



MOUNTAIN SILENCE

NEWSLETTER OF THE DANCING MOUNTAINS ZEN SANGHA

Issue 20 ; Winter 2012/13

Mindful Communication

Events

Residential Retreat,
with Ingen Breen
19th February 2013 to
24th February 2013
5 day residential retreat
for experienced people
Cost: £200
+44 7970 425 932

Awakening to our
True Body
with Tenshin Reb
Anderson
12th July 2013 to 19th
July 2013
Tenshin Reb Anderson
Retreat in Germany
Cost: 555 € — 615 €
rebsretreat@gmail.com

UK visit of Tenshin
Reb Anderson
with Tenshin Reb
Anderson
21st July 2013 to 28th
July 2013
7 day sesshin
Cost: TBA

October Zen in the
Sun
with Ingen Breen
6th October 2013 to 13th
October 2013
A Retreat with Ingen
Breen in Greece.
There will options of
shared and single
rooms. Payment can be
in installments for this
event. Still find it hard



'No Words' By David Greenaway

Editorial

By Michael Elsmere KoGan MuJu

Mindful Communication

'Mindfulnessmindfulness must be dynamic and confrontative..... it should leap forward onto the object, covering it completely, penetrating in to it, not missing any part of it.'

From 'In This Very Life' By Sayadaw U Pandita

"Strive students to concentrate on one thing alone."

Shobogenzo Zuimonki by Dogen

'it is not the technologies themselves that I'm criticising, but how they are used and the extent to which they are used. '

Baroness Susan Greenfield New Scientist 3 August 2011

This twentieth edition of Mountain Silence focuses on 'Mindful Communication,' an apt theme perhaps when considering that our sangha that is spread out and

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'Meeting the Shadow
The Hidden Power of
the Dark Side of
Human Nature',
By Francis Checkley AnRyu

event. Still finalising details, but do contact for information.

Cost: TBA

07970425932

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dispersed across the U.K. and therefore dependent to a marked extent on effective communication. The last few years have seen the exponential rise of various digital forms of communication from e-mail to Twitter to Facebook as forms of contact that are instantaneous, that we can dash off as we walk, play, shop or even in some instances drive! Recently in Stockholm I was struck by the number of people who seemingly unaware of their surroundings and others around them walked head down immersed in their digital worlds. Because such sights are becoming common on our streets, in our homes, schools and workplaces concerns are being expressed about the way that such devices seem to be taking over our lives and the question is being asked is this really communication? Are Facebook 'friends,' really friends, can Twitter offer more than the most superficial form of connection? Susan Greenfield in the quote at the head of the editorial questions our use of the various technologies at our disposal. Recently I was discussing with a friend the way that we use e-mails and she offered what I thought was wise advice and made the very point that Greenfield is making, that the fault is not in the technology but in ourselves! My friend said that several weeks before our conversation she had to e-mail a relative regarding a very delicate family matter. As the person was in Spain and needed to be contacted urgently and the subject was a legal and needed to be in written form the only method at her disposal was the use of e-mail. Despite the urgency she thought about it for some hours well aware that the slightest misunderstanding of the complex situation could cause much strife and distress. She decided to approach the e-mail as if she were writing an 'old fashioned,' letter to a dear, much loved friend, she made several drafts leaving a couple of hours between each.

'I refused to hurry myself despite the pressing urgency of the situation. I tried to imagine myself in his shoes as he received it, at best sitting on his patio in the Spanish sun, a glass of wine at hand, at worst in the midst of a fraught business schedule. I hoped that he would read the e-mail carefully and respectfully although our preceding correspondence on the matters involved had been marked by some distrust and anger.'

In musing on my friend's comments I realised that she had intuitively got to the heart of the problems that surround our digitised communications. If we approach each mail we send forth with care, respect and imagination, being mindful in the energetic manner suggested by Sayadaw U Pandita and with the deep single mindedness of Dogen then most of our problems surrounding e-mails and other modern forms would disappear. This perhaps may mean for us less e-mails Twitter, Facebook etc. but surely this approach will yield untold rewards in the form of real understanding, perhaps even approaching the depths we achieve when we simply sit in silence and stillness together, an ancient method of communication and meeting which has not yet been surpassed!

In this edition of Mountain Silence we have reflections on

By Francis Checkley AnRyu
ChiU

Pure Heart
Enlightened Mind

By Michael Elsmere KoGan
MuJu

The Impermanence of
water!

By Sue Blackmore

Totnes Sangha

By Francis Checkley AnRyu
ChiU

Hebden Bridge

By Rebecca Habberham



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 Spring edition will have a theme around 'Buddhism and Ecology'. We welcome your articles, poetry, pictures, letters, retreat reflections and book reviews! Publication date: 21st March, deadline for submission of material 1st March.

Submissions to the Newsletter/Website:

Michael Elsmere

Address: Westerly, Washbourne, Totnes
TQ9 7UF Devon

melsmere@hotmail.com

Mindful Communication both in writing and dialogue by Francis Checkley and Chris Hannah and there are also book reviews by Francis and Josh Zatz on the varying approaches possible in communicating clearly and compassionately whilst Clare Hannah offers us a clear concise method to consider when we wish to convey something. Our recent Rohatsu retreat prompted musings from David, Michael and Devin along with a delightful traditional verse from Chris Hannah. There is information on a retreat at Hebden Bridge in February with Ingen Breen, news from the regions and details of the various sitting groups around UK.

I would like to thank all those who have submitted writings for this newsletter and hope that readers will enjoy their thoughts and views.

Previous issues are available [here](#)

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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 20;

Article

On Mindful Communication

By Francis Checkley AnRyu ChiU

The Oxford Thesaurus gives the alternatives to Mindful Communication as "Conscious Transmission".

Another word for communication is CONTACT and for conscious, "ALIVE or ALERT". Alive, conscious transmission immediately brings to mind the very ordinary but quite special communication of Dokusan. During this encounter, sometimes there is very little verbal communication and yet these meetings often live on in our memory as exalted states, of a conscious transmission of wisdom we may struggle to put into words. This intimate face to face contact after sometimes days of meditation reminds us of our supreme good fortune in having a human body. Our embodied state may not always be comfortable but it is the only state which allows us the opportunity for realisation. Mind depends on body, and vice versa because of the belief in western philosophy of a soul capable of living independently of the body, the body/mind split has been a source of endless debate.

In Zen, this is not a problem. Mind is body, body is mind or as Suzuki Roshi said when speaking of the body-mind conundrum, "not two, not one". Each of our six 'sense doors' continuously give us data of six different kinds: form, sound, smell, taste, touch and consciousness, with each sense door opening us to a different world of experience.

For the Buddha, realisation came through seeing something. Our other senses however may also awaken us to our interconnection with all of life, to the realisation that we were never anything other than unified with it from the beginning.

I think it was the writer Alan Watts who spoke of our sense of separateness and alienation from life as being the result of our diminished awareness as "skin encapsulated egos". Our true body, our true self however transcends such boundaries.

The physical body is part of the physical world. The wisdom we aspire to is not just in the body it is co-functioning with the world around it; embedded in our awareness. Our environment is continually offering us the opportunity to reach out and touch which we have often come to

believe is separate from us. Simple words of kindness, a please or thank you to our partner, the shop clerk, the bus driver to those who are busy or stressed, to anyone we sense is troubled, caught up in their subjective circlings.

It is just so easy to feel alone, depressed, overwhelmed in our daily lives. Our hospitals, hospices, residential and nursing homes are brimming over with human beings who feel forgotten, unwanted, lonely and often uncared for. Knowing this, we can consciously communicate our kindness, our gladness to be in their company by simply touching their hand, putting our arm around their shoulder. In this instance, our touch may be the catalyst which awakens them from a sense of sadness they may have struggled with since the death of a partner/spouse. And it may be this simple opening to the actuality of their life, this momentary awareness of being valued which releases them from their suffering.

Nowadays it is quite commonplace in care homes for older people to receive care and kindness as it is consciously transmitted through the art of massage. In this way both parties involved are allowed the healing benefits of giving and receiving, of letting go and relaxing, of allowing a spaciousness of mind which gives rise to, however momentarily, a certain sense of gladness to be alive.

For those who are profoundly deaf, Conscious Communication often comes through the medium of sign language. To witness this is to recognise just how important our bodies can be in expressing meaning. It is as if every part of the body is in constant movement, transmission is direct and

physical. Those persons who are challenged in this way, who can so easily feel alone and isolated may, with training, transcend such limitation and share friendship with their peers.

Because until quite recently much of our communication as human beings has been carried out in close proximity to one another, our language contains many words and phrases which reveal our intuitive understanding of the body-mind correspondence because of this we speak of being "face to face", "seeing eye to eye" feeling "in touch" with someone or "out of touch".

Recently, a journalist visiting the Dalai Lama to conduct an interview was quite bemused and just a little unnerved when his host not only shook his hand on greeting him, but continued to hold his hand throughout the interview. They were quite literally, continuously "in touch".

Gradually, the journalist was able to relax into the intimacy of being together and the interview proceeded far better than he had expected.

The more we are "in touch" with our inner landscape, which for most of us is an environment of such stark contrasts, the less

we may be tempted to run for the hills, or do battle. With just this small insight we may hope for some degree of success.

"Our hearts were made to bleed" Reb has said. How easy it can be to hurt someone's feelings despite having no conscious intention to do so. It begs the question as to the degree we are responsible for the effects of our speech? Is it any wonder that communication breakdown is so common? And yet we must try! With our partners/spouses, our children, friends, colleagues, bosses, with those nearby, and those who are separated from us by huge distances.

And so to the joys and tribulations of cyber communication, of e-mails, blogs, tweets, etc.: its convenience, and some would argue its absolute necessity.

As many of you know, I tend not to use this form of communication, or if I do, as little as possible. Undoubtedly it can be convenient and it is self-evident that it is becoming faster by the day, but could the acceleration and quantity of messaging be the cause of so much misunderstanding?

When communicating verbally with someone face to face, we are continually receiving, storing, evaluating perhaps thousands of cues:(the look in the eyes, facial expression, comportment, tone of voice, pauses in their speech, the intensity or otherwise of their general demeanour)

and many more factors which we receive subliminally before responding.

Even on the telephone, conscious listening to both what is said as well as not said provides us with so much more than any rushed e-mail can give us. Maybe any real success with electronic messaging and the like if it is to approach the potential of face to face embodied communication will depend on us realising that these things cannot be rushed. We all need to slow down, develop patience, understanding and a willingness to forgive if we feel offended when receiving a communication. Not an easy task by any means.

Some possible ways forward: ---

--- That all involved have a clear purpose and intention for the communication.

--- An adherence to precepts so that everyone feels respected, honoured and valued.

--- That however 'noble' the perceived end, it does not justify the means being less so.

--- That any perceived conflict is addressed fully before moving on.

--- That there is a conscious admission that misunderstanding will occur rather than a climate of denial where those involved avoid the opportunity for creative conflict.

--- Recognising that slow and easy is sometimes preferable to Fast and Furious.

--- The use of video and skypeing so as to visually "embody" the communication more fully.

I offer the above while recognising that any kind of inter-personal communication is fraught with the potential for misunderstanding, and wish us all the necessary wisdom needed to fulfil our goals.

Deep bows to all.

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Event

Visit of Tenshin Reb Anderson 2013 - Retreat at Hebden Bridge Yorkshire

By Frances Collins & Devin Ashwood

Dear friends,

We are writing on behalf of Dancing Mountains Zen to everyone who asked to be kept up to date with events by adding your name to our email list. Before advertising widely, we want to share with you the wonderful news that our founding teacher Tenshin Reb Anderson will lead a residential retreat at Hebden Bridge, Yorkshire from Sunday 21st to Sunday 28th July 2013.



Dancing Mountains Zen and Hebden Bridge Zen are working together to support this opportunity. The seven day sesshin will have residential and non-residential options for accommodation, made possible by the generous support of Hebden Bridge Zen Group. These choices should also allow family members to visit Hebden Bridge at the same time.

Reb will also lead a non-residential public day at the Quaker Meeting House Hampstead in Central London on Tuesday 30th July 2013.

For now, we simply want to allow you to mark these dates in your diary and to watch our website at www.dancingmountains.org.uk and Dancing Mountains Facebook page for news. We will be able to release full details within the next 2 weeks.

We see this as a unique sangha building opportunity and want to invite those who are familiar with the San Francisco Zen Centre tradition and also wish to offer support to the events organising to contact us at our Google group at <https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/reb-uk-retreat-2013> , click on : 'Apply to join Group'.

With love,

Frances Collins and Devin Ashwood
[co-chairs Dancing Mountains Zen]

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Article

Mindful Communication Considered

By Chris Hannah

Neither past nor future provide legitimate respite from the challenge and beauty of the moment. When we learn to become fully present in every instant, we discover that there are opportunities and choices immediately before us which will determine both our past and our future. Here on the sharp blade of the moment lie opportunities to create and to love. Equally present are the possibilities of abuse and cruelty. In the capsule of experience which is given to us each instant, we determine who we are and what is significant to us. The whole of our lives is presented to us in the moment, and each moment is an intersection with eternity in which we decide our destiny and are offered the grace of becoming. All else is illusion.'

Mike Riddell, Sacred Journey

There is a story that Mozart was asked what he appreciated most about his music? He apparently replied "the pauses". Without the pauses there would be no music. It is perhaps the pauses that give shape and colour and energy to the music. Many talk of mindfulness as "minding the gap" watching the pauses, noticing the space in between, spaces between utterances where the shape and direction of conversations and hence relationships can take new directions or continue on well worn tracks. Communication theorist Barnett Pearce encourages a mindful focus on "what are we making?" Whilst in the flow of active participation in communication or call it conversation, we are not simply studying awareness of self or other but resting our attention on "what are we making". Perhaps gently asking ourselves the question, what are we making here? How is this conversation going? Is this a moment to pause together and reflect?

Others may refer to this kindly attending as reflecting both in the action and on the action, noticing how we are together shaping the conversation and noting in a curious kind of way our knowing of ourselves and each other, watching how we dance and endlessly co-author different reversions of ourselves and others and are constantly redefining our relationship one with another. Asking together what kind of conversation is this or pausing to reflect together on the direction, flow and pace of the conversation? So together we are evolving a dance of reflecting in and on the conversation as it unfolds.

One of a number of frameworks Barnett Pearce gives us for reflecting in and on what is being made in conversation is what he refers to as the serpentine model. Let's imagine the thread of a conversation as if it is following a snake like shape. Along the thread we mark the different utterances and leave spaces along the thread to denote the length of the pauses between the utterances. So for example a mother and daughter told me that the daughter had come home from school and said to her mother, "Mum I need some new clothes" there was a longish pause before the mother replied "I'll have to ask your Dad" almost instantly the daughter walks out the room slamming the door and shouting "well don't f..ing well bother then". In my conversation with this mother and her daughter we were able to reflect on the meaning that was being made at the time. It seemed what was being made was a world of misunderstanding and reactions and all stemming from a complex history of family relationships. Now we were reflecting on this conversation exploring the space in between these three utterances. In doing this we were able to create a space for multiple levels of meaning to co-exist, where one level of meaning is neither more nor less significant but leaning towards being able to hold these different understandings or meanings in a relationship of acceptance.

An early day family therapist Harry Goolishian would often advocate being "slow to understand". I find this obviously hard to do but enormously helpful. What I take it to offer us in terms of mindful communication is the ability to gently watch how our minds constantly construct meaning and understanding which in essence simply expresses our beliefs and prejudices and assumptions about what is being made (going on). Without mindful reflection we might well take this to be the truth of what is happening and rush towards it. This approach fits so well with Harry's and Harlene Anderson writings on developing "The Not Knowing Approach". The attitude that keeps us focused on taking a "not knowing stance" is of course mindful curiosity.

Mindful communication could be seen to be about pacing. Not necessarily meaning being slow but having an intention to mind the gaps however short, to notice the in taking of breath as a space for new movement in the dance of the

conversation.

I hope you have enjoyed reading this short offering and found it perhaps offers a pause to mindfully go onto notice what we are going to do next with an eye on “what we are making” extending our field of awareness to include first, second and third person perspectives. What am I experiencing; I wonder what the other/s are experiencing and what are we together creating?

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[A B C of Mindful Relationships](#)

By Claire Hannah

A B C of Mindful Relationships

Attention Acceptance Appreciation Affection Allowing

Be Being Beholding Beauty Boundaries

Curious Compassion Clarity Coherence Coordination

The Five A's come from David Richo's book 'How to be an adult in relationships' 'The Five Keys to Mindful Loving'.

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Article

Rohatsu Thoughts

By Devin Ashwood

The Rohatsu Sesshin I attended at the end of November was a traditional retreat held in the Zen lineage. It lasts for seven full days at this time of the year to celebrate the Buddha's enlightenment. It is customary for students on the retreat to be encouraged to meditate through the night on the final night.

A sesshin such as this cultivates sustained mindfulness throughout the day with a relatively seamless transition between formalised activities such as walking, eating, chanting, bowing and sitting for hours at a time. Many activities have intimately prescribed forms that invite observation of mindful concentration.

During the sesshin, I was struck by our teachers measured approach in both formal talks and practice discussions, they came across clear, measured and mindful, before, during and after the retreat, embodying the practice they spoke of. I would like to spend as much time as I can with people like as this to help me to develop my commitment to consistent practice.

The story of Siddhartha Gautama suggests that it was while gazing upon the morning star after sitting all night that he attained enlightenment. I didn't sit all the way through on the final night as I had a long drive home after, but sat up late and rose early to sit the next day when we were blessed to see Venus rise during our final outdoor walking meditation.



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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

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Article

Recollections of Rohatsu - Rohatsu at Unstone Grange 1st to 8th December 2012 - with Ingen Breen & Catherine Gammon

By Various

Below are offered some brief reflections on the first ever Dancing Mountains
Rohatsu Sessin:



Rohatsu evolving, deepening love for all beings, wondrously dancing with nurturing compassion expressed in many forms

Lovely. Offered by David Greenaway

Rohatsu Rohatsu where have you been?
I went to Unstone to sit with the Breen.
Rohatsu Rohatsu what did you there?
I sat on my cushion till I needed a chair.

(Inspired by sitting with my 3 year old grandson Benji) Offered by Chris Hannah



Deepening stillness
Ripening silence embracing us
Incense smoke cutting the cold air
Bells, darkness, light, muted dawns
Kitchen sounds and food scents
The axe blow of the fire alarm
Venus the morning star.

Offered by Michael

Half way through the retreat, after a level of concentration had developed and thought processes were attenuated and more a content of mind than 'my thoughts', a thought occurred that all this thinking was obscuring the true beauty and tragedy of life. However, this fairly superficial analysis was put into perspective as 'I' suddenly and unexpectedly dropped completely away and a situation arose that words fail to convey. The best I can do in hindsight to describe what is now a collection of memories and stories is to say that selflessness was experienced and limited life (that from the perspective of the 'I') was shown for the tragic illusion it is. This brief glimpse left me deeply sobbing for reasons I still don't completely understand, but

I remember there was some sense of sadness for the limited life we lead in relation to selfless reality.

Offered by anon.

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Book Review

Review of 'The Way of Council' (2nd Ed) Jack Zimmerman and Virginia Cole (Bramble Books, 2009).

By Josh Zatz

This book is about creating a container for authentic communication. Its subject is, perhaps, not so much '*mindful* communication' as *heartful* communication. You could even say, "*wholehearted communication*". It is about a method for fostering intimacy through authentic speech and authentic listening. It is also about how this method can move us beyond our habitual ways of relating, so that we can find ourselves speaking from a place of a more profound knowing, sometimes speaking truths that we did not even know we knew. In this way, together, we can discover the 'Wisdom of the Circle': the broader truth that can come out through a whole group, together.

The book explores the practical functioning of the 'Way of Council' in some depth, and looks at many different settings in which Council can be used, devoting a whole chapter each to practising Council with children, in a couple, in a family and in community and business settings. In addition – and this is what makes it, for me, such an extraordinary reading experience – the authors give much of their attention to clarifying the more profound and mysterious aspects of the Council process: the deeper functioning which can make it so powerful and transformational.

"Participating in council teaches us how to let go of personal expectations and become fully attentive to others. The practise fosters compassionate response and provides a continuing source of wisdom." (from the Introduction, pg6)

In its most essential form, a 'Council' is a meeting of two or more people in which each person takes it in turn to speak, and interruption is not permitted. The tradition of council set out in this book has its roots in Native American traditions, in which a talking piece would be held by the speaker and passed around the circle, and where the whole event would most often be bounded by some kind of ceremonial forms. The authors' training and experience in this form has taken place in a number of environments, but is most deeply rooted, it seems, in their involvement with the Ojai Foundation, where it was originally introduced by Joan Halifax Roshi.

The form of Council which has been developed there – and at other related venues – is, in its essence, simple and universal. Nonetheless, it also utilises an array of particular methods, techniques and styles by which, in experienced hands, it can adapt to suit many different kinds of groups and circumstances. This book sets out many of these different methods and ways of working very clearly, along with numerous stories and anecdotes to illustrate their use.

I first experienced this kind of Circle in its simplest form, in the summer of 1994, when I lived at the Rainbow Centre – a squatted Church in North London with (pretty much) an open door policy. The weekly Talking Stick Circle was the only regular whole-community meeting. Generally the stick would go once around the circle, everyone who wished to, would speak – and then it would end. It was remarkable to me at the time how this simple form of meeting could suffice for such a diverse and often chaotic community, but for most of the time it served us very well, and in times of difficulty we held extra circles to address the specific issues. In the years that followed, I have sat in various circles of this sort from time to time.

More recently, I participated in the founding of an ecological community in Devon. In principle, our decision-making was by consensus, and most of us had a fair amount of experience in consensus-based decision-making, as well as in various kinds of 'talking circles' or 'feelings circles', and we used these kind of circles from time to time, especially when we had significant differences of vision, or interpersonal difficulties. Nonetheless, after a few years, various interpersonal strains started to reach an unmanageable level, and we began to look for outside help. Through this, I came to be introduced for the first time to the slightly more formal structure of the 'Way of Council', as set out in this book. Our first Councils of this type were facilitated expertly by Rob Dreaming, an experienced and trained Council Leader who lives in the South East of England (<http://www.heart-source.com>). Rob also did his best to provide us with enough experience and confidence to continue to use the Way of Council by ourselves.

I was initially somewhat sceptical about using this kind of talking circle to address the community's issues. I suspected that each person having an opportunity to tell the group their story – their version of reality – might just lead to a cementing of

each person's position. I felt that we already did a lot of talking, and that maybe spending some time in silence together might actually help more. That first time, we conducted a whole week of Councils and although many issues remained unresolved, I was very much converted. I had underestimated the transformative power of the particular kind of container created by this Way of Council.

Over the years that followed, we used Council regularly, mostly under our own rotating leadership. Once a year or so we brought in an experienced external facilitator to help us to ensure we were keeping to the forms well and to facilitate a more intensive period of Council over a number of days, to enable more difficult issues to be heard and expressed. The people still living at the community continue to do this.

Through this experience, I have come to really value Council, not only for its ability to clear out difficulties and tensions within a group, but even more so for the way it constantly brought us back to a feeling of genuine intimacy and authenticity: for the opportunity to really *meet* each other; to see and be seen, to hear and be heard.

The Way of Council set out in this book creates a strong container through starting and ending ceremonially (this can be as simple as, for example, lighting a candle at the beginning and extinguishing it at the end) and through calling on each participant to embrace the 'four intentions'. These are: to Speak from the Heart; to Listen from the Heart; to be of 'Lean Expression'; and to be Spontaneous. In addition, confidentiality is important to enable trust and authenticity.

When the participants in the circle make a real, wholehearted effort to embody these four simple instructions, the quality of communication which can arise is really extraordinary. A large part of this magic is due to the quality of listening. I am very taken with the authors' occasional use of the term, "devout listening", which has its roots in the Quaker tradition. It evokes beautifully for me the quality of authentic 'listening from the Heart', which can seem to draw forth from each person in turn, the most authentic self-expression that they are capable of at that time.

" In Council the gateway to the mystery is *listening*. We listen in council with more than our ears. We listen with the same awareness a mountain person gives to the wind in the alders or a mother gives her young child learning to speak....When we listen in this way, and the person speaking is able to do so authentically, we can see his or her story unfolding in front of us."

(Introduction, pg6)

I personally have found that, when I find myself being listened to in this way, I hear my own story unfolding as I speak, sometimes more clearly than I have ever heard it before. On numerous occasions, I have seen deep misunderstandings unravel and become clear in the light of this mutual authenticity. This does not always mean that longstanding inter-personal conflicts are instantly ended - unfortunately - but it can be the beginning of their profound transformation. Through a better understanding of the other's story it becomes easier to be more tolerant of whatever it is one is having difficulty with. Through receiving feedback from other members of the circle on one's own story, one can start to hold it more lightly or to examine more carefully how true or helpful it really is. Most importantly, through really listening heartfully to the other's heartfelt self-expression, an intimacy is engendered, even in the midst of conflict, and this intimacy necessarily transforms that conflict, even if it does not immediately end it.

In the spirit of Council, this book is filled with stories and personal experiences of the authors themselves and their colleagues, which help the reader to understand how Council can function in practice. The authors also deal in some detail with the technicalities of how authentic speaking and listening can bring individuals and groups into a sense of "heightened perception" and how council leaders can steer councils effectively by working consciously with the "Interactive Field" of the group.

I really don't know how meaningful and comprehensible these particular sections of the book would be to those who have not sat in Council with a skilled leader, but I do have a feeling that many who have sat Zazen in a group might have some sense of what is being talked about. That the subtle but powerful togetherness which one can feel in a group of silent meditators can also be experienced in the midst of verbal interaction is a potent message from this book for those of us who cherish that communion.

Since leaving that community, I no longer sit regularly in Council with a group, but I still consider it the most potent tool I know of for engendering genuine intimacy, openness and authenticity. Along with this, Council brings each individual the opportunity to practise Heartful communication - authentic listening and authentic self-expression - and this experience can transform one's style of communication in the rest of one's life. Within a community who practise Council together, this possibility can extend to the whole life of that community.

For those interested in a tool for deep exploration of these qualities, this book will open a world of fascinating possibilities. For those with some experience already with this form, it invites us to deepen our practice and to understand it more clearly. I have really enjoyed re-reading it, to write this review. It has left me conscious of how I miss sitting in Council with a regular group, and keen to bring it back into my life.

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Book Review

'Meeting the Shadow The Hidden Power of the Dark Side of Human Nature', - edited by
Jeremiah Abrams and Connie Zweig

By Francis Checkley AnRyu ChiU

In a collection of 65 wide-ranging articles, 'Meeting the Shadow,' offers an overview of what Jung has referred to as the dark side of human nature; and how it appears in families, intimate relationships, sexuality, work, spirituality, the New Age politics, psychotherapy and creativity. Essentially then, it is a book about rage, jealousy, lying, resentment, blaming and how such forbidden feelings and behaviour arise from the dark, denied part of ourselves, our personal shadow. This shadow, the book asserts, develops in childhood as a result of repressing negative feelings in order to build a proper ego.

We meet our shadow when we feel an unexplainable dislike of someone, when we uncover a long buried, unacceptable trait in ourselves, or when we feel overwhelmed by anger, envy or shame; but the shadow is not only an individual problem. Groups and nations have a collective shadow which may lead to racism, scapegoating, enemy making and ultimately war.

One writer speaks of meeting her "Devils" during a mid-life crisis, when her well nurtured and well-coiffed saint within, met the "sinner".

At this time, she remarks, her fascination with the light, her eager optimism, her implicit trust of others, her commitment to meditation and the path of enlightenment, were no longer a saving grace but a kind of subtle curse which brought her face to face with the heartbreak of failed ideals, the plague of her naivety with the dark side of God.

Jung and of course many post-Jungian therapists are quoted throughout the book as in the following:

" One does not become enlightened"
by imagining figures of light, but
by making the darkness conscious". C.G. Jung

In section 28 of the book "Meeting the Dark Side in Spiritual Practice by William Eichman, he says:

" When we practice meditation the dark side within us is washed to the surface of consciousness by the purifying and energising effects of the exercises" and "this personal repressed evil" is released and must be examined and integrated by the practitioner as a necessary part of the meditation process".

The following section 29 is entitled "Encountering the Shadow in Buddhist America by Katy Butler In this, Katy, herself a practicing Buddhist of some 13 years, speaks of the many crisis of leadership in which she has seen:

"Black-robed Japanese Roshis and their American heirs exposed for having secret affairs,
misusing money, becoming alcoholic and indulging in eccentric behaviour".

She goes on to say that despite her heartache and puzzlement over such matters she knew that the teachers involved were not charlatans but thoroughly trained spiritual mentors dedicated to transmitting the Buddhist Dharma to the West. Nonetheless, now that the shadow side had come

to light, certain common elements within the communities became apparent.

These included:-

- Patterns of denial regarding alcoholic and incestuous families.
- Soft-peddalling of basic Buddhist precepts against the harmful use of alcohol & sex.
- an unhealthy marriage of Asian hierarchy and American license that distorts the the teacher-disciple relationship
- A tendency, once scandals are uncovered to either scapegoat disgraced teachers or blindly deny that anything has

changed.

Had this "Lineage of Denial" as she refers to it, only happened in isolated incidents, it could possibly be explained away by individual villainy. But it didn't! It gained hold and flourished widely in spiritual communities of many kinds, and I would venture to say, the potential for such misfortunes still exists, because all community members, however unconsciously play a part in keeping hidden emotional wounds as shadow material.

I thoroughly recommend this book to anyone involved in the practice of making the unconscious, conscious and for everyone participating in community development, whatever their level of involvement. In this way, maybe those of us who unknowingly may have hoped to find sanctuary

from the wounds of painful childhoods and from the loneliness of our consumer society, will not replicate unconscious

patterns we hoped to leave behind.

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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 20;

Book Review

Pure Heart Enlightened Mind - Pure Heart. Enlightened Mind The Zen Journal and Letters of An Irish Woman in Japan by Maura 'Soshin,' O'Halloran

By Michael Elsmere KoGan MuJu

It is strange that sometimes books come into your life quite unbidden, books that support or inspire you or maybe help answer problems that you are wrestling with. Such a book is 'Pure Heart Enlightened Mind'. For different reasons over many months I have been struggling with maintaining my practice, bedevilled by unanswered questions and longing for an extended retreat with my teacher and Dancing Mountains sangha. After a recent Zen talk I attended at a local Buddhist centre I fell into conversation with a stranger, a fellow Soto Zen practitioner. After a short time he handed me a well-thumbed book.

"Perhaps this might interest you. Just leave it here when you are finished and I'll pick it up sometime."

He left soon after and I realize I still don't know his name!

'Pure Heart Enlightened Mind,' is apparently something of a 'cult' text in Zen but it had passed me by. Maura's journals and letters are for me the most inspiring and nurturing account of one woman's commitment and what may be attained in practice even in these modern times.

Maura O'Halloran grew up in an American Irish family spending extended periods of time in both countries. After matriculating from Trinity College Dublin in the early 1970's and completing degrees in mathematics and economics she travelled extensively and in 1979 was looking for work in Tokyo, Japan when she was offered a room in a small back street temple of Toshoji whose master was the great Zen teacher Ban Tetsugyu Roshi 'Go-Roshi'.

'When I was told that I could stay there, I felt as if I had come home, very settled and bursting with happiness. There are no other foreigners.'

Indeed there were no other foreigners and no other women for a long time!

She is given the koan 'Mu' (Ban Tetsugyu had been also rigorously trained in the Rinzai tradition.)

'The days went on full of mu..... Mu rose vibrating up my spine, exploded in my head.'

By January 1980 she has been asked to go to the remote Kannoji temple. Situated in the far northern prefecture of Iwateken she undergoes the harsh challenges of extreme cold whilst undertaking 'takuhatsu' (begging) around the local town to the astonishment of the local population who had never seen a woman engaged in this practice .

Her comments about life are at times so earthy, so honest, and so full of humour and then there is an arresting phrase that leaves the reader

pondering its depth, its beauty:

' Creaking to the post office
on my rusty bike
I saw one purple iris
Wild in the wet green
of the rice field.
I wanted to send it to you.
I can only tell you
it was there.'

Maura works endlessly, cleaning the temple, cooking as Tenzo, gardening, sometimes without a care 'just doing,' sometimes raging at the perceived laziness of some of the monks who are supposed to be helping her. At other times she sees their deep compassion for her, a small gift unexpected, a gesture or remark that sustains her, wisdom arising from hidden sources.

'Of late I feel ridiculously happy. No reason. Just bursting with joy.....Now I am 26, and I feel I have lived my life. Strange sensation. Almost as if I'm close to death. Any desires, ambitions, hopes I may have had have either been fulfilled or spontaneously dissipated. I'm totally content.'

Maura received the dharma transmission of her roshi after 1000 days of practice.

' I begin Denpo-shiki (transmission ceremony). Three thousand full bows. Have one week to do it.' I finished 3036 on the second day.'

Soshin's wonderful account (I've bought my own copy) of her practice is placed on my shelf next to 'Zen Mind Beginners Mind,' the book that inspired me to begin Zen practice.

Who was that stranger? How will I get his book back to him? Such generosity. A true bodhisattva? Manjushri? Even Avalokiteshvara?

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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 20;

Final Words

The Impermanence of water!

By Sue Blackmore

As a reminder of our inclement summer here are some photos and comment submitted by Sue Blackmore in whose delightful house we have held retreats in the past.



We live right on the banks of the river Erme and, on July 7th, like many others in our part of south Devon, our house was badly flooded. We were woken at 5 a.m. by ominous gurgling noises, only to see the river water right up against our bedroom window, and rushing in under the door. We spent the next hour wading through ever-deepening water carrying all we could manage upstairs to safety. The neighbours were fantastic and we had more offers of help than we could accept. Four months on rebuilding has still not started but we are happily living in half a house. The whole experience was quite a reminder of impermanence!

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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 20;

Sangha Update

Totnes Sangha

By Francis Checkley AnRyu ChiU

Now that winter is with us, we meet at the slightly earlier time of 7 pm. rather than 7:30.

Tuesday evening has been the preferred day for the last several years. People arrive, greet one another, and decide on Zendo roles for the evening, before assuming their preferred positions.

The format has remained unchanged for some time now. Firstly the offering of incense, three full bows, and then a standing bow to each other before sitting. We then do the Robe Chant, Purification and taking Refuge Chants.

This is followed by a 30 minutes period of meditation, 10 minutes Kinhin (walking meditation) and finally a further 30 minutes of Zazen. We then chant the Heart Sutra accompanied by the Mokugyo, followed by the Dedication of Merits and the Refuges in Pali.

After some lengthy discussions of the six Paramitas over the last 2 months, we have now decided to explore the Bodhisattvas "Way Seeking Mind" and what this means to each of us. This would give each person the opportunity (if they so wished) to say how they themselves came to be practising.. What perhaps was the initial impetus that drew them to this particular path. This might include wholly biographical details of their personal life or not. After this presentation people present could comment or remain silent. So far there seems to have been a deep respectful intensity of listening followed by a meditative silence. Personally, I have found these times of sharing to be deeply moving. Finally after sometimes years of shared formal Zen practice, we have given each other the gift and chance to whole-heartedly express what it is that gives our lives ultimate meaning.

On one occasion this was done after tea & biscuits in the living room and once immediately following Zazen in the Zendo. On the 2nd occasion, refreshments were offered but declined. We will no doubt discuss the merits of each, with each person deciding on their preference at some later date. The "Way Seeking Mind" sharing, we have decided to schedule for each 3rd Tuesday of the month. The 1st Tuesday of the month will be alternatively a discussion of a practice which one of us is having difficulty with or wants to explore in more detail, a reading or readings from various books, or both. Slowly it seems that together we are trying to more precisely define just how we intend to spend our precious time. For each of us this will be different, dependent on an almost limitless number of conditions, some of which we are barely aware of. Again, I would like to express my thanks and gratitude to everyone for their on-going participation and effort in both the local as well as the wider Sangha as we all try to manifest the teaching.

Deep Bows, Francis Checkley (AnRyu ChiU)

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Deep Bows, Francis Checkley (AnRyu ChiU)

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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 20;

Sangha Update

Hebden Bridge

By Rebecca Habergham

Hello everyone. A bit of an update from us to you.

We have had quite a busy Summer of weekend and day retreats, welcoming old and new folk to the group.

Ingen Breen

A huge big THANK YOU to Ingen Breen for supporting us through quite a diary of events this summer. We have had a mixture of evening, day and weekend talks and retreats which has brought a diversity and depth to our group. We have been learning more form and service too, for those in the group that are interested. This has proved a rich way to bring practice alive and deeply study ourselves in our resistance, terror and/or playfulness that arises, when sat behind the bells for the first time! The deepening of commitment and stillness through Ingen's repeated return to us has been beautiful indeed. Thanks Ingen.

Catherine Gammon

A big THANK YOU to Catherine too, who came to visit us for a few days in November. We did a mixture of sitting and writing retreats which were enjoyed by many, and left a trail of inspiration and creativity. We also visited the Parsonage in Haworth to see the home of the Bronte's. The stormy, howling moorland weather again prevented us from visiting Top Withins which allegedly inspired Wuthering Heights. Next time maybe Catherine?

Brad Warner

We are really grateful that Brad managed to fit us into his visit to Europe. It was a bit last minute, but we had a very interesting and stimulating talk and then mini mid week Sesshin with him. Also, most importantly, fitting some comic buying in for him to meet his love of 70's comics.

It has been really useful to spend the "in between times" the spaces between the retreats with Ingen, Catherine and Brad too. We have been hiring the hostel in Hebden Bridge for some events and having a space to share breakfasts, coffee, prebedtime chats and walks to the town, has given a more intimate but ordinary time for all that have been around. This has often been with people that have not been on the retreats but passing through the hostel as travellers.

Use of New Room

As a bit of an experiment in April this year we started to rent a room for Hebden Bridge Zen Groups sole use. We did not know if we would be able to sustain this but wanted to give it a go. For the first few months we needed to top up the rent as we did not get enough from Dana. However with the increased use over the Summer we have managed to fully fund the space for the last few months and so have decided to carry on for the next 6 months. Other groups are also hiring the space for yoga and meditation during the week. Sister Kovida visited us again whilst stopping with a friends in the town. She is a Theravadan nun who some have sat with before and whose teachings many people find really useful.

Looking Forward

We are holding an all night sit on 7th ~ 8th December to celebrate the Buddha's Enlightenment. We have done this before and it was a really beautiful night. Especially connecting was the personal stories people shared of why they felt it is important to bring some stillness and peace to the dark hours. Recognising that night spaces can at times be especially difficult to navigate.

February Retreat

Ingen Breen will lead a 5 day retreat in Hebden Bridge 19th ~ 24th February. Please contact Rebecca for more details and to book a place on this:

07970 425932, rebeccahabs@googlemail.com

It will be residential with all food included, running from the www.hebdenbridgehostel.co.uk. Price to be confirmed soon.

October Zen in the Sun

Ingen Breen will be leading a retreat in Lefkada, Greece.

6th ~ 13th October 2012

Please contact Rebecca for details. There will options of shared and single rooms. Payment can be in installments for this event. Still finalising details, but do contact for information.

We continue to meet twice a week on Sunday and Wednesday, all welcome.

The development of the chapel space in the Birchcliffe Centre is moving along well. You can see this at: www.pennine-horizons.org.uk. Click on the flickr account to see photos. This space will be able to support much larger groups meeting for longer periods. If anyone wants to organise visits from other teachers to England, please get in touch with us, and we can see how we could support each other to do this.

We hope to sit with some of you soon. Happy winter stilling and fermenting, retreating and reflecting.

Rebecca

What you ignore persists, what you look

at disappears. N.D. Walsh.

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