



MOUNTAIN SILENCE

NEWSLETTER OF THE DANCING MOUNTAINS ZEN SANGHA

Issue 19 ; Autumn 2012

Form & Ritual in Zen

Events

Evening Talk in Hebden Bridge

with Rev Catherine
Gammon

9th November 2012:

19:11 - 00:11

Dharma offering and
discussion: bodhisattva
practice and social
engagement. Venue is
yet to be decided.

07970425932

rebeccahabs@googlemail.com



Zen Ritual

Day retreat in Hebden Bridge

with Rev Catherine
Gammon

10th November 2012:

09:11 - 17:11

Day Sitting with Rev
Catherine Gammon

Cost: TBC

07970425932

rebeccahabs@googlemail.com

Writing as a Wisdom Project, Hebden

Bridge

with Rev Catherine
Gammon

11th November 2012:

09:11 - 17:11

Writing as a Wisdom
Project - Hebden Bridge

Cost: TBC

07970425932

rebeccahabs@googlemail.com

Writing As A Wisdom Project, Glastonbury

with Catherine Gammon

Editorial

By **Angyu Devin Ashwood**

This issue of Mountain Silence makes offerings on form and ritual in Zen. In the service of this, we have a talk by **Roshi Reb Anderson**, kindly transcribed by Frances highlighting the Bodhisattva initiation ceremony as a wonderful example of the essential quality of form to practice. **Gill Jackman** offers a view of form that liberates us from fundamentalism and **Hilary** reports from the wonderful retreat at Unstone Grange.

We have some unique events in the calendar now, with Catherine visiting and leading a number of retreats and workshops up and down the country, culminating in a long Rohatsu retreat lead by Ingen Breen from the 30th November to the 8th December (only one or two places left!) and some sewing support in Little Budworth!

We'd like to invite interest from people willing to transcribe audio talks for publication in this newsletter (and maybe even a book one day?). This is a great practice that really helps you to

In this issue...

Bodhisattva Initiation

By **Reb Anderson Roshi**

Form and Ritual in Zen

By **Gill Jackman**

Unstone Grange retreat

By **Hilary Heriz-Smith**



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

with SOLO ZEN PRIEST &
Writer Catherine
Gammon

17th November 2012:

09:11 - 17:11

Bringing self-study to
our practice of
imaginative

Cost: £40

07817604156 melsmere@hotmail.com

Day Retreat, Glastonbury

with Catherine Gammon

18th November 2012:

09:11 - 17:11

Meditation day with Zen
Priest Catherine

Gammon

Cost: £45

07875155464

devin@dancingmountains.org.uk

Writing as a Wisdom Project, Norfolk

with Rev Catherine
Gammon

23rd November 2012 to

25th November 2012

A weekend workshop
retreat led by Catherine

Gammon

Cost: £125-£150

01366502106

carolhunter135@hotmail.com

Rohatsu Sesshin at Unstone Grange

with Ingen Breen,
assisted by Catherine
Gammon

30th November 2012 to

8th December 2012

Join us for seven days
to gather the mind in
zazen

Cost: £400 inclusive of
payment for teachers

07786 369682

mountaindancing1@yahoo.co.uk

Zen Sewing

with Rev Catherine
Gammon

9th December 2012 to

10th December 2012

Sewing weekend 9-10
December in Chester

Cost: by donation

07786369682

mountaindancing1@yahoo.co.uk

become intimate with the teaching. [Email us](#) if
this is of interest to you.

Previous issues are available [here](#)

in your area, and the [Diary](#)
for their regular meeting
dates and times.

Next Issue

The autumn edition will
have a theme around
mindful communication. We
welcome your articles,
poetry, pictures, letters,
retreat reflections and book
reviews! Publication date:
21st December, deadline for
submission of material 1st
December.

Submissions to the
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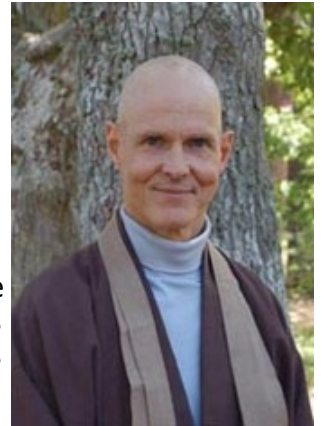
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Dharma Talk

Bodhisattva Initiation - Green Gulch Farm November 2007. Transcribed by Frances Collins, Edited by Devin Ashwood

By Reb Anderson Roshi



This afternoon we are planning to have a ceremony. It's an initiation ceremony for entering into the path of a Bodhisattva. A bodhisattva is a generous & wholehearted way of being. It's a wholehearted way of being. It's so generous that it is also fearless and it wants to give completely in all directions to everyone. It's happy to be that way. It's not afraid of what would happen to be that generous. Of course it is totally about peace because it is spreading generosity, fearlessness and non-violence. Bodhisattva literally means awakening or enlightened being. This way of generosity, fearlessness, peace and non-violence is a way of awakening.

Today 9 people for the first time will enter into a formal ceremony to receive Bodhisattva precepts and to commit their life to the practice of Bodhisattva vows or precepts. They will be asked if they would like to receive these vows and they will probably say, yes I do. After they receive them we will ask them from now on and even after realizing the body of the Buddha will you promise to practice these precepts of compassion? They will probably say yes I will. We will do that 3 times. So they really promise. It doesn't mean they will, because they are human beings like all of us. It means they commit...I commit to being a good friend, I don't know if I will be but I want to be. I promise to be and if I don't, I definitely will be sorry. I commit to being 100% wholeheartedly generous and if I don't, I'll be sorry. This kind of commitment will probably happen this afternoon.

Before I go further I just want to say that it is my happy view that all of you are generous beings. But I know that we don't fully realise that sometimes. That's why we have to practice these vows so that we realise that we are generous and we realise that other people are generous too. It is my happy view that we are already intimate with each other. This is a happy view of mine which I am not attached to but which I express again and again. But if we don't practice intimacy we sometimes don't realise it.

Bodhisattvas are those who promise and who realise intimacy with all beings, even beings who they completely disagree with. Bodhisattvas are nourished by their vows. They are lifted up and carried by their vows. They progress by means of their vows. They make vows. They live vows.... great vows, auspicious vows, sublime vows....extensive, vast, unlimited vows. This is how they live....by these vows. In the ceremony today such vows will be offered, received and committed to out of love for all beings....out of love for peace and to become committed to out of love for, and to work wholeheartedly for, peace for all beings.

We hope that these forms, these ceremonies, these precepts help us. We try to do these ceremonies well. We try to give ourselves wholeheartedly, completely present, concentrated and tender. We begin the ceremony by making offerings to the enlightened beings, to the enlightening beings. We make offerings to the way of being generous and intimate with all beings. We make offerings and we pay homage to this way of being. We invoke the presence and request this kind of being to enter this room and to be with us. We say please come great compassion, great generosity, great fearlessness, and great non-violence. Please come and be with us and help us to make this commitment. We call their famous names. We call the various names of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of wisdom and compassion; and the Bodhisattvas of vows. We invite them to come and then we practice repentance.

We cut a little hair as a symbol of cutting worldly affairs. But '*worldly affairs*' brings up thinking like - "wait a minute I have to go shopping for my children this afternoon". '*Worldly affairs*' means trying to

get something out of this life. At the beginning of the ceremony we renounce the way of trying to *get*...we renounce, we give away. We make our deeply ingrained habit of trying to get something moment after momentwhat can I get for me and my friends...what can I get, what can I gain, how can I avoid losing? What can I lose that I would like to get rid of? This attitude is the worldly affair that we renounce but not in a mean way. We make it a gift. We say, oh worldly affairs here, I give it to the Buddhas. Would you please take this hair for me and take care of my worldly affairs? Here they're yours! You know what to do with them! They do know what to do with them. They receive them as gifts and they graciously thank us for handing over our distractions from giving, from intimacy. I renounce my veering away from being close friends with all beings....I have a tendency to not be close friends with all beings. It's just a tendency but it's strong. I give it away and make it a gift to the Buddhas. I say *Here Buddhas* and the Buddhas say thank you. I renounce distractions. I renounce deviating from the path of compassion. I give it away. I make everything a gift and I give away the tendency to be distracted from giving and to slip into getting for 'me' and 'mine'. Then we confess that we have a long history of doing things to get things. Then I give away the tendency to be distracted from giving and to slip into getting for 'me' and 'mine'. Then we confess that we have a long history of doing things to get things and we confess it... and we confess it ...and we confess it....three times...that stands for quite a few. We recognise that this tendency to be acquiring stuff comes from greed, hate and delusion. It comes from ignorance. We wish to give up this tendency to be ignorant, admit that we have been involved in it for a long time and get ready for the path of wisdom. Once we have wisdom it will be easy to see that there is giving all the time. So now when we give it away we renounce it. We renounce taking and confess that we have been thinking about taking for a long time.

Then we receive a water initiation. We are sprinkled by the water of wisdom of the Buddhas. Then we are ready to receive the precepts and commit to the precepts. Then these 9 people will come forward, offer incense and bow as a formal way of saying please give me the bodhisattva precepts. Please make a gift of the bodhisattva precepts from the Buddhas down through the centuries and I will commit to them. Then they are ready.

In this tradition there are 16 bodhisattva precepts that you will receive today. The first 3 are actually going for refuge or you could say going back. Refuge means to fly back etymologically. In Sanskrit and Pali it says go back and rely on, return and rely on, go back to Buddha, go back to enlightenment, go back to the teaching of enlightenment and go back to the community of beings committed to the path of the bodhisattva. There's an English expression to take refuge in a church or in a group. I have a problem with the words take refuge when the thing we are taking refuge in is to give. We are taking refuge in the generous ones and the teachings of generosity. So it's a bit funny to take it. I don't know if I will be forced to say it differently today. But this morning I would say that the first 3 precepts are going for refuge in Buddha, going for refuge in dharma, going for refuge in sangha....returning to Buddha, returning to the truth, returning to the great community. We say that these are the first 3 refuge vows but they're actually refuge vows of all disciples of Buddhas. All Buddha's disciples are people who go to Buddhas to receive the teaching to practice the Buddha way. So the bodhisattvas and other disciples, who may not wish to be bodhisattvas but wish to study in a different way, also do the same first 3 precepts, refuge in Buddha, dharma and Sangha.

The next 3 are the vow to practice the forms and ceremonies which are conducive to enlightenment, for example the ceremony that you're in the middle of right now. You come here; you sit in your place and feel some commitment to it. You're sitting upright; you're paying attention; we have a beginning and an end. It's a form and it's a ceremony. This is a Sunday morning ceremony in the valley of the jolly green dragon. So there's a commitment to practice those forms which help people be enlightened. We need some forms just like we need some forms to go shopping. We need a door to find how to get in to the grocery store. There's forms in the world and there's forms in the bodhisattva way. We vow to practice these forms for the welfare of all beings.

The next precept is the precept of vowing to practice and sustain all wholesome activities and the next one is the vow to sustain and support all beings - to be intimate and generous with all beings. Those are called the 3 pure precepts. So that's 6. Then the next 10 are the 10 major precepts and they're phrased negatively. They can be phrased positively but the negative brings out something that the positive doesn't. The teaching of not killing; the teaching of not taking what is not given; the teaching of not misusing sexuality; the teaching of not lying; the teaching of not intoxicating others or self; the teaching and the practice of not slandering anything; the teaching of not putting yourself up at the expense of others; the teaching and the practice of not being possessive; the teaching of not holding

on to ill will....actually having no ill will; the practice of not speaking in a disparaging way about Buddha, dharma or Sangha. These are the 16 bodhisattva precepts of this tradition.

Before this tradition started in Japan the bodhisattva precepts that were more commonly given and received were the last 10 of this group plus 48 minor precepts totalling 58. The ancestor of this temple named Eihei Dogen made this new form of taking the 10 major, the 3 pure precepts and the 3 refuge vows making 16. So that's what we practice here. We know about the other 48 and we make some effort to study them and understand them but they're not formally part of the ceremony. So we can, and some of us have, committed to and made vows and promises about these precepts. Although people don't usually say this you could say these are precepts of fearlessness; these are precepts of non-violence. They are precepts of compassion; that is commonly said. They are precepts of intimacy. They are instructions for all those things. They are instructions for compassion, for non-violence, for fearlessness and for intimacy.

The first precept, going back to Buddha, is going back to the one who realizes and demonstrates intimacy with all of us. The Buddha is the intimacy of all of us. That *is* the Buddha. Going back to Buddha means you are going back to the intimacy of all of us. Buddha is the non-violence of all of us. To go for refuge in Buddha means you go back to the non-violence among us. You return to the non-violence here right now. Buddha is the fearlessness among us. There's fear among us too; there's violence among us; there's a lack of intimacy among us. But also among us is non-violence, intimacy and fearlessness. The Bodhisattvas have vowed to return to this compassion that lives among us all the time. Fearlessness does not mean there's no fear. In this room there may be some fear. There probably is some fear here; various types of fear could be in this room. Fearlessness is here too; fearlessness *lives with* fear. Fearlessness is willing to be generous, open and not try to get rid of any fear in this room. Fearlessness is to be intimate with fear. Being intimate with fear is fearlessness. Buddha is intimate with all frightened beings. Buddha is also intimate with all non-frightened beings. Buddha is intimate with all fearless beings *and* all frightened beings.

I wish to, and I promise to, be mindful of returning to such fearlessness, such intimacy, such graciousness. In intimacy, fearlessness and generosity there is no ill will. However the graciousness can relate to ill will graciously. The graciousness doesn't like ill will and doesn't dislike ill will. It graciously welcomes it. It's gracious with all the varieties of ill will that might come. Being gracious and welcoming all kinds of ill will is giving. It is also welcoming enlightenment - the non-welcoming of ill will closes the door on the Buddha's wisdom. Graciousness with ill will and graciousness with fear opens the door to Buddha's wisdom. Bodhisattvas vow to welcome and to be open to all beings. If ill will arises in the bodhisattva towards anyone the bodhisattva is gracious with their own heart; if fear arises in the bodhisattvas' heart they are gracious with the fear in their own heart and their own mind just as they are gracious with the ill will in other peoples' minds and hearts.

9 is an auspicious number in some peoples' view. It's like....almost 10. So it's like really full but not quite perfect and almost better than 10. I was kind of hoping for 11 because today is 11/11. But 9 is a nice number...Today, November 11th, is veterans' day traditionally, a day to honour people who loved this beautiful country, and loved the people who live here, and thought it would be helpful if they went to war. Maybe some of these people went to war as an act of non-violence and generosity. I don't know but it's possible that there were bodhisattvas among the veterans who died. There may be bodhisattvas among the armed forces in the U.S. and there may be bodhisattvas among the armed forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. There may be bodhisattvas among the Taliban. I am really sincere when I say that there may be bodhisattvas in the armed forces who are totally committed to non-violence and who will not cause harm. They are totally committed to that and they are in that situation to help others learn this path. There may be such bodhisattvas. Of course we have no problem honouring them if they are veterans, if they died in the past. But we honour even those who had other motivations for entering the military. The bodhisattva path is to honour all beings as our children, as our brothers and sisters.....because they are. They honour beings so wholeheartedly that they dare to open their hearts to nonviolence; they dare to live so generously that there's no fear. So, again, it's auspicious that it's a beautiful day, that you all came here, that we have 9 people...and that it is Veterans Day.

It's a great day for making these great vows, to deeply consider in our hearts how we are. Is there fearlessness here? Is there generosity here? Is there intimacy with all beings here? If I feel that it isn't here do I wish to learn to be intimate with all beings, to find compassion with all beings, to find fearlessness and generosity with all beings? It's a good day to look. It's a good moment to look.

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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

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Article

Form and Ritual in Zen - (The opposite of swings and roundabouts)

By Gill Jackman

I find it very interesting that many people are put off by the rituals of Zen. Apart, of course, from the bowing and the prostrations, there is the liturgy: a variety of repetitive chants which are reproduced even with a specific intonation that seems designed to drain the activity of all meaning.

To me, this is the point, and one to be welcomed. Drawn to Zen, initially by the lack of words inherent in 'just sitting', I found this practice to be a valuable counterpoint to its opposite: evangelism. To quote the great poet, Louis MacNeice, 'Let not the man who is beast or who thinks he is God, come near me.' Words terrify me and paradoxically, my work as a writer is about perfecting how to protect myself from people who think they know something and how to inhabit the world that means something to me, in my own, rather than borrowed, words.

Form is emptiness, emptiness is form. Odd as it sounds, this has always meant something of great value to me. I use the analogy of the counselling room to try and explain. As a counsellor, I am more committed to form: the time, the place, the clear beginning and end, than I am the muddle of content that is to be sorted through. If the form is present, (including the form of holding a particular attitude, empathy, encouragement) the content will take care of itself. Without the form, we will not have the empty space needed to examine and sort through the content and the content will run away with itself. For me, rituals and liturgy perform the same function, becoming so familiar, whether C of E or the Zendo morning service, that we are released from being bound up in thinking about them yet simultaneously, we are held in a form where, perhaps, for a moment we can just 'be'. If, instead of this, we were having breakfast or chatting over coffee, we would be too wrapped up in our immediate and unpredictable surroundings to let go of them.

So, for me, Zen form and ritual is the opposite of received wisdom. It mitigates against our becoming wrapped up in dogma and prevents fanatics from grabbing hold of their constructed world and stuffing it down my throat. That my own emptiness is frequently filled with the garbage in my own head is another matter altogether. That is the point and with enough 'sitting' (half an hour, no talking, chin up) my experience is that the Bodhisattva of compassion arises and reminds me, in the nicest possible way, that it's all bullshit.

(Written in a hurry, in humility, Gill.)

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Article

Unstone Grange retreat - report from 3rd-7th August

By Hilary Heriz-Smith

The Unstone Grange retreat held from 3rd-7th August this summer felt like a very special event, like the moment a fledgling succeeds in taking flight for the first time. Dancing Mountains Sangha felt to me like it was spreading its wings, eager to take form, emerging for at least the days we spent together on the retreat in a variety of wonderful ways. And the forms practised on the retreat were a very unique blend of high ritual with bowing, prostrations, and chanting and incense on the one hand (creating a strong container for intimacy) and, on the other hand, talking in between zazen periods in the morning and evening. We celebrated tea break in the morning with "dharma tea" - an opportunity to ask questions, discuss issues and concerns in a less formal setting than the zendo, and on one occasion Devin invited Dancing Mountain members to report back on what was happening in sanghas in different parts of the country. There was a sense of celebrating unity and diversity - the motto of Unstone Grange. I felt that it was a strong demonstration of dependent co-arising, with each person playing a unique and vital role. Although I was a little surprised to find that we would not be in silence throughout the retreat, I soon felt that it was a good practice, with everyone given the opportunity to get to know one another and feel part of it all. Having a social opportunity also felt that the division between the retreat and "real life" became less extreme and I was given an inkling of how the one might become interwoven with the other. The beginners were incredibly well supported by those who knew the forms and chants and those who had had their rakasu for a while were equally appreciative of the demonstration of beginner's mind of those on their first retreat. In evening dharma talks, Ingen shared some stimulating thoughts about his own journey to becoming a Zen priest and some "enlightenment poetry" from Leonard Cohen as well as meditations on where yesterday went. After the retreat Chris Hannah (Myo Ji) had this to say: "a wondrous retreat endlessly unfolding in the moments of today, yesterday is truly in-between today, with great gratitude to all". I think we all felt a huge sense of appreciation for what had been achieved. Perhaps the kitchen managers (Wendy, Bev and Frances) carried the major brunt of responsibility in planning, preparing and cooking wonderful food for everyone, but Ingen proved to be a masterful choreographer of our movements or "crowd control" as he put it. I appreciated his quiet



and attuned style of leadership and felt warmed by his thoughts and attentiveness. On the last night there was a bonfire. Someone blew bubbles. Karen brought her teddy. It was not sacrificed on the bonfire. It was fun.

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