



Issue 30 ; Autumn 2016

# MOUNTAIN SILENCE

## NEWSLETTER OF THE DANCING MOUNTAINS ZEN SANGHA

### From Light Into Darkness

#### Events

##### Group Facilitators Support and Study Retreat

at Warminster  
with Ingen Breen  
**22nd October 2016 to  
23rd October 2016**

Developing practice for  
event & group  
facilitators

**Cost:** £100 - £115

07875155464  
devin@dancingmountains.org.uk

##### Weekend Retreat

at Totnes  
with Ingen Breen  
**25th February 2017 to  
26th February 2017**

A weekend of sitting  
together led by Zen  
priest In

**Cost:** Please enquire to  
Francis Checkley 01803  
866735 or

01803 866735  
mbcheckley@hotmail.com

##### Weekend Retreat

at Totnes Devon  
with Ingen Breen  
**10th June 2017 to 11th  
June 2017**

Sitting Together led by  
Zen Teacher Ingen  
Breen

**Cost:** To be announced  
please contact Francis  
Checkley 01

01803 866735  
mbcheckley@hotmail.com



#### Editorial

By Michael

As I write this we are a few days past the Autumn Equinox when throughout the world day and night are of equal length. The sunfilled days of summer are passing ( I can write this with assurance this year) and we are moving into winter darkness. Here in the countryside the harvests are gathered in and already the ploughs are turning the fields from gold to reveal the red earth of Devon.

When I was deciding the title for the newsletter in the Spring I had come upon a talk by Suzuki Roshi that he had given, I think at Tassajara, towards the end of his life on the Sandokai(The Equality of Harmony and Difference) this is a poem that is fundamental to Soto Zen and of which Roshi had said that all Zen masters taught when they are dying.

"In the light there is darkness,  
but don't take it as darkness;  
In the dark there is light,  
but don't see it as light

#### In this issue...

A Residential Centre  
in Glastonbury

By Bev Eatwell

A Short History Of  
Dancing Mountains

By Dancing Mountains

Merely To Know

By KojiJu (1121 -1201)

Going for Refuge,  
Practising with Fear

By Tenshin Reb Anderson  
transcribed by Bev Eatwell

Group Facilitators  
Retreat and AGM

By Membership Sec

The Way I Must Enter

By Izumi Shikibu (974-1034)

Brad Warner Retreat  
October 2016

By Kaishin Alan Crawford of  
Stonewall Sangha Liverpool

The Digital Monk

By From the Guardian 26 April,  
2016

A Bodhisattva's  
Samadhi Retreat  
Report

By Michael Elsmere

My snapshot report of

but don't see it as right.

Light and dark oppose one another  
like the front and back foot walking.  
Each of the myriad things has its merit  
expressed according to function and place."

So it is with this in mind that in this issue there are poems by ancient Japanese poets that for me express so eloquently and deeply their thoughts on these words from the Sandokai. I would like to thank Francis Checkley for drawing them to my attention. But there is of course light in the darkness and we have stop press news from Bev Eatwell and her partner Jez on their plans for a residential centre in Glastonbury. We also have a profile of Dancing Mountains submitted to Branching Streams the San Francisco Zen Centre organisation which offers support and aids cooperation between sanghas in the tradition of Shogaku Shunryu Suzuki across USA and Europe. One of Reb's talks has been transcribed by Bev. This not by any means all!!

Read on and many thanks to all those who have taken time and given expression to the ideas and thoughts contained in this issue.

One final wise thought offered by Suzuki Roshi.  
"Shine one corner."

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Previous issues are available [here](#)

## 'A Bohdisattva's Samadhi.'

By Rebecca Habergham



## 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 **Winter** edition will have a theme around "Study Yourself." We welcome your articles, poetry, pictures, letters, retreat reflections and book reviews!

Publication date: 21st **February**, deadline for submission of material 15th February.

Submissions to the Newsletter/Website:  
Michael Elsmere, 07817 604156

Address: Westerly,  
Washbourne, Totnes, TQ9 7UF

[melsmere@hotmail.com](mailto:melsmere@hotmail.com)

## Membership

You already belong, so why not become a member? - Download a printable [membership form](#) and support Dancing Mountains.

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For enquiries related to this newsletter please email: [devin@dancingmountains.org.uk](mailto:devin@dancingmountains.org.uk)

Issue 30;

## Article

### A Residential Centre in Glastonbury - Putting Down Roots

By Bev Eatwell

Ever since visiting Hope House in Hebden Bridge I knew that I wanted to duplicate something like it in the south, and here it (possibly) is. My partner Gez and I are in the process of buying a 5 bed detached house on the outskirts of Glastonbury. We are planning on converting the large garage on the bottom floor into a zendo with its own separate entrance. This will then be a space that can be used by local zen/yoga/meditation groups, and also will be available cheaply and easily for DM retreats.

The zendo will probably be able to sit around 15 when finished, and the house can sleep up to 8, with space in the garden for tents. There are lots of lovely airbnb options in the local area, so if more people than that wanted to come, they could sleep there and we could split the costs between us. In that way I'm hoping we could offer retreats that are only £10-15 per person a night, including food. We could even store any DM zafus, bells etc so that it is a practice space that is ready to go with minimum effort.

I'm really hoping that having somewhere permanent and relatively cheap will help us come and sit together as a sangha more often, and hopefully by offering a selection of weekend retreats across the year, there will be times when most people can make it down. Once we have bought the property, it would be really helpful if people could give some input as to what shape they would like this project to take. The ideal situation would be to be able to invite a visiting teacher to live in the room adjacent to the zendo, and for them to be able to give talks and run sesshins from here.

Thanks to everyone for their positivity and support so far and fingers crossed it all works out!

[Back](#) to front page

# MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 30;

## Sangha Update

### A Short History Of Dancing Mountains - A Profile for SFZC Branching Streams

By Dancing Mountains

**Editor's note.** Some months ago Dancing Mountains was contacted by Steve Weintraub and we were asked if we wished to join Branching Streams which is the SFZC organisation which supports Sanghas in the tradition of Shunryu Suzuki across U.S.A. and Europe. After some deliberation and correspondence the board of DM decided to take up this offer as it gave us considerable advantages to our sangha. The following profile was written to inform Branching Streams members about DM.



Dancing Mountains Zen Sangha has as its main aim the support of a number of local sanghas scattered throughout England.

Tenshin Reb Anderson Roshi has been visiting the UK for around 25 years, initially at the invitation of Maurice Ashe a philanthropist with a deep interest in Buddhism who owned a fine estate and Palladian Mansion in Devon, Southern England.

Between 1999 and 2010, Tenshin Roshi taught annual, week long retreats at Gaia House, and over this time built a committed following. Gaia House, formerly a convent, was bought and developed as an Insight Meditation centre, and for many years this served as an excellent venue for us.



#### Weekend retreat in Glastonbury, 2007

Tenshin Roshi's retreats at Gaia House were for some time, one of only a few events that filled all the available space at the venue, attracting over 60 people. In an organic process, the retreats at Gaia House gradually evolved form and intensity, and started to look more and more like a Zen sesshin. As this process evolved, so too did the wish among students to support each other to practice between sesshin, and the idea of developing groups and a centre in the UK was born.

In the millennial years, we began having post-retreat meetings at Gaia House to discuss with Tenshin Roshi the possibility of further developing sangha in England. He suggested that whilst putting our energy into such a project we should let any development be organic, nurturing the growth of cells as they blossomed or put down roots in the different regions of the UK. Out of this there came a number of further meetings to develop this vision and focus. There was recognition by a few members that a legal structure was required to support, clarify and inform both the financial and legal





nature of our sangha and maybe to raise funds for purchase of a residential centre. In 2007, we began to consolidate an identity for the entity, and inspired by one of Tenshin Roshi's talks at Gaia House, we settled on the name "Dancing Mountains" (DM). Our inaugural meeting was in April of 2008 and by 2010, we had started forming a legal, democratic entity to take care of the organisation so we could be responsible with the donations people were offering. Over a two-year period with a series of practice weekends and meetings, a Community Interest Company (CIC; a form of Charitable Company) was formed. As this process was evolving, regular sitting groups in Totnes, Glastonbury, Chester, Manchester and Norfolk all became established and in March of 2008, we launched our quarterly newsletter, Mountain Silence, which (with a little interruption) has continued to this day.



From 2010, Dancing Mountains and other European sangha members began arranging venues specifically for retreats with Tenshin Roshi and other teachers in the lineage of Suzuki Roshi. Tenshin Roshi continued visiting annually at a number of groups in England, Switzerland and Germany. In 2012 a decision was taken to bring together the complete European sangha at a beautiful rural Zen Centre set amidst the forests and lakes of Southern Sweden. These yearly retreats have proved very successful, being occasions for deep practice and providing a special opportunity to listen to Tenshin Roshi presenting his inspiring, sometime humorous (and musical) talks over the period of seven days.

Over the years we have had notable visits by Catherine Gammon and a number of other Soto Zen priests. These have been a constant source of support and inspiration for which we offer our most grateful thanks. Diana Gerrard has settled in Brighton and been a great support to the sangha there, and we are particularly grateful to Ingen Breen, who after initial visits

leading retreats and sesshins has now based himself in Ireland and has also provided Dancing Mountains with significant support and many opportunities for practice.

Over many years Tenshin Roshi's students have visited Green Gulch, City Centre and Tassajara for short or extended periods in order to deepen their practice and have while there studied temple forms, bringing these back to the UK. We are currently actively working in the pursuit of a residential centre in Southern England and expect this to come to fruition in the near future, which will give DM the chance to offer more practice opportunities and the ability to house visiting teachers for longer periods. This will provide substantial support to our nationwide sanghas.

Very recently Tenshi Roshi has offered three students from DM the opportunity to work together with himself, Ingen Breen and Catherine Gammon toward ordination as priests. In addition, one of our sangha is working in a similar process with Ingen Breen. This is a very significant development for us in DM which will hopefully secure the next generation of teachers and students practising in the tradition of Shogaku Shunryu Suzuki in The United Kingdom. We are appreciative of being part of the international diaspora of Soto Zen practitioners represented by the Branching Streams organisation and hope to be able to welcome some of you to England to practice with us sometime in the future. Please visit: <http://www.dancingmountains.org.uk/> to find out more.



Gassho

Michael Elsmere Kogan Muju Radiant Vow No Abode





[Back](#) to front page

# MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 30;

Poetry

## Merely To Know

By KojiJu (1121 -1201)

### **Merely to Know**

Merely to know

The Flawless Moon dwells pure

In the human heart

Is to find Darkness in the night

Vanished under clearing skies.

(Kojiju 1121- 1201)

[Back](#) to front page



# MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 30;

## Dharma Talk

### Going for Refuge, Practising with Fear - Sunday Morning Public Lecture Green Gulch Farm June 2008

By Tenshin Reb Anderson transcribed by Bev Eatwell

Sunday Morning Public Lecture Green Gulch Farm June 2008 Tenshin Roshi Reb Anderson

Going for refuge, practising with fear

May I mention that today in some people's calendar is fathers day. It's a good day to tell your father that you love him, even if your father is not alive. And it's a good day for fathers to feel ashamed at their short comings. But even an ashamed father, and an ashamed grandfather, still might want to talk with you about something. Last time I spoke I think I talked about the very basic Buddhist practice, the very basic ritual in the Buddha way, of going for refuge in Buddha. The basic ritual of returning to Buddha, and during that talk I think I mentioned that if one wishes to practice going for refuge in Buddha then maybe it would be good to consider what Buddha is. And I talked about what Buddha is in the tradition of the great vehicle of the bodhisattva, the universal vehicle of the being who is devoted to the welfare of all beings. And I would just mention briefly again that in the Mahayana, the Buddha is a being which is always not thinking and a being which is always thinking, simultaneously. A being who is completely free of thinking, or thought construction, and of the world of suffering that arises from thought construction. Completely free: completely giving up all world-constructing thought. Simultaneously the Buddha is always thinking: always involved in world-constructing thinking. Buddha is always thinking about how to make a world where all beings can enter the Buddha way and quickly attain Buddhahood and freedom. Buddha is always not thinking and always thinking. Buddha doesn't abide in either, and embraces both. This is the Buddha. Limitlessly free and limitlessly involved to help all beings and it's this Buddha that in Mahayana we return to by the practice of refuge. Today I'd like to talk about the practice of refuge and also just to say that I would use the word 'practice' synonymously in this situation with 'ritual' or 'ceremony'. And I am also just offering you the statement that not everyone who performs rituals understands the ultimate truth. But I would say that a person or a being who understands the ultimate truth, that for such a being all of her actions are rituals. When you understand ultimate truth, you understand that every action of your body, speech and mind is a ritual. Your whole life becomes a ritual, your whole life becomes a ceremony. Everything you do, everything you think, everything you say, every bodily posture you make, is a ceremony which puts the ultimate truth as a form. Every form, you understand, is the ultimate truth, and ultimate truth is every form. If we don't understand that, we may think that some forms are truths and some are not. Also if we don't understand ultimate truth, we think ultimate truth is something. We might think that the ultimate truth of all things is another thing. So the basic definition of ritual is that it's synonymous with ceremony. This can be a religious ceremony, religious rituals, or just solemn rituals. They are dignified forms of behaviour within religion or not.

Coming back to the ceremony of going for refuge in Buddha. I go for refuge in Buddha. I say that with my voice. I can sit here with you and try to sit upright and still and make my upright stillness and posture and sitting a physical ritual. This sitting is returning to Buddha. I return to Buddha's posture. I give my posture to Buddha and thereby I return to Buddha by this posture. I think that I am returning to Buddha and my thinking is returning to Buddha. I spoke about this last weekend and a woman came up to me at the end and asked "why a ritual? Why do we have to do ritual?". She said ritual, but she could also have said "why do we have to do a practice?" She said "The Buddha is totally pervading our lives, is never separate from us, so why do we have to do the practice, why do we have to do the ritual of returning to Buddha?". And I simply would suggest that although that is true, that Buddhas are with us always, unless we do the ritual, unless we perform the ceremony of making our actions, or our thought, speech and posture, actions of returning to Buddha, we will not realise Buddha. All Buddhas who have realised Buddhahood have done the ritual of returning to Buddha. None who do not return to Buddha realise Buddha even though we are already there with Buddha. We are already surrounded by the understanding of the Dharma, which Buddhas are. Buddhas are the understanding of the truth. We live in the same truth, but unless we practice the ritual, the ceremony of returning to the truth, returning to the Buddha, we do not realise the Buddha or the truth which Buddha realises. We are always living in the midst of the great assembly of practitioners doing the ceremony of returning to Buddha, but unless we return to Buddha we do not realise that we live in this community. My thoughts, my speech and my posture does not reach what the Buddha is. But they realise what the Buddha is. My thoughts, your thoughts, my actions, your actions, are not separate from Buddha, therefore we cannot reach what we are not separate from. But we can confuse what we are not separate from. We can think that we are separate from it and try to reach it. This is a distraction, which is fine. Just give that distraction to the Buddha. While I was talking to this woman I stumbled upon her being herself. That she is who she is, that you are who you are. You are yourself, but if you don't practice returning to yourself, you will not realise yourself. Buddha is our true home, but if we don't do the ritual of returning to Buddha, we do not realise Buddha, we do not realise our true home. We exile ourselves by not practicing returning to our home. It seems kind of unfair in a way that we

exile ourselves by not practicing being home. But actually I think that that is necessary. You can't just be an innocent bystander and not practice and be left at home. To forgo celebrating your home, to forgo celebrating your intimate relationship with the Buddhas, is to eject yourself from your home by neglecting the performance of your relationship. Just like a father needs to perform his relationship to his daughter or his son. Without performing it, it is not realised. It is a sorrow. "I love you" "Yes" "I love you dearly" "Yes", but without practicing that, somebody does not realise it. For me ritual is always thinking 'what is my action in the context of relationship'. One meaning of ritual is something that you do on a regular basis: invariably. So brushing your teeth could be a ritual. But with me I don't always brush my teeth. But when I brush my teeth, I brush them together with all Buddhas and all living beings. Then my tooth brushing is a ritual. It is also going for refuge in Buddha when I brush my teeth in relationship to all beings. And it is possible to learn to brush your teeth in relationship with all beings every time you brush. This is to realise Buddha's way while brushing your teeth. Excuse me for mentioning this, but I thought about this in the process of urinating and I remembered a zen teacher whose teacher told him. "When you urinate, always sit down". Most people sit down when they do number two. Not all people, but most do and not all women sit down when they do a number 1 and number 2 but most women do sit down. I think. I don't know, I haven't really watched (laughter), but I get that impression that mostly they sit down, whereas men sometimes stand. It's convenient and some women are jealous of men being able to stand. But I thought 'if it's a ritual. If bodily functions like that are rituals of going for refuge in Buddha, then I felt it seems better to sit down. It seems more solemn rather than saying 'ok I'll just do it the easy way'. I'm not saying that you can't take refuge standing but if you really meant this as a ritual, then wouldn't you take a dignified posture and say 'ok: here we go'? So I suggested to this woman: "you are who you are, right now before me, but if you don't practice the ritual of being who you are then you miss who you are". And I say that to myself and I say that to you. If you don't practice being who you are you will miss out on something called being you and that will be something which will be a great sorrow to the whole world because that is your job moment by moment to be who you are and you are only the way you are right now once. And now is the time for you to be this person. But if you don't practice being you then you miss it. And if you don't practice being you then you also miss going to refuge in Buddha. So I stumbled upon the something: that being yourself and returning to Buddha are synonymous. If you really return to yourself you will return to Buddha and you will realise that. If you really return to Buddha you will realise that you return to yourself. And returning to yourself, maybe some people feel ok about that. It's non-sectarian: it's not really Buddhist. But I propose to you to consider that if you really return to yourself you will realise that you are returning to Buddha and vice versa. But if you don't yet want to return to Buddha, start with yourself. If you return to the place where you are right now, if you practice that ritual of being where you are right now in this place, the practice of the Buddha will occur. And it will realise the truth. Realising the truth will help you return to the practice of being where you are and finding your place moment by moment. Just after the woman I mentioned before came and asked her question last week, a man came up and said that he felt dread being with me. He was a really tall man, maybe 7 feet tall (laughs). He said that when he came up and felt himself being with me, he felt afraid. It was very difficult for him to actually be there with me. And then I thought of this story which connects these things. The name of the story is 'Fear and Dread'. It's the name of a scripture. In this scripture the Buddha is approached by a Brahmin, Jāṇussoṇi. The Brahmin paid his respects to the Buddha and then asked the Buddha "Are you the leader, the teacher and the guide for all of these people here? Do they follow your example?" and the Buddha said "Yes I am their teacher, I am their guide and they do follow my example" and then the Brahmin said, "but don't you go out into the jungle thickets of the forest and practice meditation out there? Don't you go into solitude in the dense jungle. And when you get there doesn't that place give rise to fear and dread and disturb your mind and make it difficult to enjoy solitude and be at peace and make it difficult to be concentrated? And if you do that and go out into the forest like that, don't these people follow you and isn't that a bad example. If they follow they will be scared and their mind can't calm down?" and the Buddha said "Well you are right, when people go out into the forest they do become frightened and it is hard for them to enjoy solitude, but that is because their minds are not yet settled and purified. Before my mind was settled, when I went out into the forest my mind was actually full of dread and fear and I couldn't enjoy solitude in the forest retreats but my mind is no longer like that. My mind is purified and therefore for me the jungle thickets are a place of joyful resort and peace. Before I realised the purified mind when I went into the jungle and I became frightened, I discovered a practice. If I was walking, and fear and dread arose in me, I would continue to walk until the fear and dread passed away. If I was sitting in the forest and fear and dread arose in me I would just continue to sit. If I was standing in the forest and fear and dread arose in me I would continue to stand until they passed away. If I was reclining in the forest and fear and dread arose in me I would continue to recline until they passed away". The next bit is a little different to how the Buddha spoke. "In this way I found my place in the forest. I returned to where I was and found my place, and the practice occurred and fear and dread were relieved and I also found something else there. I found the Buddha". The Buddha, before being Buddha, returned to Buddha and realised Buddha. The Buddha took refuge in Buddha and realised Buddha. The Buddha returned to where he was in the jungle. A dreadful situation. A situation well worthy to be frightened. Poisonous snakes and insects. Wild carnivorous giants inhabited those Indian jungles and he was out there with them. Not to mention demons and all kinds of disturbed spirits untamed by the oppression of civilisation. He went into that place and he found where he was and he found Buddha and he became Buddha, he realised Buddha by going for refuge in Buddha. The Buddha goes for refuge in Buddha. All Buddhas have gone for refuge in Buddha over and over and thereby realised Buddhahood. They did the ritual, which is the same as returning to where you are and whatever comes up, do not move. If you are walking do not move, which means keep walking as a ritual. Every moment is an opportunity to find your place right where you are, to return to where Buddha is realised, which is here. We must practice being who we are, where we are now, in order to realise who we are, where we are now. At the end of this discourse on fear and dread and how to become

free of them, Jāṇussoṇi says "Thank you so much Lord Buddha, may I take refuge in you? May I become your disciple? And the Buddha says "You may. Come. Come home" and Jāṇussoṇi becomes the Buddha's disciple. And then the Buddha says "One may think that since I still do the practice of going into the forest that I'm dependent or attached to it, that I am not free of the rituals that I performed to realise Buddhahood. But that would not be true Buddhahood if I was attached to the forms. But I am Buddha and I'm not attached to the forms that I used to realise Buddhahood. I continue to do these forms for two reasons. 1: because I like to and 2: to set an example for the future generations" We do need ritual to realise Buddha, but when we realise Buddha, we don't need to return to Buddha anymore. We realise where we are. We no longer need the ritual. The ritual has served its purpose. However, once we don't need it anymore, now we practice it just for fun and to show other people an example, a form, that they can use to find themselves. Or to show them the form for finding themselves so that they can find Buddha. Also, recently, an older person came to me and said that she was feeling some aversion to ageing. She didn't say it, but you can elaborate on that: dislike, hatred. Some people hate getting old. Some people do all types of anti-ageing activity. There are all kinds of anti-ageing products that people can buy. Anyway, she said she was feeling some aversion to ageing, kind of like a dread. A dread is more basic than aversion. Once you have the dread you can find some way to avoid it or slow it down or go to some kind of resort or spa. And she mentioned this to me in the context of our community where lots of people are sick and aging and dying. So many sick people in our community. So many people who are ageing and dying. She admitted that she is not really that challenged right now, but she still felt some dread and I thought again of this sutra and I said "it's like: we don't have to go into the jungle where there are tigers and huge venomous snakes and elephants and poisonous insects and malaria. We don't have to go. Our body is good enough (laughter). Our body is a good enough place to have fear and dread come up". But in this story Jāṇussoṇi didn't come up to the Buddha and say "Are you the example and teacher to these people" "Yes" "Well, how come you inhabit a human body. Isn't it difficult to be at peace in a human body? Isn't it hard to be calm and joyful in a human body? You are setting a bad example". But he could have! And the Buddha could have said "Yeah it is dreadful and frightening to be in a human body and it was for me too before my mind was purified. But now my mind is purified so now a human body is a place of joy. A human body that is always in danger of being ripped to shreds and becoming sick is a place of joyful solitude because I found my place in my human body. And I stay in my human body even though I don't need to because I like to practice in a human body. I like to practice with my ageing, with my illness, with my injuries, with my brokenness. I love to practice here, and I also want to show other people a form so that they can practice the Buddha way in a human body with all of its problems, all its impermanence". And again when fear and dread arise in this body: don't move. If you are walking, keep walking. Don't move from the place that you are and you will find yourself, you will find Buddha. You will be practicing going for refuge which all Buddhas have done in whatever body they have. I don't want to sell Buddhism. I don't like selling Buddhism, but I'm happy to give Buddhism, I'm happy to give you the tradition. But sometimes when I give it, it sounds like a sales pitch because some of the things that are given are so wonderful. So I caution you now. Caveat emptor. Buyer beware. But this is more like receiver beware. You are being given the Buddha's gifts. Now, the Buddha's gifts that I am going to tell you about are the gifts that you receive when you go for refuge. Going for refuge is the super simple, basic practice of being where you are, but it has extraordinary benefits and blessings. I can think of eight of them (laughs). Some people like numbers, some people don't. Here's eight virtues, eight merits, or going for refuge in Buddha. You become a disciple of Buddha. You have a foundation in the precepts because the first precept of our tradition is going for refuge in Buddha. When you go for refuge you set your foundation in the number one precept. Karmic obstructions are reduced. An ocean of blessing and merit is assembled. You do not fall into terrible destinies anymore. However, you happily visit those who are in terrible destinies without fear. You can enter any destiny fearlessly. You will not be disturbed by human beings any more (laughter). Also you will not be disturbed by non human beings. You will accomplish good deeds easily. You will receive the ability to become Buddha. If we can always be mindful of these extraordinary merits of going for refuge and practice, the ritual of going for refuge, we will easily enter the Buddha way and live it. So simple, so basic: going for refuge in the Buddha. Doing the ritual of being who you are right now, or finding your place right now. And again, I think Suzuki Roshi used to recommend finding it on your exhale. On each exhale, come back to where you are. Now he might also say you can find your place where you are on inhale and exhale too. While inhaling and exhale come back to where you are. Come back to Buddha. And if I forget to come back here, to come back to Buddha, I confess and repent. I'm ashamed that I have not been present. That is one of the main things that I think that I am ashamed of as a father. Of not being present. I loved my children, but I sometimes neglected to be present. And the same as a disciple of Buddha- as Buddha's child. I do not like missing the opportunity of being here, of taking refuge in Buddha. In practicing the ritual of returning here to Buddha, the merit of this is fully realised when you realise that you are not going for refuge by yourself, you are doing it with the Buddha. Together with the Buddha. A few days ago, some of us were up with Michael Sawyer who had just died, and we were up sitting with him and I asked if I could sing a song, and the living people said 'ok'. The song I sang was 'Ol' Man River', and after singing it, his brother said that that was their father's favourite song and so they grew up on that song and their father used to sing it to them and play the organ while he sang. So shall we sing it? It seems like a father's day song.

### Everyone sings

"Ol' man river

Dat ol' man river

He mus'know sumpin'  
But don't say nuthin'  
He jes'keeps rollin'  
He keeps on rollin' along.  
He don' plant taters  
He don't plant cotton  
An' dem dat plants 'em  
Is soon forgotten  
But ol'man river  
He jes keeps rollin'along.  
You an'me, we sweat an' strain  
Body all achin' an' racket wid pain  
Tote dat barge!Lif' dat bale!  
Git a little drunkAn' you land in jail  
Ah gits wearyAn' sick of tryin'  
Ah'm tired of livin'An' skeered of dyin'  
But ol' man river  
He jes'keeps rolling' along.

"One more thing that I wanted to mention is that sometimes the way that we say it is that 'I go for refuge in Buddha as the most honoured one of bipeds, the most honoured two footed one'. That is one way that Buddha is described. But another way it can be translated is 'I go for refuge in Buddha the most honoured one of the two perfections'. The perfections can also be called feet, the foot, or the foundations. And the two perfections of Buddha are the perfections of merit and the perfections of wisdom. So we go for refuge in Buddha, the world honoured one of the merit and wisdom. Buddha's wisdom is 'always not thinking' and the Buddha's merit is 'always thinking'. Always thinking of the welfare of beings and generating a world of merit and always not thinking and generating the world of wisdom. These two feet of Buddha, the most honoured one, and we return to these two feet, these two perfections.

[Back](#) to front page

Issue 30;

## Event

### Group Facilitators Retreat and AGM

By Membership Sec

The Group Facilitators Support and Study Retreat from Fri evening 21st to Sunday 23rd October 2016. The AGM will take place on Sunday 23 October at 2-4pm. The venue for this w/e is The Manor House, Ash Walk, Warminster BA12 8PY

The Group Facilitators Support and Study Retreat to be led by Ingen Breen is intended to help group facilitators and sangha members further their understanding and practice of Soto Zen form and rituals as well as offering opportunities for discussion and ideas to consolidate sangha practice in their locality. All sangha whether a member or not are very welcome to attend and we look forward to practising with you then.

It is our intention that the AGM should be as informal as possible within the legal structure of our Community Interest Company and we feel it is vital that our membership support these meetings in order for us to maintain the democratic nature of our sangha. Gassho

Dancing Mountains Zen sangha Community Interest Company

Angyu Daichi Devin Ashwood Chair

Kaisen Kozan Chris Brown Treasurer

Ji Getsu Shin San Bev Eatwell Co-opted Area Member Brighton

Kogan Muju Michael Elsmere Secretary

Costs for Group Facilitators Support and Study Retreat+ AGM

Single Room for 2 nights (food/ teaching/dana costs inclusive) £115

Single Room shared bathroom (food/teaching/dana costs inclusive) £108

Room only shared occupancy (food/teaching/dana costs inclusive) £100

Rooms will be booked on a first come first served basis. Please book by at latest Monday 3 October.

Pay by Bank Transfer to DM Zen Sangha CIC

The Co-operative Bank plc

Sort code 08-92-99,

Account 65323036 Under Reference put DM Warminster

or by cheque made out to Dancing Mountains Zen to

Chris Brown 40 Woolacombe Road, Liverpool, L16 9JQ

Room only single occupancy e/s £28pppn

Room only single occupancy shared bathroom £24pppn

Room only shared occupancy (Twin or double) e/s £20pppn

[Back](#) to front page



# MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 30;

Poetry

## The Way I Must Enter

By Izumi Shikibu (974–1034)

The way I must enter leads through darkness to darkness - o moon above the mountains' rim, please shine a little further on my path.

Izumi Shikibu Court Lady & Poet Japan 10/11C

[Back](#) to front page

# MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 30;

## Retreat Report

### Brad Warner Retreat October 2016 - Enthusiastic Devotion

By Kaishin Alan Crawford of Stonewall Sangha Liverpool

I wish to thank Alan Crawford for this report of Brad Warner's Retreat in Glastonbury in October 2016 that was organised by Nicky Ashwood. Brad also travelled further west but his day retreat was controversially rejected by an established Buddhist Centre in Totnes. We eventually ran it in a church hall! Brad's teaching and the Dokusan he offered was warmly welcomed by all present.

I was very touched by Alan's determination and enthusiasm to be at Brad's retreat. His opening lines reveal this. Where there is a will there is a way!!!!Editor.

#### **The Long Journey South**

I set off at 4.45 am on a Sunday morning to make my way down to Glastonbury from Liverpool for the one day retreat. This would be my only retreat this year with being a new dad, so even though it was only one day, I was looking forward to the opportunity for a period of intensive practice. Plus, Brad is the first 'celebrity' Buddhist teacher I have gone to see, so there is a degree of excitement and anticipation. Which is ironic really as I'm probably known to my friends as somebody who might pontificate about the vacuous nature of celebrity culture! (note to self: I should really stop pontificating, it's not attractive). So on the drive down, I wondered what is it about Brad Warner that makes me want to drive 3 and half hours to mostly sit in silence in the same room as him, hear him speak briefly and answer a few questions? I remember first hearing about Brad in an article in which he was compared to Noah Levine, another 'Punk' Buddhist (or Dharma Punk, as Noah prefers). I'd read Noah's books and had been impressed by his stance that Buddhism was inherently counter-cultural, a radical rebellion against greed, anger and ignorance. I loved the fact that I was getting my Dharma-fix from a big, tattooed bloke in a band T-shirt (though Punk was never really my thing, I'm more of a psychedelic rock, prog and metal guy). I identified with Noah as an alternative-looking person in recovery who found in Buddhism a response not just to addictive craving, but also to the big questions about life and what it's all about - how should we live in a way that allows us to be at peace? How do we appreciate our lives and connect with others? But Noah's teaching, rooted in the Theravadan tradition, felt formulaic and a bit religious to my Zen eyes and ears (is it just me, or do Theravadans and Tibetans really love lists and stages?). I had been practicing Zen for a short while by this point, attracted by its stripped back, back-to-basics approach, as well as its ability to straddle both the mundane and the mysterious in a way that embraces paradoxes and refuses to allow you anything in which to 'believe', any solid ground on which to stand. So Brad had an instant appeal, could I have really found a Zen Noah Levine? I went out and read Brad's books and was attracted to his direct, irreverent, no-nonsense approach and 'punk' aesthetic. I've always had an attraction to the unorthodox and rebellious, so a Zen teacher with a potty mouth who plays in a rock band had an instant allure. Brad struck me as somebody who is who he is, unapologetically so, which is something I respect and aspire to. He seems very authentic in his unorthodoxy. Except that when you read his books, the unorthodoxy is something of a misnomer. His interpretation of Zen is actually pretty standard, traditional stuff, it is more his delivery and style that make him anomalous to the Buddhist stereotype. I think his anti-bullshit approach, whilst genuine, is also a deliberate way (skilful means?) in which to counter the fluffiness and 'niceness' that often surrounds contemporary approaches to spirituality. Brad adopts a refreshingly frank, confessional approach to honesty and self-disclosure that I really connect with and find very endearing. His candid disclosures about his own imperfections illustrate his message that he isn't special (none of us are actually, even me - my mum lied to me for 18 years!), and that just because he is a 'Zen Master' (he uses the term ironically), who has happened to have had an awakening experience, received some teachings and practicing this stuff for a while, doesn't make him special, extra-ordinary or a spiritual superhero of some sort. However, despite making it clear he is nothing special, Brad writes elsewhere about there being no other teacher in North America teaching the way he does and that his voice is vital and unique (I'm paraphrasing, but I think that was the gist of what he said). So is this ego, or just another one of those Zen paradoxes; can Brad be both nothing special, and at the same time a solitary, unique voice? I guess that's what I drove 3 and a half hours to find out. The drive in to Glastonbury was beautiful in the early morning light as I drove through picturesque villages that were quintessentially English, with farmers' fields, stone cottages with thatched roofs, traditional red post boxes and village pubs. This must be exactly how an American like Brad might picture England I thought (although Brad has also been to Manchester which would certainly serve as a contrast to Somerset's green and

pleasant land!). Glastonbury itself is a place of myth and legend, associated with the Holy Grail, King Arthur and the Lady of the Lake. It is known for the crossing of leylines that purportedly create powerful energetic fields that result in feelings of peace, balance and spiritual connection. It is a site of spiritual pilgrimage for neo-pagans and new-age hippies... Eckhart Tolle even lived here in the 1980s! And of course, it lends its name to the huge counter-culture festival that takes place a few miles away. The venue itself was on the high street, nestled amongst alternative, new-age shops and cafes. Built of stone and rubble (including some from the ancient Abbey ruins), complete with Gargoyles and adorned with photographic prints of early Glastonbury festivals. Brad remarked that he'd never seen a more psychedelic backdrop to an altar (a large, colourfully trippy mandala), nor had he sat Zazen in a room with photos on the wall of naked dancing hippies! On arriving I was thrown a little by the subtle and not so subtle differences with my home Sangha back in Liverpool (Stonewater Zen). Here we sat facing the wall in traditional Soto style, rather than inwards as I'm used to, did our full bows facing towards the altar (rather than inwards), Kinhin (walking meditation) took place around your own row of Zafus/Zabutons rather than around the perimeter of the Zendo, and other little differences in form and the chanting of the sutras threw me and unsettled me a little (the Heart Sutra was a completely different translation to that I'm accustomed to and was chanted with a very different rhythm). It was familiar yet strangely alien to me, making me feel like a newbie all over again. I suppose Zen isn't quite like the Catholic faith I grew up with in which no matter which church you attended, the prayers, hymns and readings had a reassuring predictability. Perhaps there was a teaching in embracing uncertainty and 'beginner's mind' in there somewhere... Perhaps it was the atmosphere of the building, or the leylines and earth energies at work, but during Zazen, despite the early start and long drive, I had nice periods of clarity and focus. I took the opportunity to have Dokusan (individual interview) with Brad. This took place in the kitchen/dining area of the venue, which was a bit unusual and, along with Brad's grungy casual clothes, gave the interview a very informal feel, more like you were sitting down to have a cup of tea with a mate rather than discuss the great matter of life and death with an ordained Zen Priest (not that the two are mutually exclusive, in fact the only thing better than discussing the great matter of life and death is to do so over a nice cup of tea, but I digress...). I didn't really know what to say to Brad, but didn't want to pass up the opportunity to meet with him on an individual basis, so I went with the first thing that came to mind and asked him about realness and authenticity. A friend of mine had posted an article online a day or two earlier which dismissed the 'cult of realness' in favour of surrendering to escapism and fantasy. An intention to be real and authentic is one of my core values, and a key motivation for my Zen practice, so with this being fresh in my mind, and Brad epitomising 'realness' to me, I decided to ask him about this. He spoke about experiencing what is rather than perceiving life through our own filter (beliefs, assumptions, concepts, likes / dislikes), or at least being aware of our filter and the ways it influences our perception. This allows us to perceive things in a fresh way and respond accordingly. The conversation moved on with Brad asking me how long had I been practicing, which Sangha I practiced with etc. I wish I'd asked him to say something about how we manifest that realness, or live in an authentic way, but Zen interviews are traditionally quite short, plus Brad had lots of other people to see so I returned to my cushion to continue to sit. I would have loved more time with Brad, but I always feel this way with Sensei too (David Keizan Shoji Scott), that I'd love to sit, talk and pick his brains for an hour rather than the 5 minutes that is customary. I remember noting that Brad, like Sensei, seemed both very spiritual and very ordinary at the same time, very present and engaged, very together (although I'm sure both of them would dispute that!). Also like Sensei, Brad seems and looks much younger than his years. I find it hard to believe that Brad is 51 years old. In appearance, mannerisms and speech he seems much more like a man in his 30s. Perhaps this Zen stuff really is good for you! Back on my cushion, I returned to my ley-line induced clarity, this time periodically disturbed by a runny nose (all those bloody farmers' fields and pesky southern pollen...). Brad spoke twice, once in the morning and again towards the end of the day, which was great, I felt like I was getting more Brad for my buck. He spoke in a very down-to-earth, genuine and matter of fact way, stating that he saw his talk as a way of stimulating discussion amongst us. My first impressions were that Brad didn't actually seem that controversial at all, just grounded and contemporary. The occasional swear word, but no more than Tenshin Roshi (Charles Tenshin Fletcher). Perhaps he has softened since his first couple of books, or perhaps I'm just desensitised to controversy! I think I am probably in a different place in my understanding of Zen than I was (I felt quite challenged when I first read Brad's stuff years ago, like I had when I read "Spiritual Materialism" by Chögyam Trungpa). Brad spoke first about the role of the teacher in Zen, taking exception with something another teacher had said about it being to "guide the student towards awakening". This, Brad felt, gives too much of a student's power and autonomy away to the teacher, in turn giving the teacher too much responsibility, authority and status. Brad said that if we simplify things and talk about Zen as 'working on yourself', the teacher is simply somebody who has been working on him or herself for a little longer and has experienced many of the common pitfalls. Through sitting together, and through his (or her) talks and interviews, the teacher's experience can be of benefit to others, helping to keep the Sangha moving in the right direction, that is towards the Dharma (although Brad isn't keen on the word, preferring 'the truth' or 'reality'). He spoke about his resistance at taking responsibility for students, or taking their power away from them in any way, and the ways in which he ensures that he keeps giving it back to them. Your (and my) practice is our life and each of us is responsible for our life, all the teacher can do is help us to navigate the pitfalls whilst moving in the direction of the truth. Guiding the student towards awakening also implies the false promise of an end result, the goal of awakening. Brad spoke about the mistaken idea of awakening or enlightenment being some kind of goal to work towards or attain, a finish line. He asked, "OK, so you wake up, but then what? Isn't that just the start?" Brad said that once you wake up, it's just the beginning, part of a shifting, evolving process that continuously unfolds. "What the hell is this 'awakening' anyway?", Brad asked at one point... In his second talk, during the question and answer session, I told Brad that during the lunch break I had met a lady in one of the new-age spiritual shops that not only knew exactly what awakening was, but that

she sold an 'awakening' spray, and therefore must have distilled the essence of awakening in to a pleasant-smelling spray! There were no instruction on the bottle so I can only imagine that this spray makes the work of a Bodhisattva much easier, perhaps one can simply skip down the high street, a spray in each hand, bestowing awakening upon unsuspecting passers-by, leaving a trail of lotus-flower-scented, crystal-infused fairy dust in your wake. The stuff was £12.99 for a small bottle, a bit of a rip off considering Dogen says we are already awake anyhow and that if we just sit down and shut up (see what I did there) then we can see it and live it. In case you were wondering, I didn't buy the awakening spray, although I did find some lovely Japanese Incense! Walking down the high street in Glastonbury, with its healing crystals, aura alignments and tarot cards provided an interesting contrast to Brad's grounded-ness and realness. Don't get me wrong, part of me loves all that new-age, hippie stuff. On a superficial level, I love the way those shops smell, and I enjoy the visual stimulus of the various colours, Indian patterns, crystals and carved masks and statues. But more than that, new-age spirituality gave me something 'positive' to hang on to when I was coming out of a difficult period of my life, and it was my gateway in to meditation... but it's not really real life is it? It's just another fantasy, a form of spiritual escapism. Zen is more about becoming intimate with your life, embracing and appreciating your moment-by-moment experience, whatever it contains. The awakening spray seemed to illustrate ironically the common misconceptions about what it is to be awakened and live an awakened life. Brad spoke about how, unlike some forms of new-age spirituality (or other traditional religions for that matter), Zen requires equal amounts of doubt and faith. It is neither wholly spiritual nor wholly materialistic, adopting a middle way that embraces both the relative and absolute. Zen is therefore well suited to those of an open-minded but slightly sceptical disposition. I was interested in Brad's description of Zen practice as "working on yourself". He developed this point by referring to Dogen's most celebrated quotation: "To study the Buddha Way is to study the self. To study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be awakened by all things." Brad spoke about how, whether it is our intention or not, when we sit still without external distractions in Zazen, we are forced to study the self as we sit with what comes up for us – our thoughts, feelings, habitual patterns. Ultimately, for many people who practice consistently over time, the boundaries of this 'self' become blurred or fuzzy, and then perhaps the boundaries of this 'self' begin to expand as the "layers of non-reality fall apart". In this way, our habitual self-referencing can fall away and we can experience what is, just breathing, just seeing, just feeling, just smelling – this is forgetting the self and being awakened by all things. Asked to say more about this self, Brad stated that it develops due to a necessity to interact and engage in the world, that it consists of our tendencies and proclivities, likes and dislikes, habitual patterns and the labels and identities that we claim for ourselves. The Zen position is not, he stated, that this self does not exist as it clearly does from an experiential perspective, but that it does not exist in the way that we think it does. That it is fluid, impermanent and in a constant state of flux. Zen is not about obliterating or getting rid of this self, rather, Zen practice can allow us to hold less tightly on to our sense of self, and ultimately allow the boundaries of the self to expand. The Buddha found that when this happens, we suffer less and our life flows more easily. Brad was also asked to say something about the secular Buddhist movement and the popularity of mindfulness. As a Counsellor and Therapist whose practice is influenced by mindfulness, I was keen to hear Brad's perspective. Though he has written articles highly critical of Mindfulness, his response on this occasion was quite nuanced. He stated that he has no problem with mindfulness per se, that it can be helpful for those suffering with anxiety or depression and that, if it helps those people, he is happy that it is available to them. However, he noted that it is just one aspect of Buddha's teaching and that taking mindfulness in isolation, divorced from ethics and the more spiritual or mystical parts of the Buddha's teachings could be problematic. Brad spoke about how, for many people, one of the first things they notice with regular meditation practice is that it helps them with their stress and they stop "freaking the fuck out", but then what? As meditation practice deepens, the initial period of stabilisation gives way to experiences that, for many, can be unsettling; difficult thoughts and feelings can emerge, the way we perceive things and relate to them can change. If they stick at it long enough, they may even experience the boundaries of their 'self' beginning to expand (and might freak the fuck out all over again!). Brad wondered if those who learn mindfulness were given the support they needed to process these experiences. He was concerned about the level of training many mindfulness teachers receive, and whether they have an ongoing personal practice that allows them to support their students in the same way a Zen teacher does? The latter part of the second talk and discussion was led by questions and focused on ethics; starting on how the absence of ethics in many mindfulness courses creates problems, moving on to how to approach the precepts and finally how to respond to the social and environmental challenges that we face, including an exploration of engaged Buddhism and what Brad called micro-social change, that is, starting with you and your little corner of the world, being the change as Ghandi put it. It felt quite fitting to end on this point before the final period of Zazen, like we'd covered the full spectrum of Buddhist practice – from working on ourselves to how we can be of service in the world, from awakening to compassionate action, from studying the self to forgetting the self. Not bad for 8 hours in a dusty hall in Glastonbury, and well worth the drive down south. Driving back through the scenic surroundings I reflected on my experience of the day. Brad was certainly the real deal, but I think I knew that already. What I really discovered was that he was in fact both nothing special and at the same time a very unique and contemporary voice in western Buddhism. After a day of Zazen this paradox doesn't seem as difficult to reconcile. I was also struck by how much he reminded me of Sensei. I had expected a very different experience of a Zen teacher, an interesting contrast. Yet what I found, beyond the superficial differences in accent, the occasional swear word and a different set of cultural references was essentially the same thing – a human being, a very real, authentic human being who has been doing this stuff for a lot longer than me and is compassionate enough to let me and others tag along, helping us to navigate the main pitfalls and keeping us pointing in the direction of reality. "with warm wishes,

**Alan Kaishin Crawford**





Issue 30;

## Article

### The Digital Monk - Can a Robot be a Bodhisattva?

By From the Guardian 26 April, 2016

#### **Robot monk to spread Buddhist Wisdom to the Digital Generation?**

In an expected synthesis of ancient and modern, a Buddhist temple on the edge of Beijing has developed a robot monk who can chant mantras and explain basic tenets of faith. At 2ft high, Xian'er is encased in saffron-yellow robes and has a shaved head. Despite spending much of his time closeted in the spiritual calm of Longquan Temple, he wears an expression of permanent surprise. His purpose is to reach out to people who are more connected to their smartphones than their inner being. Xian'er can answer 20 simple questions, displayed on the touch-screen on his chest about Buddhism and daily life at the 500-year-old temple.



Master Xianfian, a (human) monk at Longquan and Xian'er's creator, said artificial intelligence could be harnessed to spread Buddhist wisdom.

"Science and Buddhism are not opposing nor contradicting, and can be combined and mutually compatible. Buddhism is something that attaches much importance to inner heart, and pays attention to the individual's spiritual world ... I think it can satisfy the needs of many people," he told Reuters.

Xian'er was developed as a robot in a joint project between the temple, artificial intelligence experts at Chinese universities and a technology company. Since he was created, he has appeared at several robotic fairs across China, but spends most of his time in deep meditation on an office shelf in Longquan. He started his existence as a cartoon drawn by Xianfian when he joined the temple in 2011. Xianfian described Xian'er as "a reflection of innovative Buddhist spirit ... [who] might help traditional Buddhism reach a wider public more easily."

Master Xuecheng, the head of Longquan and president of the Buddhist Association of China, is a digital communication enthusiast.

"Buddhists should not only seek enlightenment through daily learning, meditation and cultivation to gain positive energy from Buddhist doctrine. They should also contribute more to society, by transforming their own gains, kindness, compassion and wisdom to others through the internet and new media."

[Back](#) to front page

# MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 30;

## Retreat Report

### A Bodhisattva's Samadhi Retreat Report - The Fish are Jumpin

By Michael Elsmere

This is an enduring image that I took away from Tenshin Reb Anderson's Retreat in Sweden 12 to 21st August at Zengarden, Fyllingebo, Sweden!



[Back](#) to front page

# MOUNTAIN SILENCE

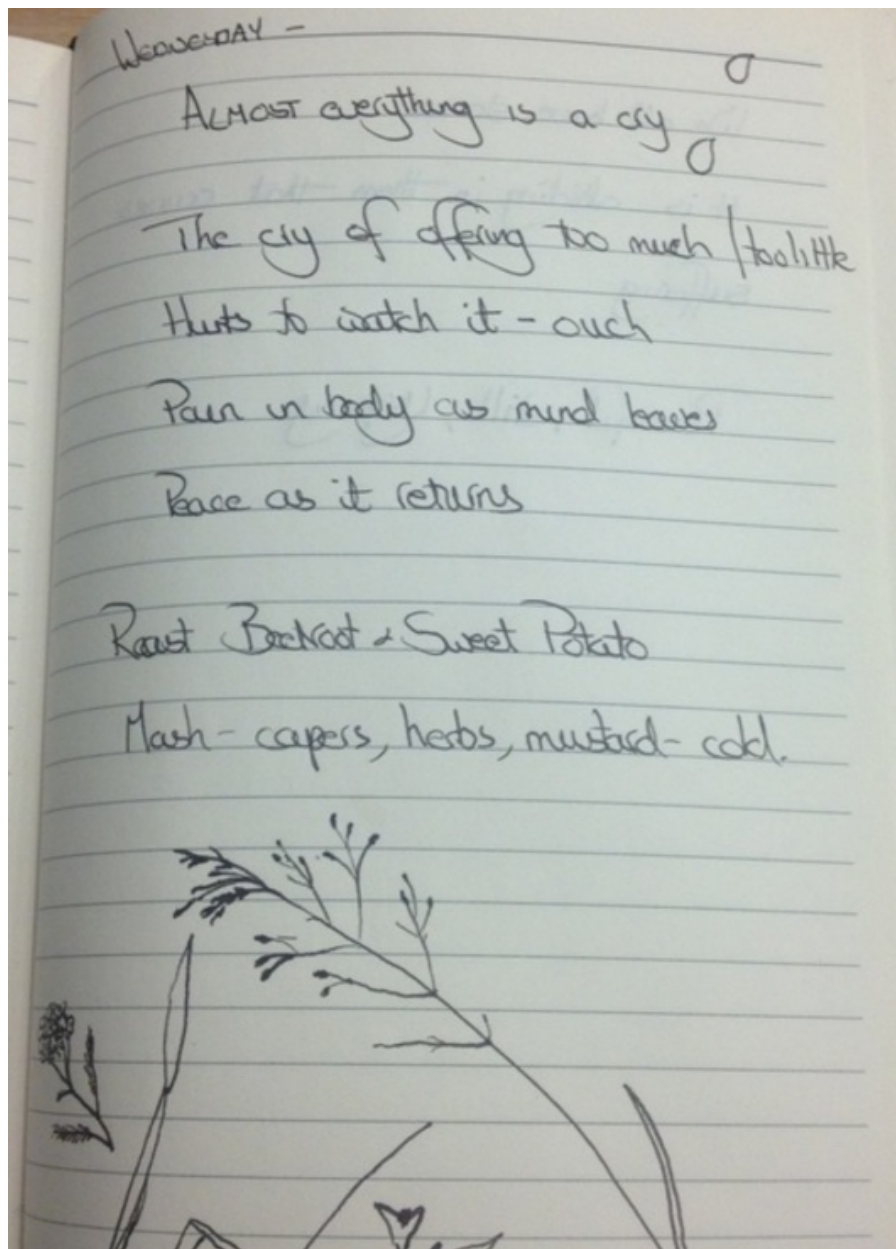
Issue 30;

## Retreat Report

### My snapshot report of 'A Bohdisattva's Samadhi.'

By Rebecca Habergham

After Reb's retreat in Sweden Michael asked me if I could write a report for Mountain Silence. This was my intuitive response on the day I got back to Hebden!



[Back](#) to front page