

Western Chan Fellowship



www.westernchanfellowship.org

December 2013

Newsletter 27

2014 Retreat Programme

Please refer to the website at www.w-c-f.org/Q342 for the latest updates.

11th – 16th January: Introduction to Mahamudra 5-night Retreat

Leader: Sophie Muir. Venue: Maenllwyd, Wales

'The Buddha became enlightened through developing boundless compassion. Our path should be based on compassionate commitment to free all living beings from suffering. In an absolute sense, compassion is the awakened nature of the mind.' Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche

'Compassionate action,' 'enlightened activity,' 'intuitive wisdom': epithets of Bodhisattva Tara - attributes of our own Tara or Buddha nature. Establishing a foundation of clear, open presence through the practice of Mahamudra, practices associated with Tara allow compassion to unfold. This retreat is open to all.

8th – 13th February: Western Zen 5-night Retreat

Leader: Jake Lyne. Venue: Maenllwyd, Wales

This retreat designed for Westerners enables the mind to face the major paradox - Who am I? The question is investigated within a framework of silent sitting meditation, alternating with a Communication Exercise in which people work in turns with each member of the group to explore this fundamental Koan.

The intensive focus drives each practitioner into a self-presentation that is difficult to experience in other ways. Practitioners are supported through this process by regular personal interviews with the teachers, interviews being offered most days. This method makes use of words to go beyond words and thereby enter the main gate of Chan. The outcome may be a profound journey through the unity of self, and the acceptance of self, to "self at ease". This may possibly lead further to a direct insight into the ground of being. Participants share a rich experience in new self-knowledge, understanding others and the human condition.

22nd – 29th March: Silent Illumination 7-night Retreat

Leader: Hilary Richards. Venue: Maenllwyd, Wales

Silent Illumination is a profound meditation practice which leads to a mind of great calmness and insight, using ancient Chinese Zen methods which are just as applicable to the modern West. This seven-night silent retreat is an opportunity to learn and deepen this practice through intensive meditation, with instruction and personal guidance by individual interviews with an experienced teacher. Whether or not a breakthrough to Enlightenment may occur, establishing a practice gives a firm basis for subsequent ongoing mindfulness in everyday life.

26th April – 3rd May: Shattering the Great Doubt 7-night Retreat

Leader: Simon Child. Venue: Maenllwyd, Wales

The ancient Chinese Zen practices of investigating Huatou and Gongan (Koan) are best practised in a supportive environment such as this intensive silent Chan retreat. As one becomes deeply absorbed in the practice, mental constructions drop away and one is confronted by a realisation that one does not know the nature of existence and one's fundamental assumptions of life are groundless. Staying with and cultivating this 'doubt', it can become all-consuming 'Great doubt' which may 'shatter', giving a direct insight into reality which may be what is known as an Enlightenment experience.

9th – 11th May: Compassion and Wisdom: Wings of the Same Bird

Leader: Jake Lyne. Venue: Hourne Farm, E. Sussex

Teaching will be given on the method of Silent Illumination, a profound meditation practice that leads to a mind of great calmness and insight, using ancient Chinese Zen methods that are applicable in the modern world. To be compassionate we need to be silent enough to hear another and to act on compassion we need a mind that is illuminated with the energy and clarity that wisdom brings. In Silent Illumination, these qualities develop together. This silent retreat is an opportunity to learn and deepen this practice – all welcome.

(CHANGE OF DATES) 10th – 15th May: Western Zen 5-night Retreat

Leader: Fiona Nuttall. Venue: Maenllwyd, Wales

This retreat designed for Westerners enables the mind to face the major paradox - Who am I? The question is investigated within a framework of silent sitting meditation, alternating with a Communication Exercise in which people work in turns with each member of the group to explore this fundamental Koan.

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16th – 18th May: Wesak Weekend

Venue: Leominster Youth Hostel

The Western Chan Fellowship will be marking Wesak 2014 with a residential weekend of celebration, discussion and meditation. The aims of the weekend will be twofold:

- To celebrate Wesak
- To provide an opportunity to explore as a sangha how we can best express Chan practice in our daily lives and in the world around us

WCF members, attenders of local WCF groups, and anyone who has been on a WCF retreat in recent years are invited.

If you want to be residential use this link: <http://w-c-f.org/Q487-214>

If you want to be non-residential use this link <http://w-c-f.org/Q487-215>. There are several B&B options nearby.

18th – 29th May: Connected Practice - Enhance your practice in your own environment

Co-ordinator: Hilary Richards. Venue: Your own home and workplace!

Join us in a commitment for a period of connected and enhanced practice. We will undertake this in our daily lives, whether at home or in the workplace, with the silent support of knowing that we are not practising alone. We intend to raise the tempo of our practice for this period, increasing our capacity to be aware in our daily lives. A Mindfulness Bell will be rung at noon every day, when all participants may pause and be joined in the silence that the bell marks. Members of our Sangha may use this opportunity in different and creative ways. Open to all. Contact connected-practice@westernchanfellowship.org

18th – 25th June: Silent Illumination 7-night Retreat

Leader: Jake Lyne. Venue: Bala Brook Retreat Centre, Dartmoor

Silent Illumination is a profound meditation practice which leads to a mind of great calmness and insight, using ancient Chinese Zen methods which are just as applicable to the modern West. This seven-night silent retreat is an opportunity to learn and deepen this practice through intensive meditation, with instruction and personal guidance by individual interviews with an experienced teacher. Whether or not a breakthrough to Enlightenment may occur, establishing a practice gives a firm basis for subsequent ongoing mindfulness in everyday life.

28th June – 3rd July: How to Travel the Great Way 5-night Retreat

Leader: Ken Jones. Venue: Maenllwyd, Wales

This retreat will cover the whole span of Chan (Zen) practice, from the beginnings of belief to the opening to wisdom and active compassion in the world. Through lively social interaction and body work it will draw on the radical teachings of Eihei Dogen, the great 13th century Zen sage, and no less on the ups and downs of our everyday lives – "straw into gold". It will range from a warm hearted liturgy and an opening to landscape to personal guiding interviews. For more background, visit www.kenjoneszen.com and read "How to do everyday Buddhism".

25th July – 3rd August: Silent Illumination 9-night Retreat

Leader: Simon Child. Venue: Hourne Farm, E. Sussex

Silent Illumination is a profound meditation practice which leads to a mind of great calmness and insight, using ancient Chinese Zen methods which are just as applicable to the modern West. This nine-night silent retreat is an opportunity to learn and deepen this practice through intensive meditation, with instruction and personal guidance by individual interviews with an experienced teacher. Whether or not a breakthrough to Enlightenment may occur, establishing a practice gives a firm basis for subsequent ongoing mindfulness in everyday life.

5th – 14th September: Shattering the Great Doubt 9-night Retreat

Leader: Simon Child. Venue: Maenllwyd, Wales

The ancient Chinese Zen practices of investigating Huatou and Gongan (Koan) are best practised in a supportive environment such as this intensive silent Chan retreat. As one becomes deeply absorbed in the practice, mental constructions drop away and one is confronted by a realisation that one does not know the nature of existence and one's fundamental assumptions of life are groundless. Staying with and cultivating this 'doubt', it can become all-consuming 'Great doubt' which may 'shatter', giving a direct insight into reality which may be what is known as an Enlightenment experience.

11th – 19th October: Silent Illumination 7-night Retreat

Leader: Fiona Nuttall. Venue: Maenllwyd, Wales

Silent Illumination is a profound meditation practice which leads to a mind of great calmness and insight, using ancient Chinese Zen methods which are just as applicable to the modern West. This seven-night silent retreat is an opportunity to learn and deepen this practice through intensive meditation, with instruction and personal guidance by individual interviews with an experienced teacher. Whether or not a breakthrough to Enlightenment may occur, establishing a practice gives a firm basis for subsequent ongoing mindfulness in everyday life.

5th – 9th November: From the deluded self to the Bodhisattva mission to help all beings

Leader: Ken Jones. Venue: Hourne Farm, E. Sussex

A traveller's guide, employing meditation, guiding talks, playful fellowship with other travellers, personal interviews, and some new outlooks on the Great Matter. All seekers welcome!

8th – 13th November: Western Zen 5-night Retreat

Leader: Hilary Richards. Venue: Maenllwyd, Wales

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outcome may be a profound journey through the unity of self, and the acceptance of self, to "self at ease". This may possibly lead further to a direct insight into the ground of being. Participants share a rich experience in new self-knowledge, understanding others and the human condition.

6th – 13th December: Shattering the Great Doubt 7-night Retreat

Leader: Simon Child. Venue: Maenllwyd, Wales

The ancient Chinese Zen practices of investigating Huatou and Gongan (Koan) are best practised in a supportive environment such as this intensive silent Chan retreat. As one becomes deeply absorbed in the practice, mental constructions drop away and one is confronted by a realisation that one does not know the nature of existence and one's fundamental assumptions of life are groundless. Staying with and cultivating this 'doubt', it can become all-consuming 'Great doubt' which may 'shatter', giving a direct insight into reality which may be what is known as an Enlightenment experience.

12th – 14th December Weekend Chan Retreat

Leader: Jake Lyne. Venue: Bala Brook Retreat Centre, Dartmoor

This is an opportunity to learn the basic techniques of Chan meditation and for experienced practitioners to deepen their practice. The retreat will consist of periods of sitting meditation, walking meditation and exercises. There will be Dharma talks; otherwise the retreat will be held in silence. There will also be an opportunity for private interviews for participants to question and investigate their practice. Open equally to beginners and established meditators.

Other Events of Interest

The following events are not run by the WCF but may be of interest

Buddhism: Theory, Practice and Tradition

Venue: Swindon New College

Hugh Carroll, WCF committee member, is to lead a course on Tuesday evenings 7-9pm from 14th January for 9 weeks (£90)

<http://www.newcollege.ac.uk/course-information-sheets/buddhism-theory-practice-tradition>

Retreats abroad with Simon Child in 2014

Contact Simon for details

- San Francisco USA: Silent Illumination weekend retreat January 24th - 26th
- Warsaw, Poland: 10-day Silent Illumination retreat, March 20th – 30th
- Dharma Drum Retreat Center, Pine Bush NY USA: 10-day Silent Illumination retreat, May 23rd – June 1st and (with Hilary Richards and Rebecca Li) Western Zen retreat October 10th – 15th

Mailings

If you no longer wish to receive postal mailings, please help us save printing and postage costs by notifying admin@westernchanfellowship.org

(CHANGE OF DATE) 5th April: Western Chan Fellowship AGM 2014

This will now be held Saturday 5th April, now at Oddfellows Hall, Bristol. Details will be circulated nearer the time.

Local Events

Several local groups arrange day retreats and other events from time to time. See the website events page <http://w-c-f.org/Q342> and individual groups pages <http://w-c-f.org/Q3> for details

Already scheduled for 2014 is a day retreat in Manchester (9th February)

Book Announcement

Hilary Richards has a koan commentary published in '*The Hidden Lamp: Stories from Twenty-Five Centuries of Awakened Women. 100 koans and stories of Buddhist women*'. She writes on one of the koans created by John Crook.

Published by Wisdom Books: <http://www.wisdompubs.org/book/hidden-lamp>

New Chan Forum – please contribute

We are looking for contributions for future issues. Currently we are considering the following themes for forthcoming issues so contributions on these would be especially welcome.

- Daily Practice
- Koans in/of Everyday Life
- Reading the literature of a tradition outside the scriptures

Please consider preparing something on one of these themes; it could be something related to your own experience, some teaching that you received that was particularly helpful, or just a few thoughts. It need not be a long piece and could even just fill half a page. Something between 400 and 2500 words would be very suitable.

We would like to include reviews of books that beginners tend to read, e.g. "Zen Mind Beginners Mind" - Suzuki, "Everyday Zen" - Joko Beck, "Hoofprint of the Ox" - Sheng Yen, etc.

By way of introduction for beginners some very brief descriptions and commentaries on the central sutras would be particularly helpful.

Artwork, black-and-white photographs, poems, haiku and haibun would be very much appreciated.

We would like to hear your suggestions for possible themes for future issues.

If any of these things stimulate you then please contact the editor, Eddy Street, who will be more than happy to discuss with you how any idea can be taken forward. He can be contacted at editor@westernchanfellowship.org