



MOUNTAIN SILENCE

NEWSLETTER OF THE DANCING MOUNTAINS ZEN SANGHA

Issue 17 ; Spring 2012

Devotion

Events

**Retreat: Ingen Breen
in Sweden**
5th April 2012 to 9th April
2012

Contact: Michael Elsmere:
01803 732761

DM retreat/meeting
20th April 2012 to 22nd
April 2012

Warminster
Residential
Peer led
Est. cost £75
Phone Devin:
07875155464

Retreat with Shundo
David Hayes
19th May 2012 to 20th
May 2012

Totnes.
May 19-20, non
residential,
From £15.00 per day
or £25.00 for 2 days.
Call Francis on: 01803
866735
[More about this event:](#)

Retreat: Tenshin Reb
Anderson Roshi
8th June 2012 to 13th
June 2012

In Sweden
cost: 4000 SEK(circa



Devotion

Editorial

By Devin Ashwood

This issue has inspired a number of us to express our thoughts on devotion. Not a commonly heard word in the Zen tradition, but as you will read, something that has touched the heart of a number of our sangha. In the spirit of this devotion, a group of committed individuals have been working away trying to formulate a constitution for us to rally around and articles of association with which to incorporate as a formal entity. I know we promised this would be ready for you to see by this issue, however, agreeing details such as how we word the precepts we are committed to is a deep practice and we have held back from rushing such. Please accept our apologies, while we have an update [here](#), we will be ready to share more with you in the summer issue.

If you have any events to share with us, [Wendy Klien](#) has kindly agreed to be our events co-ordinator so you may contact her directly if there is something you'd like to propose or explore with her.

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years

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Roshi

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Komazawa

By Sam Hill

The Peaches are

£372)

contact: Liselotte Aldén:
+46-498-53905

**Retreat: Tenshin Reb
Anderson Roshi**
15th June 2012 to 24th
June 2012

Felsentor Switzerland
Zen Meditation Before and
after Awakening.
Cost: From circa £873
www.felsentor.ch/english

Previous issues are available [here](#).

Screaming

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Auditorium

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Get involved

[Facebook group](#)

For general discussion and socialising about Dancing Mountains and related events on Facebook, please click the link above.

Business matters and decisions are made separately via an email list - please contact us if you want to be part of this.

Local Contacts

Visit the [Local Groups webpage](#) for details of Dancing Mountains groups in your area, and the [Diary](#) for their regular meeting dates and times.

Next issue

The Summer edition will have a theme around "Lay Practice". We welcome your articles, poetry, pictures, letters, retreat reflections and book reviews! Publication date: 21st June, deadline for submission of material 1st June.

Submissions to the
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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 17;

Dharma Talk

Facing the Wall for 9 years - At No Abode Hermitage, September 18th 2010 -

Transcribed & edited by Frances Collins

By Tenshin Reb Anderson Roshi



Someone came to talk to me recently. I heard before he came to talk to me that he was about to leave this country and go over the ocean to another country. I think I asked him if there was anything he wanted to tell me and I think he said something like... I don't believe that this is it. He might have said, sometimes I don't believe this is it or I have trouble believing that this is it and I said something like... I don't go there. I could have said let's put that aside for a little while and let me say that I believe in giving wholehearted attention to *this*. So I'm not going to go as far as saying that I don't believe this is it. I'm just going to talk about what I do believe in rather than what I don't believe in. There are quite a few things that I don't believe in but what *do* I believe in? I believe in giving attention to *this*.

Now, if I give attention to *this* I might find out that this is it....or that *it* is this. I might find that out. As a matter of fact I believe that if I give wholehearted attention to *this* I will find out the truth of *this*. I don't believe in *this* but I do wish to realise the truth of this. What this *is* to some extent my idea of this or my opinion of this or the appearance of this. I have to deal with the appearance of this or this is an appearance.

When I meet you this meeting is partly how this meeting appears to me. This meeting is partly my opinion of this meeting and it's partly your opinion of this meeting. You might think this is really an above average meeting or you might think that this is not a good meeting and that this is a really unwholesome meeting. You might think that. Without getting into if you trust your opinion of this meeting I'd just like to say that *I* believe in giving wholehearted attention to the appearance....to your opinion of this meeting.

Now, many people have opinions about the meeting between me and this priest trainee. I believe in giving attention to it. My faith is not one hundred percent perfect so I occasionally forget to pay attention to *this*. When I do pay attention it has never been regretted by me. I never say that I wish I hadn't paid attention to that. I never felt that way. As a matter of fact I think this is good and what I suggest to you is that I believe it would be good for you to pay whole hearted attention to this. I think that sounds good. I think I'll pay attention to that myself right now. I might even propose to you that there's a theory in the Buddha dharma that if you give wholehearted attention to this you will find out that this is not this. When you find out that this is not this you realize that this is it. When you realize that this is not it you realize the dharma. If you don't give wholehearted attention to this you're going to keep thinking that this is it. You'll keep believing that you're right or you're wrong or in between. That's what I said to this person who was about to leave the country. Then I said to him are you going on a pilgrimage? Well actually, he said, I don't know. I'm going to celebrate a wedding of some friends of mine. I said I hope you'll make it a pilgrimage. What I mean by pilgrimage is that I hope and pray that you give wholehearted attention to every *this* from here to England and every *this* when you get to England. Then going to another country is a pilgrimage. It's not a pilgrimage to the country. It's a pilgrimage *to* being present while you're moving or while you're still.

One of our ancestors on pilgrimage said no matter where I go I meet him. Wherever I go I study what's going on. No matter where I go or who comes to me, no matter what place I go to

or what place comes to me, I study it. The term that is used by one of our ancestors for pilgrimage is a Japanese term Hensan. Literally 'hen' means everywhere or everything and 'san' means practice or meet. So the word for pilgrimage means everywhere, practice meet everywhere. As you move through the universe if you're on pilgrimage, everywhere you will meet your self...everywhere you will meet him or meet her, everywhere you meet *it*. Another translation for this term for pilgrimage is through exploration. So wherever you are you continue the exploration of truth. You don't just study the truth at the bus stop. You also study the truth on the bus and you study the truth at the café. You're thoroughly exploring life and your life becomes a pilgrimage even if you're not moving. You're thoroughly exploring. As you know sometimes when you're travelling you have to sit still and wait in order to travel. Sometimes people complain they want to travel but actually they're being required to not move...to sit and wait for the train or the plane or the bus or the car. Part of the travel is not to move. But do they enjoy it? Sometimes they don't. Sometimes they forget that they're on pilgrimage. They think that they are actually just trying to get some place other than where they are. So I prayed that he would give attention to where he *is*.

I'd like to relate this to some other ways of saying the same thing. One of them is that I was travelling from the Sierra Nevada, the mountain range where it has snowed travelling west toward San Francisco. On the way up to the mountains my spouse said that she wanted to go car shopping at a Toyota place. On the way back she reminded me. So when we came to the Toyota place we went in and looked at their hybrid cars and we got into the process of purchasing the car. They offered to finance it at 0% interest ...the Buddhist rate of interest. But also I think it's the Christian rate of interest. Then they checked my credit and the guy said that maybe we were getting a little bit ahead of ourselves here. We checked your credit but, one way to put it is, you have zero credit. You don't have good credit or bad credit...you have *zero* credit. Another way to put it is in the realm of credit you do not exist. The guy said it's like you're a ghost. Where are you? Where have you been? I almost got proud! This person who said, it's like you're a ghost man, also found out I was ordained as a priest about 40 years ago and he thought maybe it's appropriate for a priest to have zero credit. Maybe that makes sense!

I think in order to verify or realize a thorough exploration we need some form. When thorough exploration is realized we have what is called a bodhisattva. We have the kind of people who attracted me to the Zen bodhisattva training programme. Because they had explored thoroughly they were not attached to any forms. They weren't attached to the forms of Zen practice. They weren't attached to the forms of Buddhist practice. They weren't attached to the forms of bodhisattva practice. They weren't attached to Buddhism. They weren't attached to Taoism. They weren't attached to Christianity. They weren't attached to Catholicism..... When I saw them behaving in their unattached way I thought I want to be like that. I want to be the way a person is when they don't attach to the self and other. Then I found out that these people went through a training programme where they were offered forms. When they were offered the forms they were trained to not be tight about the forms or loose about the forms. They were advised to study the forms and thoroughly explore the forms. But it's kind of difficult to thoroughly explore a form if you don't have anything to do with it....if you don't look at it, if you don't hug it, if you don't kiss it, if you don't pat it, if you don't pick it up, if you don't set it down, if you don't enter it, if you don't leave it. If you don't relate to it in a formal way it's hard to prove that you're not attached to it. A lot of people say I'm not attached to Zen practice, I never even heard of it and I never went near a Zen Centre so I'm not attached to it! Well, maybe so but zen practice is sitting there waiting for you to come and verify that if you engaged in zen forms that you could do so in a thorough way, which is the same as saying you could do so without being tight about the forms.

Tight rope walking is a form you could use. For some people it is possible if they could get up on the tightrope the first time, step on it with no attachment to the tightrope, just put their foot on it without attaching to the tightrope and maybe walk for a little while on it without attaching to it. It's possible but unlikely that they could walk very far without attaching to it. Let's say they walk just for a few steps without attaching to it and then they fell off in an unattached way. They stepped on in an unattached way and they stepped in the air in an unattached way. When they fell, not too far but far enough so that the next time that they got on it they started to attach to it because they didn't like falling that much. So then they tried to stay on the thing. How can you balance without being attached to balancing? You actually can attach to being balanced without attaching to being balanced. It is possible to learn. But it

does take quite a bit of training. You can do it once or twice or a few times without attachment but eventually you start getting attached to it. Then, if you train more and more you finally find a way to walk on the tightrope and not fall off or fall off either way without being attached to falling off or not falling off. But it does require quite a bit of training.

All the forms in zen like sitting for a period of time with a group of people, forms like bowing, offering incense, studying scriptures, cooking breakfast, bowing to people, shaking hands, talking....all these forms are setting a context for you to not attach to anything...starting with the forms. All these forms are set up to help us to give up trying to control our life. Most people are trying to control their life which means their life and their relationships with other beings. Most people are trying to control. What attracted me to this tradition was seeing some people showing what it looks like to not be trying to control...not some people who are not in control. I've seen a lot of people who are not in control. I wasn't attracted to this tradition because of seeing somebody driving off the road and kill her self. What attracted me was somebody not trying to control the car and the wonderful way of life that is... not trying to control her thoughts, not trying to control her speech, not trying to control her body....giving it up after many years of training in caring for her body, her speech and her thought. This is where having zero credit comes in handy.

One of the things I have noticed in this practice with these forms which offer an opportunity to give up trying to control our life is that sometimes we feel like the forms are controlling us or that the people that are giving us the forms are giving us the forms to try to control us. I want to point out a pivot here and that is that when we give up trying to control our life we readily become fearless. To put it another way, most people's attempts to control their life comes from fear and when they act to control they perpetuate the fear. By learning to give up trying to control we open the doors to fearlessness. Part of the way to open it is, as we begin to give up trying to control, we become more in touch with our fear. When we start trying to give up control it helps us get in touch with our fear. By getting in touch with our fear we have a chance to give full attention to it. If we give full attention to it we'll realize among other things that fear is not fear. So, fearlessness doesn't mean there's no fear. It just means we understand that fear is not fear, I am not me, and you are not you. You are me and I am you and everywhere I go I meet *it*.

Now I'm on the verge of going down to Tassajara for a practice period and so are some other people in this room. Some of you are probably not going to Tassajara. I wanted to speak to those going to Tassajara but they are going to hear this again when they get there. To those of you who aren't going, I encourage you to create forms in your life to support you to give up trying to control your life. Here today we have a form of sitting and walking together and I hope for the rest of the day you use this form when you're sitting and when you're walking as a context for giving up trying to control your life. In other words, give up trying to control your life today here. We're all here to support you to give up trying to control your life today here! I'm here to support you today to give up trying to control your life here today. I'm here to support myself to give up trying to control my life here today. When I think about it and when I embrace the possibility of giving up trying to control I do feel more intimate with fear and fearlessness.

Someone might ask a question and the person might not respond very well. Because of being so sleepy they can hardly understand what the person is saying. People might look at you and ask what's the matter with you? You look sleepy. You shouldn't be sleepy. Then they think, I should drink some tea and I won't be so sleepy. But if I'm drinking the tea out of fear of sleepiness am I trying to control my sleep level? Maybe I should give up trying to control my sleep level. How can I drink tea without trying to control my state of mind? I'll drink tea to get strength so I can give this talk.

Here's the tea. Should I throw it away?

Whether I drink the tea or not, with caffeine or not, I'm saying thoroughly explore what I'm doing. Am I doing this to try to control my state of mind? Check that out! Now how about trying to give up trying to control my state of mind? If I don't drink this tea do I feel fear of my ability to give this talk? Yeah, I feel afraid I won't be able to give this talk if I don't drink this tea or it won't be a very good talk and then that won't please the sangha...they might say that he came in there and he was kind of sleepy and he didn't say anything that was interesting. It was really

boring. I'm not going to go hang out with him anymore. He's no fun. He used to be fun because he used to drink a lot of caffeine and say funny stuff....but no more. He's lost me. I'm going to go somewhere that it's more interesting. If I'm afraid of that and I can feel that and I try to control that, do I try to control myself so that I make myself more entertaining? That's my job to look at that, to explore myself and see what I'm up to here.

A few minutes ago I asked those of you who are not going to go to Tassajara to create some forms that will support you to give up trying to control your life. This is the same as finding a form that will support you to be kind to every experience you have. Chapter 14 of the Lotus Sutra describes how to practice with your body to help the Buddha transmit the dharma. One of the wonderful practices there is giving up trying to control. It says that whenever you meet phenomena, a person, a feeling, a smell, a touch, a taste, a colour, inwardly or outwardly whatever phenomena you meetgive up trying to control it. Be patient with it. Be non violent with it. Create a structure that will support you. One thing you could do is read 2 or 3 paragraphs of that chapter every day. Then you could talk to yourself and ask yourself if you committed to practice that today. Then you could answer your self and say yes I will. That's a form you could create to support that. Then you could notice if you try to control yourself into doing that practice....and you probably would....

The forms you use to support yourself to give up forms tend to attach to those forms but that's part of the training. The people who are going to Tassajara are going into a place where there are a lot of forms being offered to help them to not be attached to the forms. So, I'm suggesting to you who are not going to be at Tassajara to create some forms and then see if you can be with them in a relaxed and playful way. Have the forms to see if you could be that way with them. One person told me recently that she has trouble following long days of sitting meditation and walking meditation without getting tight about them. She said that when she does a few periods of sitting she can do these without getting tight with them. Then it is beneficial. But if she does a lot of sitting she starts to get more and more tight around it. Then if she spends a lot of time tightly following the schedule this injures her. So I suggested that she start experimenting with this on her own outside the community context, walking and stretching and other things until she finds a way to relate to these forms. Practice without getting tense means probably discovering that you didn't get tense and then just stop and do a different form. Then maybe you attach to that. So, when you notice that you're starting to get distressed because of tightness around the sitting, get up and walk. In my case I'm not as good at standing as I am at sitting. Walking I'm okay but I have a problem standing without getting tight about it.

I think we do need a form to surface to see our innate tendency to tighten around things, to grasp things and to attach to things. These forms are opportunities to discover this by your attachment to the forms. Work with the forms in such a way as to learn through the forms how to be relaxed, playful and creative. It might be difficult to do that in a situation where there are a lot of other people involved. So you could try that on your own and have some extended period of practice in your home where you feel comfortable sitting for a short time, walking for a short time, walking for a long time, sitting for a long time, sitting for a long time, walking for a short time..... you could try all different patterns like sitting, walking, stretching until you find a way to be formally engaging with your body all day long. When its over you might say that was really wonderful and I enjoyed that and no harm was done. One form I would suggest to help try to give up trying to control life is to walk around your house silently for 10 minutes. Find your own rhythm.

When I first started sitting I could not sit full lotus for 40 minutes. So I sat full lotus for less than 40 minutes. When I actually started sitting I could sit full lotus. I wasn't very good but then I worked at it and it got more healthy and authentic. So I sat a lot on my own and not in the zendo. I found that I could sit 25 minutes outside the zendo and then I could sit 40 minutes in the zendo. That was just one period and then gradually I was able to do more and more out of consistent practice. But I didn't push myself too hard like some people do...actually sometimes I pushed myself too hard and then some days I didn't. I didn't push myself so hard that I quit.

The goal here is to benefit all beings and to transmit the truth which will liberate all beings. In order to be able to receive the truth and transmit the truth one needs to try to give up trying to control life....your life and my life. You need to give up trying to control your life and my life in

order to transmit the Buddhist teaching. The point of transmitting the Buddha's teaching is for the welfare and happiness of all beings. The goal is the freedom of all beings. This is a requirement.

You might intend to receive and to transmit the Buddha's teaching in order to benefit all beings. That's an intention. You might also promote that intention to a vow which is what happens when you receive the bodhisattva precepts. So, you had the intention before you received and promised. Then you did a formal ceremony where you received the precepts and you promised to practice from now on. Even after realizing the Buddha body you promise to practice these precepts. A vow is the highest level of intention. So you had the intention of practicing these teachings of compassion. In promising to practice them, that is intention. One of the precepts which you vow to practice is to embrace and sustain forms. That's one of the vows you made. The point of practicing those forms is to learn to practice those forms without attaching to them. You vow to practice forms so that you learn how to practice the forms without trying to control the forms. For example, you vow to learn how to sit in a traditional way without being tight about sitting in that traditional way of sitting. In Zen we have formal sittings which we practice in order to practice sitting without getting tight. In fact people try to do them and they do get tight. Then they practice more and more and they get feedback on their tightness until finally they can sit without being tight about the sitting.

Another thing I was going to mention was that in the toilet earlier today I noticed a magazine called Martha Stewart or was it Whole Living magazine? On the cover it said outward order and inner calm. It had a picture of a flower in a vase. The flower in a vase is an outward form. It is an outward form in this temple when we put flowers on the altar with an intention. We offer these flowers in order to promote inner calm but also to promote outer calm. We use outer forms to make inner calm, inner forms to create not being tight with the forms. If you're tight you're not calm. If you're tight you're not tranquil. We use forms like this stick, like incense offering or like a posture in sitting. The whole point is can you do them wholeheartedly? Wholeheartedly can you do them without being tight about them? When you clean a closet is that an outer form or order that you're doing to be calm or are you trying to get your closet under control? This afternoon we are going to put some debris in a dumpster. We're going to clean the temple but I'm not going to clean this temple to get this temple under control. I should say I vow not to take care of this place in order to get it under control. That would be antithetical to No Abode. No Abode is to clean the place so that we cannot dwell here. Clean this place so that we can be calm here! Don't clean this place to get it under control because if you get this place under control then we're going to be sitting here afraid that it's going to get out of control! We don't do that here and that's why you people like to come here. You don't come here to get this place under control. You come to play here! You come to take care of the forms and closets here. There's a big closet project that we have been doing here. Some people might get in those closets to get peoples stuff under control, I don't know. But I'm not trying to get your stuff under control. I'm just letting there be a form where there's a closet where you can put your stuff so that you can give up trying to control when you're here. When you go home and you clean your closet, don't do it to get your closet under control...clean your closet to be calm. If you notice that you're cleaning your closet to get it under control then stop and go do something else that you can do to promote calm. Take a walk and don't go anywhere. Just walk in a circle around your living room. Or go sit on the toilet and read Martha Stewart. Now I have cleaned the bathroom and I can sit calmly.

Cleaning your house is a traditional Zen practice. But the point of it is not to get the house clean. The point of it is so that now you can sit and give up trying to control. It's the same as the tight rope walking. So I would like you to find some forms between our one day sittings. I'd like you to think about the forms that you will be practicing that will support you, not to get that form under control but to do that form to see if you can do it without tightening. Clean your closet without tightening around it to get it clean so that if someone comes in and dumps a load of garbage in your closet you can welcome them. You might welcome them by saying could you dump this stuff someplace else? They might say no I've got to dump it here! You might then say that you can't believe how Reb got these bodhisattvas to come and dump garbage in my closet as a test for me. You might open the door to a delivery of garbage that says Reb sent us to test if you're trying to clean your closet in order to get your closet clean or if you're cleaning your closet to test your fearlessness. That's why he asked me to bring this garbage to you. However if you really don't want us to put it there we wont. We're not attached

to getting it in the closet either. Our assignment is to deliver the garbage and your assignment is to welcome it. But you can welcome it in many, many ways. The point is, are you practicing this precept which you vowed to practice, which is forms and ceremonies?

This ultimately means that everything you do all day long is a ceremony. When you clean the closet it is a form and ceremony. It's not done to get the closet cleaned. When we offer the incense it's not done in order to offer the incense. It's to test non attachment. In giving this incense away are you trying to get this incense into the bowl to make sure it stands up straight. I remember one of the first times I saw Suzuki Roshi offer incense I was struck by the thought that when he put the incense in he was kind of surprised at what happened. He put it in and it sort of stood there as if he put it in saying I wonder what's going to happen now. Oh wow it stood up! Actually, sometimes he would tilt it over a little bit and that was a surprise too. You don't put it in and think now that's the incense offered what's the next thing to do? I give the incense and I do the bow. It's not like I do the bow to do the bow. I do the bow to see what the bow is and not to get this bow under control. I don't say now I have that bow under control I'll cross my hands under control or I'll walk in control. Some zen monks slip into that and the teacher and the sangha say you seem to be kind of tight. It's a really beautiful gassho. It's lovely but I feel you wouldn't be willing to do an ugly gassho. Is that right? Well, no I can't do an ugly gassho. I would be terrified of an ugly gassho. I've got to do this perfect one. I might say, could I please change your gassho a little bit and make it a little less beautiful? Could I push your hands a little tighter together? Could I push your thumb down here or pull it back? No! No! I might say that's fine. See you later! I might say that I thought you asked me to give you feedback on your forms. You might say yes you can give me feedback but not this one.

Have I told you about the guy one time who came to serve me at Tassajara in the meals and stood in front of me? I was looking down at my bowls and I could see his feet. I noticed that every time he came one foot was straight ahead and the other one was turned off to the right. I thought it was sort of funny since he didn't seem to have walking problems. Yet when he stood in front of me one foot was straight and one was turned to the right. So I asked him one time outside the zendo if I could ask him a question about this serving form. I said that when you serve almost always one foot is straight ahead and one foot is turned out to the right. I asked, do you do that intentionally? I thought it didn't happen by accident and if he was doing it intentionally I was wondering why and what was his motivation? I asked do you do that intentionally and he said something like well what difference does it make to you or ... so what? So I said, okay, I'm going to go swimming. The next time he came to serve both feet were straight. I wondered what happened. Ten or 15 years later when he left Zen Centre he moved back to his home state. One of his close friends told me that he saw him and they were talking about his time at Zen Centre. He said that the most important time at Zen Centre was when I asked him that question. That was the most important thing that happened to him there! So these forms....we get tight around it when someone asks us about it. It can have a big impact. We can get very frightened when someone is telling us how to put our feet, our hands, how we wear our clothes, whether we are leaning to the right or leaning to the left. These are ways for us to be intimate with ourselves and intimate with each other.

As we become more intimate we go through various layers of fear. The forms that are supporting us to be intimate with the forms are offered to realize intimacy. We usually start with being too relaxed or too tight with them and we are too relaxed or too tight because we are afraid of what would happen if we weren't too tight or too loose. So being too tight or too loose with the forms are ways of trying to control them. When you're not trying to control them you're not too tight or too loose. You just do them. But almost nobody hits the mark every time. Most people are a little too tight or too loose. Most people are trying to control their life through what they're doing. As we get deeper and deeper there are more and more subtle levels of trying to control. At the grosser levels of trying to control you get more and more subtle levels of trying to control. It's virtually endless...this thoroughness of the subtleness of the controlling.

When I'm doing calligraphy it takes a while to warm up until I'm in a place where it's going pretty well. Sometimes it goes too long and I start to make mistakes. Part of what helps me do it is if I feel like I'm crying when I'm doing it. I'm surrendering into it rather than getting it done, surrendering to a process rather than getting a process under control. If I'm sort of crying into the process it's pretty easy to pick up on the signal that its time to stop. But if I'm bulldozing the process then I keep going beyond when I should stop and that's when I start

making mistakes.

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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

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[Sangha Update](#)

[Dancing Mountains Latest News - All the latest about formalising our organisation](#)

By Ji Den Dai U Frances Collins

FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS OF DANCING MOUNTAINS

Development of Dancing Mountains as a charitable organization has progressed. The choice of organizational structure was discussed more fully in the winter 2010 edition no. 12 of Mountain Silence which is still available on our website. I stated then that we had been advised that a realistic time frame from interim committee to set up was identified as 12 months. It looks like that will be the case.

It has been most important to all concerned that this process of formally recognizing Dancing Mountains as a company occurs out of our practice together with integrity and at a pace that is experienced as organic and supported by the wider sangha. Open invitation to U.K. sangha to join in practicing together in retreat at the beautiful Trigonos in Snowdonia **29th April 2011** led to the a representation of sangha and clarification of those available and willing to take on roles as trustees or directors needed to form a core interim committee.

Assisted by our friends in Community of Interbeing and in particular the endless support from C.O.I. trustee Dene Donalds has enabled us to become aware of the need for formal role identification in order to proceed toward registration with The U.K. Charity Commission. These foundational steps serve to represent decision making until legitimate organizational status is achieved. This interim committee has supported the sharing of main director roles and a willingness to expand according to additional support offered from sangha in the context of expertise and availability as liaison or support officers. Mandatory to the submission of the application to The Charity Commission is the identification of two or three trustees. The interim committee voted are Devin Ashwood and Frances Collins as joint chairpersons, Michael Ellesmere as Company Secretary / communications officer and Chris Brown as treasurer. Gill Jackman and Kath Bennett have fully supported this process as liaison officers. Wendy Klein has generously agreed to continue as membership secretary. U.K. Networking between committed local sangha representatives and potential dharma teachers has already begun. Any such representatives interested in skype meeting to arrange retreats and events for **2012 – 2014** are invited to make contact.

As advised by Community of Interbeing monthly skype conference has been found to be both necessary and extremely helpful in promoting and sustaining energy. Meeting of directors face to face will follow a small sangha led retreat at Warminster arranged for **20th April 2012**. By that time application to the Charity Commission will have been completed. A general meeting will be arranged following retreat **10th – 14th August** led by Ingen Breen which can celebrate wider sangha discussion.

An annual general meeting to review existing roles and hopefully vote in members into new roles will also be arranged. Details of these events will be posted on the Dancing Mountains website.

MEMBERSHIP

The Community Interest Company is now a popular structure for a company seeking to operate as a charity whilst evolving into an organization which may express itself through engaged Buddhist activities. Agreement on membership directly from The Memorandum and Articles documents is offered here for ease and as invitation to the community by way of promoting commitment and inclusion whilst offering fundraising opportunity.

As a Community Interest Company (CIC) committed to the inclusion and benefit of all beings Dancing Mountains seeks to promote peace and understanding through the practice of mindful living. A tiered membership is offered to facilitate flexibility and growth according to the evolving needs of those who wish to follow Zen practice as established by Dogen Zenji and Shogaku Shunryu Suzuki and other ancestors and teachers of the soto zen lineage. Such other persons as are admitted to membership in accordance with the Articles shall be members of the Company.

Levels of Membership

1. General membership:- free to everyone and provides access to Dancing Mountains' website, plus free Mountain Silence newsletter only. This level of membership does not require any commitment and does not permit voting rights.
2. Committed membership - commitment to regular practice with sangha plus a financial commitment of £4 per calendar month (p.c.m.) provides full voting rights.
3. Lay Commitment membership:- facilitates those who have received lay ordination or who aspire to receive bodhisattva vows in this tradition to access relevant practices and training toward development and support of practice. Financial commitment of £4 p.c.m. is required and carries full voting rights.
4. Committee membership:- facilitates access to specific support and development of Dancing Mountains organizational committee and full voting rights. Financial commitment of £4 p.c.m. is required.
5. Patron (s) membership:- Voting rights are dependent on level of commitment to practice as laid out above.

NEXT STEPS

As our organization expands any generous voluntary offering of skill and time to support this work will be much appreciated. In particular additional roles previously considered and found to be timely right now are: -

- Support for membership secretary
- Support for other committee roles
- Database for venues for retreats and events
- Retreat co-ordinators
- Editors of docs /newsletter
- Web master

Not essential to the legal procedure, the most important practice of weaving Dancing Mountains C.I.C. into existence this far has been how to articulate our precepts through language that tells us and informs others about the practice of our tradition. The interim committee have made great efforts to organize this into one document which has become three examples. Grateful for this opportunity and support from everyone this far, we look forward to this wonderful practice unfolding further as our teacher Tenshin Reb Anderson Roshi has agreed to look at the wording of these wonderful precepts with us.

Ji Den Dai U

Frances Collins

Email:- Mountaindancing1@yahoo.co.uk

Tel. 07786369682

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Devotion

By Gill Jackman

As I sat in bed this morning, drinking my tea, I remembered Reb's reflection that sitting or meditating is really a simulation of meditation. We pretend to meditate in order to be in the right place at the right time under the right conditions to apprehend the nature of reality. We can't actually do it, we can only try. In fact it's extremely difficult to stop trying. So is this in the way? The trying?

It's as good as anything, which is just as well, and if the instruction to 'study the self' floats around somewhere, so much the better, but it's what's at the core of this seemingly insane behaviour that struck me this morning. This other strange behaviour. The gift, growing at every contact, of loving Reb.

Barking, obviously, to love a man I don't personally know. So why do I love him? As a psychotherapist, I'm not even going to open that casket of worms, but as a Zen practitioner, who feels her canny self has watched and researched this man enough to trust what he says, I've really started to listen to him. A big chunk of me isn't interested in saving all beings but I love and trust Reb enough to know he's onto something. So I listen to his talks, I read his books, I long to sit with him. And what he says (or is it who he is?) leads me towards more and more glimpses of dependent co-arising. Not so much as a path as a line of crazy-paving. And what helps me most, is although my way isn't the way, I'm totally allowed to do it and to be it.

Held in the form of Soto Zen, there are no extraneous words to get tangled up in except my own and a load of koan-like liturgy, which offers only profound and helpful truths.

I suspect, in the end, my wail – but I want to understand the nature of reality – is much like the cry of the child who wants to be a train driver or an astronaut, and like the very best of parents, Reb smiles and nods and engages to be helpful, because he knows I'll probably grow out of seeing things that way. But the point is, I love him, so I listen and I feel encouraged. It's not devotion to liberating all beings (well – actually, it is, but I can't see it!) any more than loving your parents is being a human rights barrister, but with their encouragement, I might follow their suggestions, which are definitely worth having. What I mean to say is, devotion is a start and with all it brings, maybe one day I will see that it's actually (in the words of Barry White) 'my first, my last, (and) my everything.'

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What is the meaning of Devotion?

By Francis Checkley Anryu Chiu

How amazing the richness of our language! Just a brief glance at my thesaurus offers these other words of vary similar meaning.

Loyalty, faithfulness, commitment, allegiance, constancy, adherence, dedication, love, admiration & fondness. The word "devoted" (adjective) comes from the same origin and similar words include reverent, holy, godly, saintly, unwavering, sincere, keen, enthusiastic, passionate, ardent, fervent and, here it comes again "wholehearted."

Of course all of the above are very admirable qualities of sentient beings and I think most people would agree that such qualities are of vast importance because they enrich and give meaning to our lives. If we are to have faith in the Buddhist belief that the three highest blessings are those of human life, hearing the Dharma and meeting a Teacher (which those of us reading this newsletter have) then devotion, commitment, dedication, call it what will, is essential.

It is so essential because when we realise or awaken to the preciousness of life we naturally want others to know this also. We have received a practice passed down faithfully through generations since the Buddha which we know inevitably leads to this realisation and so devotion and gratitude are indispensable.

Our teachers embody these virtues and their life's work is their proper transmission. In their humility they offer themselves both as teachers and students of the Way as they guide us to resume our natural order of mind free from greed, hate and delusion. In our practice, we bring devotion to the details of our every day life. Forms and ceremonies reflect our care and intimacy with each other and each thing we use is given honor and respect.

This devotion to form in the Zendo may see our Teachers making almost imperceptible "adjustments" to our posture. Initially, there maybe a sense of awkwardness with the newness of how we hold ourselves but most times it allows us to let go of long held tensions, breathe more easily and feel more settled. Over and over again we show devotion as we bow to the Triple Treasures of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

For herein we find the inspiration, path and actualisation of awakening.

I have heard that someone once asked Suzuki Roshi the meaning of the Heart Sutra? "It is about "Love" he is reported to have said!

So, every day throughout the world millions of us are devoted to chanting a mantra of love to each other, for each other!

We vow endlessly to come together, to leap free, and go beyond all self limiting ideas, views, convictions and prejudices. To this end we chant " Gate, Gate, Paragate, Parasamgate, Bodhi Svaha."

Deep Bows

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Zen Devotion?

By Angyu Devin Ashwood

Like many westerners, one of the attractions of Zen to me was its no-nonsense meditation focus. I had flirted with a number of other religious traditions for some years and I never could get the hang of all the cultural, spiritual drivel that seemed bound up with them. Worst of all seemed to be the thread running through all of them that I should bow down and devote myself to some higher power. Buddhism (and particularly Zen) seemed to offer something different, a philosophy and psychology rather than a superstitious religion.



Well, twelve years after meeting a teacher and a lot has changed. I didn't notice it at first. I was happy to sit in neat rows wearing muted colours, happy to treat my teachers more impenetrable talks on the compassion of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas as metaphor or skilful challenging of my attachment to views. I was even happy to chant the writings of ancient priests and bow when my teacher eventually invited us to do so, in fact, strangely, I embraced these things, but still I felt a little superior to my friends in devotional traditions who clearly just didn't get it – that there was nothing outside ourselves to devote to!

This arrogance began to wane a little when I realised that the chanting, bowing and ceremony I was involved in didn't look so different to theirs, but I consoled myself that I understood this was just a meditation in the Zen tradition, we don't attach any special significance to our ceremonies.

Of course feeling the separation my arrogance caused was a just part of the practice that helped to soften me. Years of sitting facing the wall – and myself, years of taking care of precepts that highlight my human frailty and years of devoting myself to my teacher who I dearly love helped me to see that the love I feel is not focused on a man and the commitment I have to practice is not for my benefit. As I realise the emptiness of myself and all beings and the emptiness of the practise, how can I do anything other than bow down and devote whatever I am to whatever it is?

This is not a novel discovery, recently I read (in the article linked to in the final words of this newsletter) that Rev. Keido Chisan Koho, Zenji, abbot of the Sojiji monastery likened Buddhist training to walking through a tunnel, not to get somewhere, but to be changed by the walking so it does not matter which end you go in or which end you come out. He gave a name to each end of the tunnel. One he called "Zen Buddhism"; the other he called "Pure Land Buddhism", the most devotional type of Buddhism I know of whose main practice is repeating the name of Amida Buddha to always keep her in mind. I think the point is that we can start by meditating and end up filled with devotion or we can start off filled with devotion and end up meditating.

I still don't know who or what I am devoted to, but I see the fruitlessness of a life lived for self gratification and feel a deep wish to make my life an offering to compassion, to hand over all that I am to Avalokiteshvara...

... Namo Guan Shi Yin Pusa!

They got me in the end.

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Retreat Report

Reflections on Zen at West Lexham - February 2012

By Wendy Klein (Gyoka zenhyo)

Eleven of us including teacher, Ingen Breen, gathered for 3 nights at the West Lexham Education Centre in rural Norfolk. The group comprised 4 beginners to Zen practice and 6 Dancing Mountains East folk who were the organisers and "practice committee".



The venue was lovely if not somewhat quirky.. two comfortable multi-double-bedroom "cottages" one of which included the "Village Hall" which, in no time was transformed into a functioning zendo complete with huge open wood fireplace that John maintained for us. And just to practice our ability to let go, we had to strike the Village Hall zendo on Friday evening and "bug out" to the sitting room in the other cottage for the remainder of the retreat – I think that Ingen was impressed with our ability to do this and suggested we could be "zen paratroopers", taking the zendo forms and services on the road!

We actually had a 12th participant – our beautiful surroundings. The immediacy of nature... the moon – especially in the mornings walking to the zendo - the birds, the longer pre-spring days and the warmer weather all supported the practice.

We were delighted to welcome Ingen and enjoyed his gently uncompromising depth of practice. His generosity showed from leading qi gong exercises at 6 am to helping out with veggie chopping. For those of us who have been to San Francisco, we were able to dust off our Zen Center forms with his guidance and some were able to try out zendo jobs they hadn't done before. He offered us chanting assistance and in-depth and welcome explanations of chants that we've done many times.

There was a real "beginners mind" feel to the retreat with lots of questions and opportunity for questions throughout the precious days together. The theme was "Living Zen" and Ingen invited us to bring the practice out of the confines of our attics, our sitting rooms, our minds and give it the space to breathe... to turn that dharma wheel. There was a commitment within the group to the schedule, to supporting each other and the forms. Ingen suggested in one of his morning talks that we might want to consider formalising our meals a little more – so organically, lunch evolved into just that – he came back to see the table set and the food ready in 3 containers ready for serving. Thinking back on it, because of his accessibility and easy goingness, there was more room to respond to such an idea and a real opportunity to be fully ourselves.

In just a few days, the daily anxieties, sadness, heaviness, etc., dropped away in the co-created environment of stillness and sangha. Sangha... How wonderful to REALLY experience many hands make MUCH less work and MUCH more joy – the meals so caringly organised by Carol were made manifest in such a seemingly effortless way.

We look forward to nurturing and fostering this new relationship with Ingen and were deeply grateful and dare I say excited to have a "brown robe" priest with us and potentially more available to us here in the UK. With deepest gratitude...

Wendy Klein (Gyoka zenhyo)

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Sangha Update

Springtime Unfolding in Hebden Bridge

By Rebecca Habergham

Hello everyone, wow how quickly these newsletters seem to spin round. So springtime does seem to be unfolding in magical and sometimes astoundingly unexpected ways.



1st April 2012 saw us welcome the sole use of a room for our own mini Zendo. It was great that Frances, Wendy, Chris, Kath, Louis and Beibei were there the day we got the keys. They could welcome the new arrival along with a bundle of lovely folk from our Sangha. A perfect welcome was had with ages ranging from 10~70 years, and cakes ranging from Guinness Cake (is that allowed in a Zen space?) to chocolate bunnies and flapjack.

Soft tears arose and I felt a strong need to give a very loud (whoops that's not very silent is it!) THANK YOU to all that has arisen in order to support this, and know that the practice you all share with us has gone a long way to making it possible. We came up with many ideas for how to use the space in the future including: Yorkshire tea ceremonies, stitching cushions, making benches, 24 hour tag team sitting, practise talks, using space for children and families.....and it felt very apt that it opened on 1st April as one thing we did want to develop was the fine art of taking ourselves less seriously and dancing with lightness. We are also considering names for the room, liking The Room of Refreshment so far as that is what it is already called, believe it or not.

More opportunities arising within this town has meant I have been given the opportunity to care for the hostel, that we ran residential retreats in, over the Summer. It is open as a Youth Hostel over the summer and I will welcome guests to stay in the 36 bed space. However alongside this we are hoping that Ingen Breen will be joining us for maybe a few months over the summer to stay in the hostel. These plans are still very much open and fluid and under discussion. If he does decide to definitely come we can use our new room we now have sole use of to run a Zen schedule over the Summer months. As the room is within the same building as the hostel it is easily accessible. Although we cannot do closed retreats during this time, as the hostel is open to other guests, we are hoping that people will use the reasonably priced facilities of the hostel to come and stay and also join in with the schedule we are developing. Hostel guests can also opt in and out if they so choose. Ingen would then be well placed to have discussions about developing connections with you in other parts of this gorgeous isle. I know there is already a 5 day retreat planned for August 2012.

It is all feeling very new and we will play with it for a few months over the Summer and see what grows from this time. Who knows?

Anyone interested? If so it would be really great to have you come stay with us, explore Hebden Bridge and also benefit from Ingen's presence. Do call or email if you want more details of how it is developing or check out the spaces we will be using on the internet:

www.hebdenbridgehostel.co.uk

My number: 07970 425932

hebdenbridgezendo@gmail.com

The hostel is situated in the Birchcliffe Centre. It is a large building which has many other small businesses there. It is currently being developed and may in the future have facilities to welcome teachers who attract larger numbers.

We thought it was important to share where we are up to now, even though it is not fixed, so you are aware of the possible developments and can pencil in some plans for yourself.

Thank you again

Sweet springtime unfolding indeed

Rebecca x



Chocolate Buddha from our first residential retreat.

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Event

A retreat with Shundo David Hayes - May 19-20 non residential

By Francis Checkley

Shundo David Hayes has kindly accepted to lead a retreat in Totnes.

Shundo is an ordained priest at San Francisco Zen Center, currently serving as ino, head of the meditation hall. He is very excited to have the opportunity to lead a retreat in his native land and to connect with the sangha in Totnes. During the retreat we will examine together some of the themes of Dogen's Tenzokyokun, [Instructions to the Cook](#). (starting at p33), and how words written for the monastic community in Japan almost 800 years ago are still relevant to us as we live our lives today.



Venue: The Oak room at the Natural Totnes health Centre

Dates: May 19-20 non residential, bring your own lunch or favorite teas. There are tea facilities, but no oven for warming up meals.

- Please bring your own cushion and a blanket if at all possible.

Time: suggested arrival 09:30 so that we can start at 10:00 to 18:00

Price: £15.00 per day or £25.00 for 2 days. (That is a concessionary rate) If you can spare more, please offer a higher amount to facilitate further events. Teacher dana (donations) are normal in addition to the retreat fee.

Capacity max 25 so please book early. email: mbcheckley@hotmail.com phone: 01803 866735

More about Shundo David Hayes:

Shundo David Hayes left England for San Francisco in 2000 and has spent almost all of the last twelve years living residentially at San Francisco Zen Center, including a total of four years at Tassajara. He was lay ordained in 2004, and ordained as a priest in 2009 by former Abbot Ryushin Paul Haller. He has held various staff positions at Zen Center, including work leader, tenzo (head of the kitchen) and for the past two years has been ino (head of the meditation hall) at City Center in San Francisco. He currently maintains the Ino's Blog (<http://theinosblog.blogspot.com/>), and apart from practice, loves to ride bikes and take photographs.

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Article

[Zen In a Napkin: How Oryoki Kicked My Ass](#) - This article was originally posted on Carmen's blog www.bicyclebuddha.org and subsequently in The Upaya newsletter of 28Dec 2011. It is republished here by kind permission of Carmen.

By Carmen Mills

Carmen has been a resident of Upaya since August 2011. The following article, about her experience during Upaya's Rohatsu sesshin, was originally posted on Carmen's blog, [Bicycle Buddha](#).



My first Zen sesshin introduced me to oryoki, the Japanese ritual of extreme table manners.

For the full week of sesshin we sit zazen for upwards of five hours a day, plus walking meditation and dharma talks. We eat all our meals in the zendo, oryoki style, seated on the floor on our round black cushions.

Each oryoki meal opens with a thundrous drumroll. Then the very comely head server enters to the beat of the drum, bearing an ornate tray for Manjusri Buddha which he receives with sword raised high....

She is followed by a procession of servers who bring in each dish, pots extended at eye level. The servers bow and drop to their knees in turn before each of the 70 cross-legged participants to ladle out the food. We receive the food into our oryoki picnic sets, which we carefully lay out and then repack into the exact approximation of a linen lotus blossom (well, sort of). The serving ritual climaxes with the presentation of the gomasio—ground sesame seeds with salt—the holy condiment of Zen.

There are a lot of rules to this game. Like, the wooden spoon can only be used in the first bowl, and the chopsticks are laid across the second bowl at a precise geometric angle. We communicate with the servers using hand signals (described by Keizan as “the oryoki hand jive”) to indicate enough, or just a bit more, please, sir, or as close to none as possible. Everything must be done silently, including chewing crunchy broccoli and stacking the rattling laquer bowls—which we may only handle with the thumb and two pure fingers. Each piece has its own special parameters. Dropping the chopsticks into the little cutlery bag instead of drawing the bag up around the sticks is considered deeply vulgar. It is like playing chess with dinner, while out of the corners of their eyes seventy people watch, while politely pretending not to watch. That’s another rule.

When everyone has been served, and after a great deal of bowing and chanting, we may raise our spoons and eat. And after we eat, we wash up. This is accomplished by the parade of servers entering with pots of steaming tea, with which we carefully clean our bowls and cutlery. Finally, to the chant of “the water with which I wash these bowls tastes of ambrosia, i offer it to the various spirits to satisfy their needs”—we have the option to drink the cloudy dishwater, saving back a sip for the servers who come around with basins to collect it for the spirits. The final challenge is to rise on cue with the re-packed oryoki kit, hoping that both legs still have enough circulation to keep from buckling for the final bow.

At first I thought the whole thing was insane. I was perpetually out of sync, there were dribbles all over my serving cloth, and my lotus flower was a mess. Doshin took me aside for some oryoki coaching. She said, just focus on doing one thing at a time. One. Thing. At. A. Time. That helped a lot, but I still feared I might just lose it and fling the bowls across the zendo like frisbees.

And then gradually it started to sink in.

Oryoki translates as “the least possible equipment.” That part I could appreciate from the beginning, having travelled and lived by bicycle. I know how to condense a full kitchen down to

just one small pot, a swiss army knife and a spork. How to make a filling and delicious meal in ten minutes with just a pack of noodles and a bottle of water, and then for the sheer satisfaction, finish the meal by washing my socks in the last of the rinse water. Efficient, minimal and self-contained: that part I get. But the lotus blossom lost me.

Through meal after meal, I began to get oryoki as Zen in a nutshell. Or more like, Zen in a napkin. Oryoki demands that we consider the food and the act of eating, not in isolation, but in complex interrelationship with everything else. It isn't just the spoonful of nutty brown rice; it is the "72 labors" that brought us this food—the farmer, the trucker, the cook, the server, and so many more who go unseen and unthanked. Says the chant, "we should know how it comes to us." We consider the way the food goes into the bowl, and its colour and taste and texture. We consider the craftsmen who made the shiny bowls to fit together so neatly. The bowls must honor the linen cloth on which they sit. The cloth respects the glossy black maple floor, and the people who so lovingly laid and polished the floorboards. We eat to honor them all. And we also consider the experience of the neighbour on the next cushion, that her elbow not be jostled, and that she be able to savour her soup without hearing me slurping at mine. Everything interdepends, and nothing stands alone.

We sit on the zendo floor knee to knee, performing this most intimate and basic biological function. We are simply ingesting food in order to stay alive. But we are special animals, and we can practice raising a lowly act to its highest level of human consciousness. I think of teenage boys at McDonalds, wolfing back fistfuls of factory meat with barely a thought beyond ordering the meal, and barely a sensation past the moment of taste between lips and gut before it is on to the next big bite. Oryoki contradicts that mindless consumption, with the food considered in a continuum from the planting of the rice to the honoring of the spirits. Too often the act of eating is all about ME, all about my immediate need to consume and get full. Oryoki says, I am part of this process, but it's not all about me. It is also and equally about the rice and the server and my neighbour and the spoon and the floor. I am just one player in this dance, no part exists alone. We need to consider and care for every part.

Another useful aspect of oryoki is that it is good practice with preference and aversion. I myself hate hot mush of any kind. Not while I have teeth, I say. But one of the rules is that you are not allowed to refuse anything, and you have to eat everything you are served. Every day breakfast would feature some kind of gruel which, by the time everyone had been served, would have cooled to a tepid grey blob. I would gesture to the server with finger and thumb pressed so tightly together my fingertip turned white, then wince as a big fat dollop landed in my bowl. No matter how much gomasio I dumped onto it, it still tasted like paste, and I had to eat it—and to acknowledge that people around the world would die for this food, and that my neighbours were chowing it down with evident enjoyment, so its grossness could only be in my head. And then, there were those delicious roasted beets and my desire to have more of them. But nobody gets seconds in this game, so: enjoy, be satisfied, and let go.

Finally as Roshi says, there is the poetry and grace of the ritual itself. The choreography of the servers and the served, this performance we create for each others' enjoyment. How everyone lifts their spoon together, how eventually the fast eaters slow down and the slow eaters speed up, until we are all as synchronized as a school of fish. It is a beautiful thing, this oryoki deal. And by the end of it, my dishwater tasted like—dishwater. One thing at a time.

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Sangha Update

Totnes

By Francis Checkley Anryu Chiu

As days lengthen and the long months of winter darkness fade into memory, I am moved when thinking of the constancy and commitment of those who make the long and sometimes arduous trek from the comfort of their homes to come and sit in silence with us. We remain a group of at most 10 people, some of whom because of age, family obligations, work or ill health cannot be present every week but remain dedicated to their practice.

Gradually more of us are being trained to assume the various roles needed to conduct ceremonies. After months or sometimes years of sitting together, one by one people have come forward and taken the place of someone who for some reason could not attend. I am amazed and openly confess my admiration for one person's devotion to practice that sees him cycle perhaps 10miles round journey to

be with us. Our once monthly group sharing seems to have evolved. We still bring various foods to share and listen to each others news offerings but more recently we now have a topic of discussion which is lead by one of us. So far we have looked at the first 2 of the 6 Paramitas namely Generosity and Patience.

Recently, Lucy Ellis who had been at the Fall Practice Period at Green Gulch, came to visit for 6 days and assumed the "Kokyo" role for our Tuesday night meditation. She also helped considerably in helping us lay a new flooring in our kitchen. Many thanks Lucy! David Hayes, currently Ino (Head of Zendo) at SFZC and a long time priest while on his annual visit to the UK, has kindly agreed to come up from Cornwall where his parents reside, to lead a weekend retreat (non residential) on the 19-20th of May at the Totnes Natural Health Center between 10:00 & 18:00 both days. David intends to talk about Dogens "Tenzokyokun - Instructions to the Head cook" and hopefully will be available for individual practice discussions for those interested. Once again, my wholehearted thanks to everyone who continues to support and contribute in whatever way to Dancing Mountains Zen Sangha.

Deep bows

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Poetry

The Peaches are Screaming

By Guido Montgomery

The peach trees are screaming, "See, here she comes!"
Backed up by a choir of voluptuous plums.
Flaunting their fullness, they lustily sing,
"Get out your gladrags, let's party, it's Spring!"



The bees growl like diesels, immersed in soft toil,
Sucking at nectar as if drilling for oil.
They pocket the pollen, thus adorning their flanks.
Promiscuous pollination provides ample thanks.

The green woodpecker deftly drums his domain
Then yaffles like crazy with glorious disdain.
At the wind's wild insistence to seize the day,
Swifts whistle with glee as they slice the airy way.

Nature is quick with the vital vibration
Of Earth's upright axis of daily rotation
At ninety degrees to its orbital plane.
Equinoctial astronomy's not so hard to explain.

But the feelings which flow, the intentions we bring
Are the deep inexpressible mystery of Spring.
As the sweet leaves of grass sprout forth from the earth,
In our suffering hearts we experience rebirth.

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Book Review

To A Mountain In Tibet - By Colin Thubron

By Michael Kogan Muju

Published by Chatto & Windus

ISBN 978-0-701-18379-0

Colin Thubron, one of a dwindling band of great travel writers, has written a number of discerning and poetic books on the Middle East, Asia, Siberia and the Silk Road. In this book he is travelling to Mount Kailas one of the world's most sacred places. This mountain since time immemorial has been a place of pilgrimage for the ancient B'on religion that was here long before the Hindus and Buddhists recognised its symbolic power. Isolated in the North West Himalaya on the arid Tibetan plateau it is a peak wreathed in legends, racked by temperamental weather systems and ravaged by storms.

He is asked by Iswor one of his two porters

'Why are you doing this, travelling alone?'

Thubron cannot answer but writes;

"I am doing this on account of the dead."

"Sometimes journeys begin long before their first step is taken. Mine, without knowing, starts not long ago, in a hospital ward, as the last of my family dies. There is nothing strange in this, the state of being alone. I need to leave a sign of their passage.....So you choose somewhere meaningful on the earth's surface, as if planning a secular pilgrimage. Yet the meaning is not your own. You go on a journey walking to a place beyond your own history, to the sound of the river flowing the other way. In the end you come to rest at a mountain that is holy to others.

The reason for this is beyond articulation. A journey is not a cure. It brings an illusion only, of change, and at best becomes a spartan comfort. To ask of a journey Why? is to hear only my own silence."

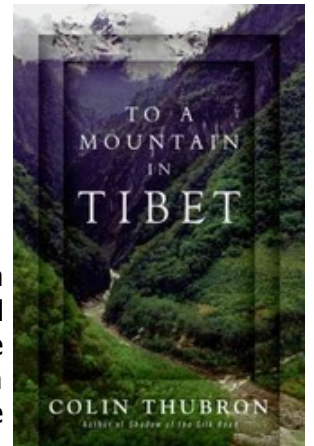
The small party of travellers pass through the remote poverty stricken villages of North West Nepal towards the Tibetan plateau. Dreams of the writer's dead father are prompted by the thinning air and the snapping of prayer flags on the high passes as they send their prayers scything away on the freezing wind 'Om mani padme om.'

The Englishman is touched by the deep devotion of Iswor who whenever they reach a pass with its prayer flags and cairns of stones circles them clockwise encouraging his companion to follow him. These are small rituals to appease the gods of the place, a way of remaining in harmony with the unpredictable earth, water and sky. Thubron is reflective and observant quietly empathising with travellers villagers and monks he meets along the way. Of one young monk he has been conversing with he writes:

'He is less than half my age, yet his surety is grand and a little mysterious. But I belong helplessly to another culture. He is focussed on spiritual continuance, while I am overcome by individual death. What is it, I ask, that survives to be reincarnated?'

Crossing the border into Tibet they are faced by the oppression of China's intrusion into the ancient landscape. There are numerous baggage searches, suspicious military everywhere. Above them loom the ruins of the once great monastery of Shepeling destroyed by Chinese artillery in 1967 its vast, priceless library of texts cast to the winds and fire.

Ascending to 16,000 feet at last they catch sight of the south face of Mount Kailas as it shines out across the lakes and the arid deserted plateau. Lake Manasarovar is the highest freshwater lake of its size on earth and Hindus believe it was created by the mind of god and is the flower of first consciousness, here the serpent king taught enlightenment to his water spirits and the Buddha's mother bathed before receiving him into her womb. It is also related that Śākyamuni Buddha and 500 of his disciples flew in on their way to visit Kailas! The water, the air, the very



rocks themselves seem impregnated with the supernatural, the mysterious, the ethereal. For centuries hermits have meditated here in caves whilst the broken monasteries sheltered those few monks who could endure the thin air, the lunar landscape, the freezing winds and storms.

The physical rigours of the pilgrimage and this strange landscape disorient Thubron, he is constantly assailed by the death of his mother and distant memories of his father and a sister who died tragically young in the Alps. As they draw closer to Kailas the mountain's strange presence intensifies and is surreally contrasted to the Chinese bureaucracy as it demands permits and visas. The party is now joined by crowds of pilgrims all intent on making the 'kora,' the traditional clockwise circambulation of the mountain. Those few travellers from the ancient Bon religion that was old when Buddhism came to this part of the world determinedly go anticlockwise against the flow. 'After all,' they say before Buddhism came this was 'our' mountain! The 'new' faith as it came to this region absorbed many of the Bon rites, rituals, spirits and gods. Even today there is little hint of western thought or rationale here. The kora reaches its zenith at 18,600 ft. where even the Tibetan pilgrims suffer in the thin freezing air and the bitter mountain winds. As he had promised Thubron lights an incense stick for a Tibetan friend in Kathmandu and then descends to the valley soft in the evening sun. As he walks he feels the cool winds off the mountain at his back and imagines he hears the eternal prayer 'om mani padme om,' 'praise to the jewel in the lotus.' singing in the breeze.

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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

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Poetry

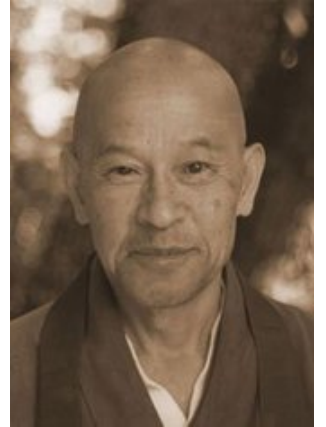
The Man from Komazawa - (Written ion the anniversary of Suzuki Roshi's death)

By Sam Hill

Everything is always here and everything
contains an imperturbable composure

like marble breasts containing marble milk,
ofr so the man from Komazawa told me.

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Auditorium

By Sam Hill

Everybody else has gone home
They lock the doors. All the lights go out.

It's very warm and dusty
This is it then.

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Poetry

My Inspiration

By Sam Hill

You think it comes from you
but it doesn't

it comes from heaven
which explains everything.

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Jazz for Toddlers

By Sam Hill

My heart goes out to licorice with 2 c's
to Jazz For Toddlers, jumbo sausages
and poodles with unnaturally black nails

but most of all my heart goes out to you
shrieking at me till you're so exhausted
you sort of shrivel up like a sea-cabbage

that might as well be white it's so blue,
the white of someone sitting in the snow
who can't remember how to get back up again

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Final Words

Tunnel vision: the surprise of devotion in Zen - An article from Ascent magazine 2007

By Daizui MacPhillamy

Devotional Zen? It would hardly seem so. Students of Zen Buddhism are generally found sitting motionless on little black cushions with their eyes lowered, in ever-so-straight rows. Or silently chopping vegetables in the kitchen with slightly intense expressions on their faces... [Read more on the Ascent website](#)

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