimately metaphysical in nature. A hypothesis may be rejected in experiment but never 100% confirmed. Who knows what fresh insight may arise tomorrow. Some speculations do however remain somewhat risky if one wishes to have a quiet life. (Eds)

The Spring 2004 29th edition of New Chan Forum contained two thought provoking articles: Jake Lyne's 'Buddhism: A Science of The Mind?' and C. T. Song's 'The Concept of Sunyata from a Scientific Viewpoint', the former tentatively psychological, the latter boldly speculative. I venture to present my own 'world view', significantly different from those of the previous authors and relevant to their arguments, in the hope of provoking further discussion and perhaps helping others grappling with these issues.

I have always felt the need to ensure that my meditational insight and my intellectual understanding were at one with each other. For many years my inspiration has been a Tibetan sentiment: For the relative world of appearances show compassion; for the absolute, devoidness, show wisdom. Pursuit of this aspiration has been greatly supported by the Chenrezig practice, taught on the annual Mahamudra retreats, based on the visualisation of oneself as, on the one hand, feeling Chenrezig's compassion for all sentient beings in this relative world of appearances, and on the other hand accepting the devoidness, the emptiness of inherent existence, of all experienced phenomena.

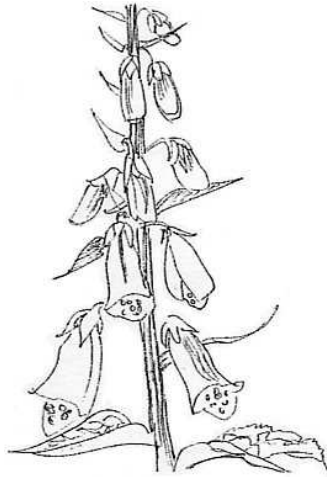
This is in tune with the text in the Sutta Udâna, VIII, 3, to which I often return: 'There is an Unborn, Unoriginated, Uncreated, Unformed'. 'There is', a statement of existence, followed by 'an Unborn, Unoriginated, Uncreated, Unformed', the antithesis of existence, though not consistent with Western conceptual logic, for me expresses perfectly the experience in meditation of a place beyond this and that, beyond born and unborn, beyond all duality: 'This I call neither arising nor passing away, neither standing still, nor being born, nor dying. There is neither foothold, nor development, nor any basis. This is the end of suffering' (Udâna, VIII, 1).

The Madyamika Middle Way philosophy encompasses the sentiments of Mahamudra and of the Udâna Sutta in the assertion that: The relative world of appearances (i.e. all phenomena) and the absolute (i.e. devoidness, emptiness of inherent existence) are neither two distinct things, nor are they one and the same thing. If they were two distinct things this would infer that they existed inherently, therefore unchangingly: the error of the eternalist viewpoint. If they were one and the same thing no distinction between them would be possible: the opposite error of the nihilist viewpoint. Hence the term Middle Way: the way between the two errors of eternalism and nihilism.

An implication of the Middle Way philosophy is that 'Neither two distinct things nor one and the same thing' applies to all pairs of contrasted phenomena in this relative, dualistic world of appearances: relative/absolute, north/south, plus/minus, hot/cold, matter/space... nothing existing inherently, of its own accord; everything interrelated, interdependent, co-existent, recalling Indra's net, each reflected in all.

This hypothesis is testable to the extent that it may be applied to certain problems to see if it provides insight.

Taking the question, raised in Jake Lyne's article, of the nature of mind: scientists struggle with the question of how the mind could be a product of matter; religions have ascribed to the idea of a soul existing independent of the body, either as an inherently existing soul or to be ultimately merged with a god-head. From the Middle Way viewpoint the material body and the mind are seen as co-existent. As they have no independent inherent existence, there is no need to wrestle with ideas such as matter giving rise to mind, or a soul assuming, and finally surviving, a material body.



The question then arises as to what gives rise to the body-and-mind, and what happens after death of the body; the whole question of life and death. The Western segregation of life and death creates a fear of death and an obsessive concern with, and attachment to, the 'self', an obsession with retention of youth, and a fear of ageing.

The Middle Way approach that life/death is another pair of opposites, neither, on the one hand, two inherently existing things nor, on the other hand, one and the same thing, is liberating in that it allows of a sense of life-death-life-death connectedness and continuity rather than life/death finality. As Dianna St Ruth pointed out in an issue of 'Buddhism Now' some years ago, the Middle Way approach to death avoids the two extremes: eternalism, with its obsessive attachment to the 'self' and a soul surviving death; and the opposite extreme of nihilism, with its associated sense of meaninglessness and despair.

The Middle Way continuity of life and death, each arising from its opposite, leads to a sense of the meaning of time which differs from that of the Western view of time, which is linear, one-pointed, the direction of increasing overall entropy and disorder, like a clock running down. Who started the clock? Who created the clock? Who created the creator? When did time begin? Will time end? – all questions I clearly remember worrying about before my first Western Zen Retreat in 1980. This Western linear line of thought leads to the blind alleys of infinite regression (Who created the creator who created the creator who...?), eternalism (time without beginning or end), or nihilism (an inexplicable ending of time).

The Middle Way approach is free of such difficulties, as time is seen as interdependent and co-emergent with other phenomena. Pursuing this viewpoint, in addition to the independent co-emergent dualities of matter/space (the physical universe) and mind/matter, it is helpful

to consider the independent co-emergent dualities of space/time and mental attachment/time. The pairing of space with time and mental attachment with time may appear incongruous, but let us consider what one means by time.

We are accustomed to thinking in terms of a world of Newtonian mechanics, including time as precisely defined intervals defined with literally atomic precision. But how easily do we comprehend the relative nature of time, physically demonstrated by the fact that an atomic clock taken by 'plane around the earth experiences and records time differently from an identical stationary atomic clock. How do we comprehend the fact that astronomers looking into the distant reaches of the universe are literally looking back in time, and seeing the birth pangs of the universe? Time was assumed to be universally constant throughout the universe until Einstein predicted, and experiment demonstrated, that within the broader context of the space-time continuum time is relative, being dependent on the motion of the observer and slower the nearer the observer is to the gravitational field of massive objects. Space and time are not independent, but are interrelated aspects of the space-time continuum.

On a psychological level, the meaning of time is very different now to what it was centuries ago. Church bells were accurate enough until the introduction of railway timetables. Water clocks were needed to regulate the offices of mediaeval monasteries. The seasons, perhaps monitored by stone circles, satisfied the needs of early farmers. Need, and with it attachment, therefore seems closely related to the concept of time.

It is worth reflecting upon the nature of the terms 'science' and 'scientific viewpoint', the terms used in the title of Jake Lyne's and C. T. Song's articles. 'Science' I take to mean a methodology based on the testing of a hypothesis by experiments: one experiment may disprove a hypothesis, but a million experiments supporting a hypothesis do not prove the hypothesis; they only lend support to the hypothesis. By definition all theories or 'truths' are only conditional and relative; true until proved false or superseded by stronger 'truths'. For example, Einstein's relativity superseded Newtonian' mechanics; Galileo's placing of the sun (now recognised as a minor star on the edge of the galaxy) at the centre of the Universe superseded God's 'heaven and earth'.

We might like to think that science progresses by successive methodical cycles of hypothesis, experimental testing, 'proof', and further hypotheses, but we should not forget Popper's paradox that, at the instant of its creation, a radically new hypothesis is indistinguishable, by virtue of its denial of the established dogma, from the creation of a complete myth. Perhaps we should be cautious of relying too much on science.

'Scientific viewpoint' I take to mean the current established dogma concerning the nature of the phenomenological universe we inhabit. If such established dogma are taken as a starting point to hypothesise on the nature of consciousness and Sunyata, it might be wise to proceed with caution: even in the physical world theories cannot be relied upon outside the realms in which they have been validated. For C. T. Song to extrapolate from theories in the physical world to areas outside their realm of established validity is to risk walking over an unsuspected cliff edge into an abyss; to extrapolate from theories of particle physics and thermodynamics to try to gain some insight into the world of consciousness and Sunyata is surely to fall into an abyss. On the other hand, applying Popper's paradox, it may be a way forward out of established dogma about consciousness and Sunyata, to a new and enlightening perspective.

Past the signless signpost -

- walk on!

Loving Kindness

Peter Reason

January 2004

Wednesday morning in the Chan Hall. Half way through the Shining Silence retreat. Jake had just spoken, among other things, about how we could exhaust ourselves if we tried to extinguish, repress, every thought, and that we should be willing to allow some thoughts into our mindful space. This, he pointed out, was different from in the early stages of the retreat, when calming the mind is paramount.

I sat on my stool, facing the wall. I had taken to calming my mind with two or three counts of breath to ten, then doing the whole body exercise and bringing my breath attention to the hara. I found that the more physical, almost tangible, I could make each breath-in-body, the more empty my mind could become.

Suddenly, as if from nowhere but also very tangibly from right here the words came to me, "Don't obstruct the loving kindness". A command, an instruction, like a prophet in the Old Testament (and curiously phrases from the Book of Common Prayer, especially the General thanksgiving, had been running through my head from time to time).

I think I had been aware of my grandchildren, two year old Otto and new-born Liberty, the image of the brother and sister, the potency of their young beings had already moved me to tears of gratitude.

"Don't obstruct the loving kindness." I sat turning these words over in my mind as a mantra or koan. No obstruction is something Buddhists pray for; Loving-kindness is incarnated in the Dalai Lama.

I went into the yard for the walk period. And again, "Don't obstruct the loving kindness." came to me. I began to think and make connections intellectually: if we were to be living in a community of subjects on the planet, as Thomas Berry would have us, rather than as a collection of separate objects, then loving kindness is the appropriate attitude to learn. We treat another as subject through loving-kindness. It is more than an expression of responsibility or stewardship, those words are important but too instrumental. We treat the world; we approach our world, with loving-kindness. And if we want others to do the same, we can only treat them with loving-kindness.

I returned to my seat. The timekeeper fumbled the bell slightly, and I caught my critical side stirring. Silly man, why can't he do it properly? And I caught myself in the act of being critical and giggled as I settled into my posture. How silly can one be? I allowed the giggles to deepen into laughter. And they turned into tears.

Long Life Prayer For His Holiness The Dalai Lama

The Dalai Lama has recently been unwell. We are asked to think of him at this time with the following words. (Eds)

*In the land of snowy mountains,
You're the source of all happiness and joy.
Powerful Chenrezig, Tenzin Gyatso -
Please remain until samsara ends!*

*In the heavenly realm of Tibet, surrounded by a chain of
snow mountains The source of all happiness and help for
beings is Tenzin Gyatso, Chenrezig in person
May his life be secure for hundreds of kalpas*

*Gang Ri Ra Wey Kor Wey Shing Kham Dhir
Phen Dang Dey Wa Ma Lu Jung Wey Nay
Chenrezig Wang Tenzin Gyatso Yi
Shab Pey Si Tey Par Du Ten Gyur Chig*

BOOK REVIEWS

Eddy Street and Ken Jones have kindly contributed two reviews of books that are clearly of great importance and interest to practitioners especially those concerned with psychotherapy and engaging Buddhist practice with the problems of the world. Here they are. (Eds).

Ordinary Mind:

Exploring the Common Ground of Zen and Psychotherapy

Barry Magid, Wisdom, Boston. ISBN 0-86171-306-0

Eddy Street

Not unexpectedly I am interested in ideas about psychotherapy and Buddhism. An interest that has two levels - how do you do it? - psychotherapy and being a Buddhist and how do the ideas and indeed the experience of personhood find expression in these doctrines of east and west?

Although books on the interface between these traditions now abound they often frustrate me. They tend to be reductionist either about Buddhism or psychotherapy, falling into three broad categories. There are those that elucidate the traditional eastern psychology of Buddhism as espoused in the Sutras and attempt a rather simple translation into possible psychotherapeutic practices. Then there are those which by a mere juxtaposition try to show how the processes of psychotherapy have a relationship with those issues and themes that are found particularly within the Zen tradition and its stories. Finally there are those that claim a Buddhist perspective within a Western psychology context usually failing to elucidate either.

Any author who attempts to address this area has to find a way of discussing the nature of being human in both traditions and also have a meaningful account of how the processes of psychotherapy fit with the Buddhist process of realisation. At last however here is a book that sensibly attempts to interweave the communality (and differences) of Buddhist and psychotherapy thinking from within a Western perspective on both. Such is the link of therapy and Zen practice for the author Barry Magid that he has constructed his Zendo in the office next door to where he practises as a psychoanalytic psychotherapist and from that place his description of the human predicament evolves.

Magid sees psychoanalytic psychotherapy and Zen practice as both being structured disciplines of moment-to-moment awareness. Whether talking to a therapist or a teacher or simply sitting on our cushion we are practising the here and now attention of the unfolding of our thoughts, feelings and experiences. >From this beginning he presents a common conceptual framework to describe the mechanisms of character change that occur within Zen and psychotherapy and he discusses the limitations/problems of both. Many people he notes can find peace on their cushion but not necessarily in their lives. He argues that even teachers who have taught a valuable, vigorous and authentic Zen may have no avenue within their brand of teaching to acknowledge and work through their own personal weakness. This he sees as having had an affect on the leadership within Zen communities.

Magid's teacher Joko Beck is a clear influence in some of the writing, with the psychotherapeutic influence being that of Kohut and self psychology. He discusses three

types of practices that assist us on our personal journeys; psychoanalytic psychotherapy, top down practice, which is his description of koan study, and bottom up practice, which he identified as sitting. In terms of the latter, Magid offers from the Western psychology perspective one of the best descriptions of the experience of sitting. In many ways such work is a constant exploration of what we mean by self and the experience of no self. The eastern and western traditions begin with a different understanding of what these words refer to. He points out that the uncovering and making explicit of the arbitrary nature of our core beliefs that form our self is the common goal of Zen and psychotherapeutic practice.



The general structure of the book takes the following form. Magid discusses the theme in a koan that illustrates some key element of the issue and then offers a short commentary on this relating it back to the core. His method places the koan in a clear psychological context and, for the Western practitioner, this is a very helpful process. He presents a view of self/no self, of emptiness, of change and constancy in character and he discusses how the Buddhist view of these notions can be considered in modern psychological thinking.

He draws attention to post enlightenment practice and discusses how to integrate particular experiences and insights into daily life. He covers themes of relationship, authenticity, authority and empathy with great simplicity and profound common sense and this is coloured by stories from his practice as a teacher and therapist. He examines emotional essentialism and shows how trying to listen to our inner voice can distract us from hearing our inside voice - our gut feelings. These being issues that arise from a place that contains our most rigid conditioning - a place that requires investigation thoroughly by whatever practice suitable.

Throughout the book Magid places Buddhist thinking naturally in line with or in counterpoint to typical features of Western psychological theory. He is very aware that meditation can cover over and mask personal issues and can aid psychological defensiveness. He points out how a clear view of the psychology of Buddhist practice is what teachers and therapists alike require.

The book has a repeating focus with the idea of no self emerging as the constant awareness of an ever arising self. Think of Dogens great realisation that Zazen is not the means to an end, rather practice is the endless expression of all we are. Viewing this within a western perspective he sees psychotherapy as helping to distinguish between self-acceptance and the defence mechanism of denial. Finally, Magid examines the koan that asks why is Zen useless?

This is not a technical book and no great knowledge of psychology or psychotherapy is required. Perhaps it is nothing more complicated than one teacher's presentation of Zen with all the simplicity that usually we fail to understand. So is that why Zen is useless?

I recommend a reading of this to all Zen practitioners whether they are interested or not in its psychotherapeutic focus, and to sample this teacher's approach a visit to www.ordinarymind.com

Not Turning Away: The Practice of Engaged Buddhism

Susan Moon, editor. Shambhala 2004. ISBN: 159030103X 238pp. £9.30

Ken Jones

Even if you feel that socially engaged Buddhism is not for you, this is a compelling read which is not to be missed. Whatever your practice, I believe you will find much of value here. I cannot recall any other book on Buddhism quite like this one. The book is a selection of thirty two articles taken from the past twenty-five years of *Turning Wheel: Journal of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship*, the magazine that is the primary forum for engaged Buddhism in America and elsewhere. This anthology skims the cream from the cream of a high quality journal, winner of the Alternative Press Award.

The strengths and limitations of this book are clearly set out in the Preface by *Turning Wheel* editor Susan Moon. She explains that, like the magazine, this anthology offers a particular perspective with a bias for the personal narrative. 'I have a great curiosity about how other people meet suffering. What gives them the strength to reach out, again and again, to people who have turned their backs in anger? What gives them the courage to ask a soldier to put down his gun?' Readers will find in these pages how ordinary people bring together their Dharma practice and their work for peace and justice.

The authors write about the suffering in their own hearts, in their own families, and in their own situations. The themes range through parental abuse, prison Dharma, practising with physical disability, healing and empowerment in mental illness, and the life of street folk. Begging is a form of work - that's clear. There is a particularly moving piece about forgiveness and reconciliation for the murder of the narrator's father. And *Dead Man's Coat* by Jarvis Jay Masters, with its racy exchanges in the prison exercise yard, has all the qualities of a successful short story. Here as elsewhere the articles vary in style and approach, and it is this as well as their clarity and down-to-earth treatment that holds the reader's attention so well. There is a good balance between the helping end of social engagement and, on the other hand, the peace, social justice and ecological concerns. Many are lightly flavoured with a particular American variety of Zen, but all are free of religiosity.

Some of the writers just tell how it is, others offer their reflections. Joan Tollifson, for example, concludes that in a sense, disabled people embody the imperfection that everyone feels, and make visible our human vulnerability to death and change. Hence what's hard is the attitudes you have to live with each day, not just in others, but internalised in yourself as well. Lin Jensen writes about childhood abuse by his father.

'If shame is all you have, embrace what you have, honor it, and care for it with all your attention and kindness. In your own grief you will find the power to convert shame to compassion.'

There are also some valuable learnings around the all-important practice of bare awareness, explained by Robin Hart in *Dealing with the Anger Caused by Racism*. 'Buddhism allows me to be where I am right this moment. I do not have to condemn or approve my anger and pain. Neither do I have to deny these feelings. I can simply be with them, observing their rising and falling, their impact on me and others'. Sally Clay explains what healing and empowerment in mental illness means for her: 'For me, recovering from mental illness would be like recovering from being human. The manic highs and depressive lows I have experienced for all these years are, for better or worse, part of who I am.'



All this relates to the easily misunderstood practice of empowerment through acceptance. Susan Moon explains: 'The Dharma asks us to see things as they are, sometimes the language used is to accept things as they are. This doesn't mean things shouldn't be changed. It means we need to accept that they are as they are before we can change them'. This is amplified in a valuable article in Part Three by Joanna Macy, well known for her despair and empowerment workshops.

Part Two is about taking the practice into the world and working with suffering humanity. It includes themes as varied as Death Row advocacy, being arrested as a peace demonstrator, and encounters on a Dhammayatra leafleting expedition through the minefields of Cambodia. Marianne Dresser concludes her *Journey of a Broken Heart* to bear witness at Auschwitz with the reflection that healing, in whatever form it may take, is a divine blessing. 'Perhaps it is a hidden boon received by some from this uneasy place of pilgrimage. For me the gift of Auschwitz is instead a new wound: a wider heart, stretched beyond what I believed was its capacity a broken-open heart.' One of the most vivid and memorable articles is Tony Patchell's day-by-day journal, 'Nowhere to Run: Portraits of Life on the Street'; 'It could happen to anybody. Blindsided and betrayed by your own brain, down, down, and out you go into the street, easy pickings for the vultures.'

Here it will be helpful to pause and consider the limitations of a book which is claimed to be an authoritative source-book on the philosophy and practice of engaged Buddhism. This excellent book is ill-served by such extravagant claims. Whereas there are several articles on homelessness and prison life, none is devoted to the situation of women in Buddhism, which has been a major theme of Buddhist social engagement in the West. Furthermore, almost all the settings are North American, and only two of the contributors are Asians. This book is, in effect, confined to engaged Buddhism in the United States. This becomes

even more evident in Part Three: Food for Thought. This claims to present the ideas behind the action; history, theory, analysis and imagination. In fact the articles here are a miscellany. Diana Winston's racy article on our contemporary speediness, Norman Fischer's on forgiveness, and yet another piece on life in prison are all well worth reading, but could belong just as well elsewhere in the book. Especially noteworthy is Mushim Ikeda-Nash's forthright Five Ways to Provide an Engaged Buddhist Education for your Children. Also in this mixed bag are two striking articles by Robert Aitken (on money) and Robert Thurman (on Tibet). These are both full of quirky verve, and the footwork of these two old Bobs is most impressive. 'Do you know what a monastic industrial revolution would be like?' asks Thurman. 'Imagine industrializing Marin County into Zen centers. The industrial product becomes an enlightened person. The whole county government and taxes are there to encourage everyone becoming selflessly enlightened.'

The main weight of theory and analysis has to be carried by Ken Kraft in an article he wrote eighteen years ago. This remains an excellent primer of engaged Buddhism, answering basic questions like should Buddhism be socially engaged and should all Buddhists be activists? However, engaged Buddhism has now come of age and the debate has moved on. I know Ken would have written a different article now. This book reflects the present limitations of engaged Buddhism certainly in the West. For the most part this is confined to mindful activism and meditative witness. These are good and necessary, but it is time we moved on.

Three new developments are overdue. First, in the social sphere we have the same job as the Buddha had in the personal sphere 2,500 years ago. How is the delusion which the Buddha explained expressed politically, socially and economically now, and how and why is it driving our crazy world to destruction? Last year Wisdom published a book by David Loy and another by myself offering outline answers. The next step is to popularise these explanations, particularly among fellow activists. So, Alan Senauke (a former executive director of Buddhist Peace Fellowship) has recently raised the question of how Buddhists should offer public witness to the Presidential election. And here in the U.K. we are now discussing how to draft Buddhist talks, leaflets and press releases on the big questions of the day that are practical, credible and attractive.

Secondly, we need to build, with our allies (and who are they?), a whole radical culture of awakening and influencing, integrated with the secular movements for global peace, social justice and ecological sanity. We badly need a sense of direction and a vision of the future.

Thirdly, around these issues we need media for critical debate, co-ordination and fellowship. *Not Turning Away* is an invaluable historic record. And from its contributors readers will find not only inspiration and guidance for the work that lies ahead, but also many warm-hearted companions on the Great Way.

Retreat Reports

Retreat reports are an integral aspect of our journal and one much approved of by Shifu. We print them mostly anonymously and are most grateful to our practitioners for sharing themselves so generously with us. In reading these reports we learn much about the experiences of others on retreat and they often provide pointers for our own understanding.

Fixing the Separator

Before setting off on my journey to the retreat I was looking forward to the train journey and to a few hours walking before arriving at the Maenllwydd and I was excited at the prospect of coming on another retreat. However as I walked from Caersws the beautiful scenery only occasionally managed to break through my mental meanderings and I felt rather grumpy at the prospect of more communication exercises. But on arriving at the Maenllwyd I felt really good. It was nice to meet new people and to meet again some of the people I had met on my two previous Western Zen Retreats.

As with the previous two retreats, the first evening was quite pleasant but the first full day was not so nice. I felt bored, physically uncomfortable and awkward about talking in the communication exercises.

However, I was pleased to find that I would be working on the Chan Hall toilets. I don't know why, but that job had appealed to me before and when it came to it my expectations were not disappointed.

I have enjoyed cleaning ever since working as a part-time kitchen porter in a Catholic Friary for 18 months whilst a part-time student in the early 1990s. It was really satisfying to make the toilets nice for other people to use. I also had the satisfaction of fixing a problem with the urine separator, with the help of Hilary and Simon.

As the retreat progressed, I started to enjoy other aspects of the retreat as well. The sitting became, more comfortable and I got more into the swing of the communication exercises. I also found that I appreciated the scenery more in the breaks and the food more at meal times, I even started to enjoy some of the chanting.

At times I found the communication exercises to be difficult and frustrating and at other times uplifting and enjoyable. I rediscovered how hard it is to listen to someone fully without watching his or her face. I also found that the exercise became much more interesting and rewarding when I concentrated as hard as I could to listen to the other person without getting distracted by my own daydreams and without planning what I would say next.

After the retreat was over I started my journey home by walking over the hills. I felt slightly disappointed that I had not had any of those weird and wonderful Zen experiences that I had read about in books and I also felt slightly disappointed that I was still daydreaming, worrying, planning, regretting and generally waffling on inside instead of just fully enjoying walking in the hills. On the other hand I found that I seemed to be a bit lighter in my heart than usual and that the gaps between my daydreaming and waffling seemed to be a little longer and more frequent than normal.

Looking back now three days after the end of the retreat I feel that overall it was a pleasant experience and that I am enjoying my life back at home more than usual as well. I think that one of the reasons I seem to prefer retreats to holidays at the moment is that although they are both fun at the time, retreats seem to leave me feeling good after they are over whereas holidays often leave me feeling that I want to be on holiday still when I get home.

Finding the Fullness of Myself

I arrived at Maenllwyd with a willingness to open to the fullness of my experience, and to be present with that which I regarded as difficult or challenging. I had already been deeply touched by my travelling companions generosity and thoughtfulness regarding our travel arrangements, and my heart was warm and open as we drove through the gates that lead us along the track towards Maenllwyd.

Upon meeting Simon my first question to him was 'where are the toilets?' Having had an upset stomach and anticipating diarrhoea, I noticed my mind anxiously trying to plan how, in the space of 15 minutes from 5.00 - 5.15am, I was going to get up, get dressed and co-ordinate my bowel movements along with the needs of 17 other yogis, within the time frame of the morning schedule. After expressing the concern to Simon and remembering that this was not actually a matter of life or death, I was able to let go a little of 'me & my anxiety', and open to the riches that were right in front of me.

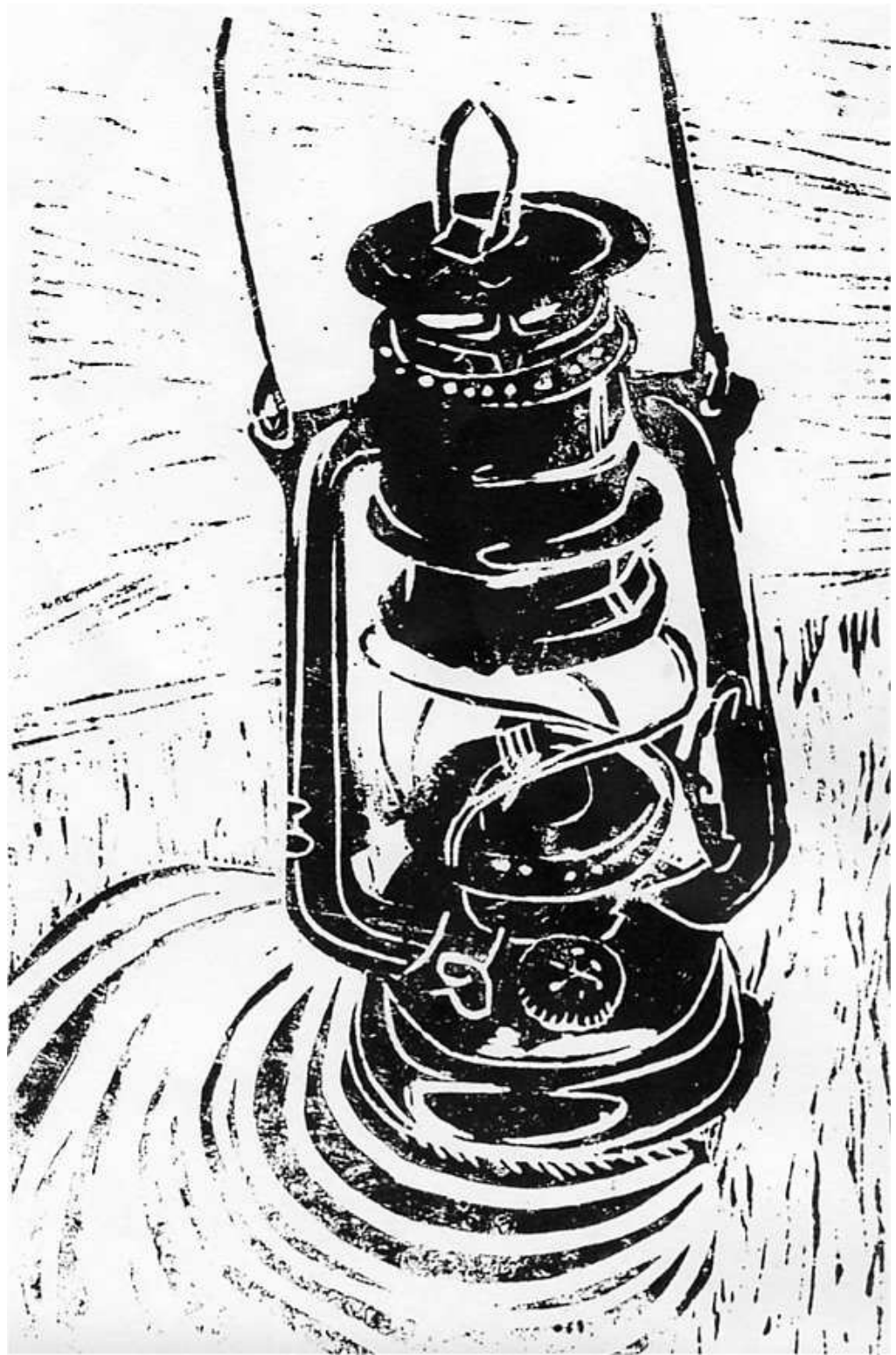
I do not think I can describe the depth of the beauty and simplicity of Maenllwyd, yet I want to try. I felt I had returned home, despite never having visited the place before. There is an indefinable magic that exists in each and every minute particle that makes up its totality; in the scarred and twisted timbers, the yellow petals of the poppies, the sound of striking stones, and the timeless safety of the Dharma. At the end of our first meal Simon explained the ritual of washing our cutlery & crockery; as I observed and took part in this process I experienced the ritual as a creative performance, we were simultaneously artists and audience, harmonies arose from the contact between bowl, spoon, water and hand, and I was reminded of scenes from the films of Peter Greenaway and Derek Jarman, and of lines of poetry from Mary Oliver, when they managed to bring into form the essence of our creative spirit.

As I sit here writing and reflecting on my experience, my sense is of the existence of parallel universes, the sacred and the mundane. Each existing simultaneously, but what you experience, what you are let in to, or what you let yourself in to, depend on something that I cannot clearly define. What I, and perhaps all of us who were present entered into, felt like a timeless, sacred mystery. For a brief moment I saw myself on the outside, looking onto this world, to a time a place that I thought I didn't belong to, and that I shouldn't have seen, and from where I would be told to leave, and to forget all that I had seen and heard. But this didn't happen, I was part of this, and like all of us, I possibly always had been, but had just never known it before.

As the days and nights of the retreat passed, my trust and faith in the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha grew, and with wise guidance the striving of the ego was releasing. I bathed in the joy of surrendering to the fear, to the shame and to the guilt that had separated me for so long from the fullness of myself, I had never known or loved myself more fully, I had never felt so radiant and so empty. A little later I notice how joy and happiness could manifest as conceit and pride, and how it is possible for the sense of self to begin to manifest from even the most self-less of experiences, The need for mindfulness is endless, and the opportunities for letting go are abundant. I am reminded of one of the lines from the Heart Sutra, '*Form is empty; emptiness is form. Emptiness is not other than form, and form is not other than emptiness*'. I puzzle over how is it possible to embrace it all, without attaching to anything?

Something was deeply healed in me during this retreat, I cannot yet name what it is, and I think perhaps that it does not need naming or quantifying. Whatever it is, I trust that it will continue to manifest in its many unpredictable forms, and that I will share the fruits of this practice with others, as and when it is appropriate.

I struggle to find a way to end this piece of writing that expresses my appreciation for the teachers, the teachings, and all that came together to enable me to go on this retreat, so I will end simply with thank you.



Opening The Heart

Western Zen Retreat, September 2001

John Rowan has made immensely important contributions to contemporary psychotherapy and humanistic psychology in Britain. We were therefore delighted when he expressed a wish to join us on retreat. Here are his valuable reflections on his experience. We send him our best wishes. Come again John!! (Eds)

Thursday 20th

Went to catch the 2.10 train to Birmingham-Shrewsbury-Llandrindod Wells. Got to Paddington in good time but did not see train up. Asked Information, and found it was Euston, not Paddington. No one had mentioned Euston when I booked the tickets on the phone. Went to Euston, got the 2.50 train to Birmingham, and then a quick connection to Shrewsbury. Checked and found that the last train to Llandrindod had gone. Decided to go to Craven Arms, which I thought was the nearest point to Llandrindod. I thought Craven Arms was a major interchange, but it turned out to be just two platforms, with no stationmaster. Found a phone, but it only took BT Phonecards, which I did not have. There were two posters up for taxis. Persuaded operator to ring the first number and ask if they could take me. Operator said: "This is a reverse charge call from Rowan. Will you pay for the call?" He said: "Never heard of Rowan, no." I said to the operator: "Perhaps you asked the wrong question. If you had said "Will you take a call from someone who wants a long trip in a taxi the response might have been different." She tried that and he said: "No, we are not going out again tonight." (This was about 7.30 by now.) So then I asked the operator to try my last chance, the other taxi service. She did that, using the better message the first time, and a cheerful woman answered, who said she would take me. She arrived about five minutes later, to my great relief. I explained exactly where I wanted to go, and she drove like a demon along a multitude of country lanes, from Shropshire into mid-Wales. When we got nearer, we saw a policeman, and asked him which road to take. He told us, and we found it easily. So now we were getting warm. By this time it was about 9 o'clock, and the retreat was due to start at about 6.30. We found the pub where we had to turn left, but went past the turning, and had to come back after a couple of miles, when we found it. We then had to follow very detailed directions, including going through three or four gates, which we had to open and close. However, we arrived at the end of the track, and there was our destination. Someone with a light and a big welcome was there. I got out and extracted my luggage, and asked what the fare was. It was £55. But I thought it was money well earned, and added another £5 on to it.

I came into a group of a dozen or so people, all sitting round a fire. A place was made for me, and I was told that they had been having a go-round. Everyone had spoken but me. So I said my piece. Soon after that it was bedtime, and I got out my sleeping-bag and nightshirt. The bed was quite comfortable, and I only had one other person in my room. The house has no electricity, so everything has to be done by torchlight or candlelight, except in the main rooms, where there are hurricane lamps and the like.

Friday 21st Autumn Equinox

Up at 5am. There is no time for ablutions, so they have to be done later. We did physical exercises in the open yard, with the stars above us. I recognised some of the exercises from various strata of my life, starting with arm swinging, and toe touching, which we used to do

every day at my prep school, and including neck rolling, which I remember as one of the Arica exercises in the 1970s. Then there was a mug of tea.

From 5.40 to 6.40 we sat meditating. At 6.40 we were given a 'Liturgy' to follow and chanted together various Buddhist texts in English and Tibetan. This was all in the Dharma Hall, which had a Buddha at one end, with quite an elaborate altar and some pictures. Every time we came into or left the room we had to put our hands together and bow to the Buddha. Down each side were mats and cushions, and stools for those who were using them. At the other end of the room, where the entrance was, there was a place for a timekeeper, complete with various bells and a very impressive timekeeping clock, which lit up when the right number of minutes had gone by. At this end also was a big stove with a huge metal chimney above it going through the roof.

At 7 o'clock we had breakfast, consisting of porridge and milk, bread and soya spread, and marmalade or jam or peanut butter. A Buddhist chant began and ended the meal.

Then at 7.30 the working shift started. My job was sweeping up the ash from the fires (all wood-burning), chopping kindling and laying fires. Other people had other jobs. The only paid post is the Cook, who also took part in the meditations when he was free.

8.30 was rest, so I had a little lie down, then did my teeth and shaved. At 9.15 we had a talk about the way the retreat was run. John Crook was in his robes, which he only wore during formal sessions. Basically we alternate between two kinds of activities (not counting work, rest and physical exercises), Zazen, which is the sitting meditation, and the Communication Exercise.

In the Communication Exercise two people sit opposite each other. One asks the other a question, the other answers for 5 minutes; then the roles are reversed. There are usually three alternations per session, making 30 minutes. The question is given to you by the course master, and consists of things like: Who am I? What is another? What is trust? What is my true nature? What is love? and so on. If and when you get a convincing answer, you may be given another question. My first question was: What is love?

We spent the rest of the morning meditating, which I found very hard on the legs, even though we had a break every half hour. We were allowed to use a chair, and I resolved to do this when it felt necessary.

At 12.30 we had lunch, which consisted of vegetable stew or thick soup, bread and cheeses. One o'clock was work, and I spent most of the time with an axe, chopping kindling for the fires. I learned to use gloves after nearly getting a nasty splinter in my finger.

1.45 was a rest, so I had a little lie-down. At 2.15 we went ahead with more Zazen and the exercise. At 3.30 a walk was scheduled. I walked about a mile to the nearest telephone and rang Sue, to ask her to tell one of my clients I would not be back in time to see him. Unfortunately she had switched off the answering machine! I didn't have her mobile number with me, so that was frustrating. (I have now memorised it!)

Back in time for a cup of tea and a cake.

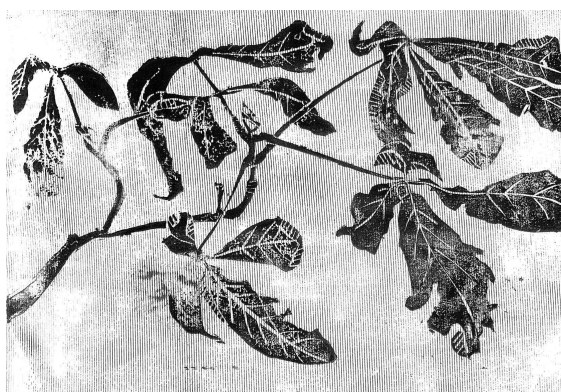
Then at 4.45 we had chanting, which consisted of the sounds AAAAAAAAAA OOOOOOO MMMMMMMMMM repeated many times. Then silence, open for meditation.

At 5.15 we went into the exercise, and I faced two people (30 minutes for each) who said to me, "Tell me what love is?" I eventually got an answer, "Love is a piece of cheese frying in a pan. If you are not careful, it will get stuck to the pan, so you have to keep it moving!" This helped me with my problem of how to relate to my students and clients, and in a

subsequent session I had the insight that I could write to FS (a student with problems), to ask her how she was getting on, and wish her well. When I told my insight to John Crook, he told me to carry on with the same question!

At 6.20 we had a little rest, and at 6.35 we went into a dynamic meditation, consisting of 10 minutes shaking, 10 minutes dancing to a tape, and 10 minutes resting. It reminded me of the old Osho days, when we used to do 10 minutes going mad, 10 minutes lion breathing, and 10 minutes resting! This was a bit easier.

Supper followed at 7.35 (everything was quite punctual, and in fact on the first day we had been told that there were three important rules, silence, tidiness and punctuality).



After supper the showers came on, so I took a shower and washed my hair. Rather difficult because there was no room to put clothes in the shower, and no curtain round it! But I managed.

8.45 and more of the exercise. 9.45 chanting. 10 o'clock lights out - very strict!

Every day we had the same routine. The food was good vegetarian stuff, and we had to say grace (Buddhist type) before and after every meal, chanting together.

I carried on with my question "What is love?" and as I did so I found my heart beginning to take over. That ruined my meditation, which had been quite structured. My heart did not like structure, and I was left rudderless in the meditation. I went to Simon (the assistant master) with this, and he said to just pay attention to whatever came up. As I did this, my heart seemed to take over more and more, and I had a sort of illumination where I suddenly saw everything from a heart point of view. It was a highly emotional experience, where I seemed to lose all need for structures and concepts: instead of trying to keep apart the real self, the subtle self, the soul, and all that, they more seemed to be all one. Love was the heart, and the heart was love, and that was all I needed to know! It seemed that I really knew what love was, because love had taken over!

I went to John Crook with that, and he said I seemed to have got it. Apparently I had some kind of radiance when I talked about my experience, and this convinced him. He gave me a new question: "What is your true nature?" As I worked with this, over and over again, my heart seemed to shift to my centre, the region of the hara. It there joined up with other parts, like the mind and the senses, and they all went to the centre. It began to seem to me that that was my true nature. And then the bottom opened up, and it became bottomless. It opened up to infinity. And then it seemed that infinity could blow up through that, and through me, and that I could be filled by it, but not hold on to it or stop it or get in the way

of it. And so I could be me and act in the world, but also be this infinite spirit, or infinite Nature, or infinite life at the same time. So my true nature was all that. I was quite ecstatic with it all. When I went to John Crook with it, he beamed and said that what I was describing was not just Nature and my true nature, but Buddha nature. But I should carry on with my same question for the last day.

I still hadn't managed to contact Sue with my point about the client, and John kindly offered to let me use his mobile phone. He had to take me right up the hill above the house to use it, however, because apparently the house is in a kind of shadow. He managed to make it work, and rang the number for me. At first I got the answering machine, but by this time it was Saturday, and Sue picked up the phone. I gave her the details, but before I could say "I love you!" it cut off, which was a shame.

On the Sunday I managed to have another shower, this time in a second shower room which was more spacious and easy to manage. I had not known about this other room before, and would have used it the first time if I had known.

On the Monday I spent the exercise time partly in finding ways to hold on to my insight when I got home, and partly in deepening the experience. As part of the latter, I suddenly had the sense that I was all the people in the twin towers, and all the pilots of the planes as well! It was as if my heart was now big enough to contain all that.

On Tuesday it was the last morning, and I oiled all the tools with edges so that they would be OK for the next retreat, which apparently was only a few days away. I took photographs of us all, and somebody kindly took one so that I would be in it. I managed to get a lift to Bristol with a kind woman with a car, and so the journey home was much easier than the journey in had been!

Now that I am back, I have found it possible to hold on to my state of mind, certainly when I am with clients, and most of the time with students. My morning meditation has changed completely, losing all the structure which was so useful to me at first, when I was learning to meditate, and gaining instead a deep sense of love and integration. So I got a lot out of the retreat, and it was very good for me.

I do have some reservations about the Buddhism, however. I found it a bit oppressive to have to chant words I didn't understand in Tibetan, to chant words I didn't agree with in English, to bow and do prostrations which seemed to me meaningless. It was the exercise which was good for me, rather than the Buddhism. Also the place seemed unnecessarily remote and isolated. I don't see why there shouldn't be a centre accessible direct from a main road, or even a side road, rather than a track with several gates. I don't see why there shouldn't be electricity (many farms have their own generator) and a telephone. The fees are very low, and could be higher, or so it seems to me. And there could (also or alternatively) be more emphasis on donations, and more sales of books, tapes, CDs, videos and the rest. I don't mean it should become a commercial enterprise, but there is a financial side to the operation, and I don't see why that needs to be denied so strongly as it is now. The work of John and Simon was excellent, and the work of the cook also, and flush toilets have been installed, but the material underpinnings could still be improved further without, I believe, losing the spirit of the place.

John Rowan, 8 October 2001

My Karma ran over my Dogma

Contributed by Jo Horward

There in the garden, a young monk speaks: "Master, I've been thinking about getting a dogma, and I seek your advice. Any thoughts on the matter?"

The Old Monk collects her thoughts, and calmly replies: "Well my son, everyone has a pet belief, so why should you be any different? Yes, we human beings have had dogmas since the dawn of recorded history. This is understandable. You cannot imagine how comforting it is to curl up with a warm fuzzy dogma on a dark night of the soul. Or to take him to the park on a fine sunny Sunday in January and watch him sniff and chase other dogmas, and bark at strangers. Some folks keep dogmas for protection. It's reassuring to have a guard dogma to scare away frightening thoughts - and it's great to have a loyal companion to fetch you an explanation when you get home from a hard day at work. And dogmas come in all varieties. Some humans like big dumb dogmas, and others prefer squeaky little irritating ones. And with compassion, someone has to stand for the underdogma. Dogma is truly wo/man's best friend. "

"Now, some may ask," she continued, "Why not let sleeping dogmas lie? But who really wants to be lied to? And what about menacing dogmas that bite? Or dogmas that run wild and get in everyone's garbage? I know, I know you're probably thinking, "It isn't my dogma making all the mess, it's my neighbour's dogma." And indeed you can look out any night and see a pack of aggressive dogmas running down the street chasing a doubt. And what should you do when you are walking down the road and a threatening dogma appears in your path? Stay calm and let the unfamiliar dogma know who's boss. Say, "Bad dogma, roll over!"

"It is a fact of life that dogmas have sharp teeth, and when backed into a corner, they can bite. As a dogma owner it is your responsibility to see that your dogma does not bite. And - if it does, well, sometimes a vicious dogma has to be put down.

"Another fact of life is that dogmas inevitably get old and sick. Perhaps you've spent years lovingly taking care of a tired old dogma - and yet the time comes to put that old dogma to sleep. It is sad when you must give up a loyal dogma like that - so I say enjoy your dogma while it is alive and playful. You know how uncanny it is that dogma owners come to resemble their dogmas. So, my son, you may have dogma. But just make sure your dogma doesn't mess on your neighbour's lawn. And know that on Non-Judgment Day, all our dogmas will run free, and surely they will bother no one. "

Adapted from Swami Beyondananda 1996

A Man on a Moped coming from Llanidloes

*Is it the same wind
that moves the pines
that moves the sycamore?
Who wants to know?*

*Fly on hand
strobically moving
I stay still until it flies away*

*The warming sun
cracks the boards
Who is there?
The wind blows the trees*

*STOP LOOKING FOR THE SOLUTION
THE ANSWER LIES
IN GIVING UP
THE QUESTION*

*Purple flower
small in the hedgerow
No significance.*

*Saddlebacked grey barn
Newly painted
A dead badger
Smells*

*Crows rise up
an absence of seagulls
So walk up the hill*

*Clouds hills and sunlight
there'll be a rainbow
And there was!*

*In candle light
poetry of the Masters
brings a calmness*

*When I blow out the candle
I am surprised at the light
of the night*

*Walking up the hill
my sounds almost fill the world
Why be surprised!*

*A flash of red
Only the bird feeder
swinging on the tree*

*The last blossom on the foxglove
blows in the last wind
of late summer*

*Crow wing beats
Traffic swishes*

*Looking at the white flower
I anxiously wait for the time
to go home*

*I pee out of the door
No one sees*

*New tinnitus sound
A man on a moped coming from Llanidloes*

*At a glassless window
A curtain touches the night air*

*The moonlight makes the grass
look like snow*

*In sleep
a woman's voice calls
"Eddy"
I awake answering
a dry mouth
and ready for a pee*

*You cannot escape
from the I that is it
from the universe that is it
from the I and the universe that is it
Bee on an autumn flower*

*Through the window
a red kite
Pleasure
Gone*

*How else to see the universe
but through these two eyes
How else for the universe to be
but these two eyes*

*I smell the warmth of sheep
Walking up the hill*

Eddy Street, Maenllwydd Sept 2003

Correspondence Received

A Day For Young People, 22nd May 2004

Alysun Jones and Iris Tute

This was the 4th day of meditation that we have organised for children and young people. It had been planned for 13 to 18 year olds but a coincidence with examination dates unfortunately cancelled out half of the young people who had been interested to take part. All of the young people had some experience of meditation before, three having done previous days with us and one having had some meditation instruction in RE class at school.

Why did we do these days? It is something about sharing of our deepest joy with the young people, to open new ways for them.

We worked with 4 young people. We planned the day to alternate between periods of stillness (meditations) and periods of activities, giving a balance to the day which worked well.

All of them seemed genuinely interested and we began the day with questions and answers about meditation and how it can be used to work with emotions and develop a new perspective in relation to difficulties.

We then did yoga exercises in the garden, which they liked very much. We meditated using a variety of guided meditations, the bubble meditation was especially well received. In this exercise thoughts are mentally placed into a bubble which rises slowly from the bottom of a deep clear pool. Another well-received activity was playing creating sounds using instruments such as Tibetan sound bowls, chimes, a wooden fish etc. The concentration and enjoyment was apparent in the number of times we repeated the exercise, every one wanted to try every instrument. They played with sensitivity and concentration, listening to themselves and to each other and so creating pleasing sounds. Not surprisingly, as we had expected, making sounds through humming resulted in giggles. Too embarrassing at this age.

Other activities were drawing the wheel of life, listening to a story and always sharing our experiences. The depth of concentration was good throughout.

One of the girls reported a remarkable shift. She found she could place her irritation in a bubble (Le Shan's bubble meditation) and let it rise away from her. Usually, she said she needed some one else to do something to shift her mood. Now she could change it herself. One of the boys spoke of his mind having 'gone blank' and he felt content and peaceful.

Most importantly the young people were keen to have another event which we hope will take place early next year out of examination time. Given the difficult pressures they are under during this period of their lives, offering this opportunity to discover mindfulness seems crucial.

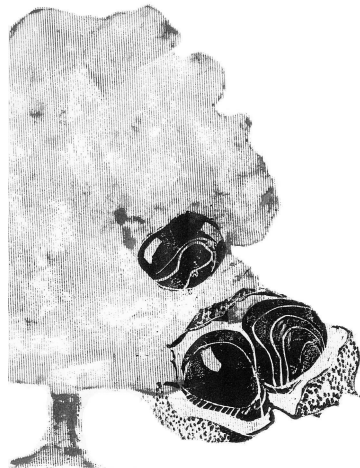
The day was a joy to us and we enjoyed working together to prepare for the event.

Buddhist Films

Michael McLoughlin

I am currently putting together a little book on Buddhist cinema. By Buddhist cinema, I am referring to films and film directors that have influenced the lives of contemporary Buddhist practitioners, perhaps even contributing in some way to their development in the Dharma. It is not my intention to confine this project to films dealing with specifically Buddhist themes e.g. 'The Cup', 'Kundun', 'Little Buddha' etc. rather I hope to leave it open to the widest possible range of genre.

Perhaps I might better illustrate what I have in mind by giving a few examples of films that have had a profound effect on my own life and practice. Some years ago I watched a film by Iranian director Abbas Kiarostami entitled *Close Up* (1990). The film is based on actual events and, in fact, uses the actual participants of the real life drama to play their own parts. The main character Hossein Sabzian is put on trial for having passed himself off to an upper middle class family in Tehran as the renowned film director Moshen Makhmalbaf, and accused of setting the family up for burglary. It eventually transpires that Sabzian, an unemployed family man, has no criminal intent, but that he did what he did simply to gain some self-esteem. 'Makhmalbaf', he says, 'portrays my sense of suffering.'



What particularly strikes me about the film is the wonderful compassion of the court in which Hossein comes up for trial. These days, when all we seem to hear about Islamic justice is the hands of thieves being lopped off and murderers being beheaded in public, how refreshing it is to see the presiding magistrate turn to the head of the angry and embarrassed family to ask them if they could find it in their hearts to forgive Hossein for his misguided attempt to be somebody. The family eventually agree to drop all charges. 'Close Up' is a beautiful and heartfelt prayer to honesty and forgiveness and, as such, is very Buddhist in nature.

A similarly profound example of compassion in a film happens right at the end of 'Rosetta,' the 1999 French film by the Dardenne brothers. The lead character, at the end of her tether and attempting to commit suicide, is physically picked up off the ground and embraced by the boy Riquet whom she had gravely wronged earlier.

But I am not only referring to films that deal with particularly grave subject matter. Some of the films that have greatly influenced my own development are the silent works of Buster Keaton, and the films of Laurel and Hardy. 'Even though he could run like a jack-rabbit... Keaton's constant drift is toward the quiet at the hurricane's eye' wrote Walter Kerr in his book

'The Silent Clowns'. In the film 'The General' (1927) particularly, Keaton's expressionless face, for me, is capable of expressing all the joys and sorrows, wonders and delights and frustrations of what it means to be alive. Keaton, more than any other performer I can think of helps me take life less seriously, and for this I am entirely grateful. And speaking of taking things less seriously, what follower of the Buddhist path cannot, at some time or other, relate to the hilarious struggle of Laurel and Hardy to get that damned piano up that flight of steps in the 1940's film 'The Music Box'.

Two other films that come to mind include Kurosawa's 'Dersu Uzala' (1975) because of the wonderful way in which the character of Dersu himself is so completely present to his natural surroundings as he passes through them. It is as if he becomes one with the yellowing leaves of autumn, the desolate wastes of tundra, the wide expanses of snow. Consequently, this very real presence has the effect of ensuring that the viewer is always present not only to the actual events unfolding on the screen, but to the act of viewing itself. Awareness of present experience, as you know, is fundamental to Buddhist philosophy. Therefore it might be said that Kurosawa's film is also very Buddhist in nature.

Richard Linklater's recent movie 'Waking Life' is also very interesting from the Buddhist perspective. Through the use of the technique of rotoscoping - a blend of animation and real-life action - Linklater succeeds magnificently in blurring the lines between illusion and reality. Wiley Wiggins, the main protagonist, is trapped in a series of dreams from which he is trying to wake. In fact, he keeps thinking that he has woken up only to realise that he's still in the middle of a strangely intense and lasting reverie. His dreams are lucid, lifelike, always of a philosophical nature, and yet he finds them profoundly unsatisfying. The dreams offer partial glimpses of meaning but no definite answers. So why can't he wake up?

And I could go on and on. The above examples are just the tip of the iceberg. Cinema has had, and continues to have, a profound influence on my own development on the pathless path. It must be said here that I am not Buddhist in any formal sense, though I have practised Buddhist meditation for years now. I have a particular interest in the Dzogchen tradition and have taken its philosophy very much to heart. It has helped me gain insight into, and understanding of, the many diverse situations and events that life has thrown in my direction over the years. I suppose you could say that it has helped keep my feet firmly on the ground and made me a much happier person as a result. The films mentioned above have, in their own way, contributed to that happiness.

If, in your own life, you can think of a film, or film director, that has had an influence on your own life and practice, I would be most grateful if you could put pen to paper and write a few paragraphs on the nature of that influence with the view to its inclusion in my book. Perhaps your words will go some way toward introducing cinephiles everywhere to the true nature of the reality right before their eyes. I can be contacted as below should further information be required.

Sincerely

Michael Mc Loughlin

eigyr@hotmail.com

On Meditation

Peter Reason

There is a space of stillness, emptiness, in front of me and inside me; it is a delicate space in which there are no thoughts. Sometimes I feel that I am clinging to this place with some desperation. At other times I sit lightly and relaxed within it. The wall in front of me, with its pattern of plaster and oak beams, comes in and out of my visual focus.

All around this space, fragments of thought spiral up. From the space of emptiness I watch these spirals arise and fall away, rather like watching a quiet firework display or a fountain. Most of the time they simply die away, but every now and then, one catches my attention, hooks me up so that, quite unaware, I follow it, elaborate it, quite forgetting my focus of stillness. I become the thought, until somehow I realise my attachment and return to the stillness. Maybe someone in the hall sneezed loudly, and because I am caught in my thought I am startled and alarmed.

I sit quietly and still, allowing, willing sometimes, but better just allowing each breath to sustain the focus of stillness. I watch the fountains of thought, noticing them with a distant curiosity.

A bird sings outside the Chan hall. I notice the sound without attaching a name or a category to it: it spirals in and out of my attention, rather as if it sings through me.

The delicacy of the moment captivates me. Sometimes I enjoy so much the excitement of riding this edge that I get off on it and thereby close the space down. Sometimes I simply allow the space and the stillness to lead me further to where there are even less words.

The Land Of The Dawn-Lit Mountains

A visit to the major Tibetan monasteries and nunneries of ARUNACHAL PRADESH.

John is negotiating preliminary arrangements for a new Himalayan journey - this time to the remote North Eastern Himalayas of India. Arunachal Pradesh has only recently been opened to Western visitors and remains in a relatively undeveloped condition, unspoilt by tourism. Special permits are required for entry allowing ten-day visits. The state contains great forests, enormous mountains, a lot of wildlife and tribal peoples of a remarkable variety. The main cultures are Shamanism and Tibetan Buddhism. It borders on Bhutan to the West, Tibet to the North and Burma (Myanmar) to the East.

We will visit the spectacular district of Tawang (10500ft approx) which requires an ascent through wild forests into the snowy mountains. The area resembles Bhutan in many ways but the highest mountain monasteries are more accessible. At Tawang we find the vast fortress-like Galden Namgyal Lhatse monastery founded in the 17th century and the birthplace of the 6th Dalai lama. It is said to be home to some 500 monks and to house many treasures. Since we are in India the practice of Tibetan Buddhism is here quite unrestricted by politics. Also in the region are several other gompas and two major nunneries. These will make an interesting visit as nunneries are not so common. We hope to do short treks and walks in the region among high altitude lakes, small meditation caves and so on.

The tour will begin in Calcutta (Kolkata). We fly to Guwahati in Assam and cross the Brahmaputra to enter Arunachal Pradesh at Tezpur. The journey into the mountains involves long coach rides through fantastic scenery but we will break these journeys as often as possible.

Dates: Either last two weeks of September 2005 or slightly later. Total duration 15 days.

Price not yet determined. Very rough estimate £2000.

Details still under negotiation.

Those seriously interested should contact John *Johcro@compuserve.com* now. Places on this unusual trip will be limited and first applicants will have precedence. A full brochure will be provided once the negotiations over arrangements have been made.

Illuminating Silence – Available at Discount Pricing

The WCF has bought a stock of the book “Illuminating Silence” and is now able to sell it at £8.99 which is less than the cover price and also includes free UK postage and packing. This is a key book for us, including as it does the teachings at two Maenllwyd retreats with Master Shengyen on the method of Silent Illumination, and also other texts and retreat reports by John Crook. To order your copy (everyone should have at least one!) send payment to Simon Child (WCF secretary), cheques payable to “Western Chan Fellowship”.

Submissions to New Chan Forum - Editorial Policy

We welcome your contributions, whether articles, poetry, artwork, retreat reports, letters, or whatever else. However we do not promise that we shall publish your contribution, or in which issue it will appear if we do so. Owing to the workload involved, our policy is that we do not acknowledge materials received. Where possible submissions by email to editorial@WesternChanFellowship.org are preferred for articles, poems, etc, since this obviates the need for retyping or scanning. For artwork email submissions are also useful, but in addition non-returnable copies or originals by post may be helpful since then if required we can rescan them ourselves at higher resolution than may be appropriate for email attachments. Thank you.

The articles in this journal have been submitted by various authors and the views expressed do not necessarily represent the views of the Western Chan Fellowship.

Contacts for New Chan Forum and the Western Chan Fellowship

WCF Secretary: (also **NCF picture editor** to whom you can submit photographs, artwork etc) is: Simon Child, 24 Woodgate Ave, Bury, LANCS, BL9 7RU. Tel: 0161 761 1945, Fax: 0161 763 3221 (work).
Secretary@WesternChanFellowship.org

Membership Secretary, NCF Subscriptions (£10. 50 per three issues), **Retreat Bookings**
Peter Howard 22 Butts Road, Chiseldon, Wiltshire, SN4 0NW, Tel 01793 740659
Retreats@WesternChanFellowship.org

Chair of the WCF: Eddy Street, 19 Velindre, Whitchurch, Cardiff CF10 2TE, Tel: 029 20 691146,
Chair@WesternChanFellowship.org

Teacher of the WCF: Dr John Crook, Winterhead Hill Farm, Shipham, N. Somerset, BS25 1RS.
Teacher@WesternChanFellowship.org

NCF Editor: Marian Partington, Ty Lottyn, Llawr y glyn, Caersws, Powys SY17 5RJ
Editor@WesternChanFellowship.org

WCF Treasurer Jake Lyne, 13 Belle Vue Terrace, York, YO10 5AZ Treasurer@WesternChanFellowship.org

Subscriptions: WCF Fellows receive NCF as a benefit of Fellowship. Others may subscribe at a price of £10.50 per three issues (we aim for two - three issues per year) by writing with payment enclosed (cheques payable to Western Chan Fellowship), stating the issue from which you want your subscription to start, to Peter Howard, 22 Butts Road, Chiseldon, Wiltshire, SN4 0NW. **Back Issues**, (*except issue 15*), are available at £4 per issue from WCF Treasurer as above, otherwise please refer to the website WesternChanFellowship.org where most back issues are freely available online.

Local Groups

Associated Groups

Aberystwyth Ken Jones 01970 880603
Cardiff Eddy Street 029 2069 1146
Guildford Roger Taylor 01483 202422
Newbury Dave/Aurie McKay 01635 46139

See the website for more details of local groups

Affiliated Groups

Bristol Sally Masheder 0117 924 8819
Medway Towns Stuart McLeod 01634 571659
Glastonbury Ned Reiter 01458 833663
Lizard Sophie Muir 01326 221651
Manchester Simon Child 0161 761 1945
Oslo Bryn Risnes + 47 9756 3317
Swindon Hughie Carroll 01793 343447
Totnes Pete Lowry 01364 643560
York James McCarthy 01904 330977
or Jannie Mead 01904 628536

New Chan Forum is published and distributed
by the Western Chan Fellowship, WesternChanFellowship.org
Registered charity number 1068637,
Correspondence address 24 Woodgate Ave, Bury, Lancs, BL9 7RU
Printed on recycled paper

*"In one's daily life, in order to be content, happy,
and spiritually uplifted, one should utilise these
three principles in one's practice:*

和 Harmony

"First, one should cultivate harmony within one's own mind. This is the most essential point, as the practice flows from a sense of balance and well-being within one's self. One should then harmonise with others. Crucial to this is practising harmonious speech, which is communication that nourishes healthy and stable relationships with others.

喜 Joy

"Joy refers to Dharma joy, which is contentment and happiness that one develops by constantly practising the Buddhadharma. Eating, sleeping, washing up, cooking, working, talking-these are all ways to practice the Dharma. By maintaining a relaxed body and mind amidst all these activities, one practices the Dharma and lives joyfully.

自在 Freedom

"Freedom is the practice of freeing oneself from afflictions-anger, greed, and confusion. With this practice, one first recognises vexations, and deeply understands what these afflictions are like: "Why am I vexed? How does it feel?" Then one employs the method of practice, and ceases the creation of vexations.

One may encounter a lot of obstacles in one's daily life, in relationships at home, or in the workplace, but regardless of the situation, whenever one feels uneasy or irritated, one should practice harmony and joy, and thereby one will be naturally free."

Chan Master Shengyen