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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

NEWSLETTER OF THE DANCING MOUNTAINS ZEN SANGHA

Issue 14: Summer

Love



Image from Green Gulch Farm by Lucy Ellis

Editorial

by Devin Ashwood

Love. What to say of love? This issue begins with a dharma talk by Roshi Paul Haller inspired by the poem "Things I didn't know I loved" by Nazim Hikmet. The theme of love seems to have inspired the poets in our sangha as we have what I think is our largest issue yet!

There have been many sangha developments and this issue reflects on these. Although neither Roshis Reb nor Paul will be leading retreats on the mainland UK this year, we are working on arrangements for Reb to come in 2012. We have already been graced with a retreat led by Ingen Breen and will also have a repeat opportunity to sit a joint retreat with the Community of Interbeing in July.

In August, following in the tradition of inviting priests ordained by Reb to lead us, Diana Gerard will be offering a retreat in Wiltshire.

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In summary, we are getting closer to incorporating as a Community Interest Company, which has some of the benefits of a charity and some of the benefits of a company. To this end, we are finalising a constitution and articles of association which outline the democratic structure and roles and responsibilities of the committee. There is still lots of opportunity to be involved, including website work, newsletter editorship, publicity, fundraising and retreat organising. So if you would like to see this lineage of Zen flourish, please join us. Contact details appear at the bottom of this page.

[Dharma Talk](#) [Things I Didn't Know I Loved](#)

by Abbot Paul Haller Roshi

Each person's life, each person's journey, is amazing. I would like to talk about how amazing it is to be on life's journey, and how that can be a deep support for us. [Read more...](#)

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By Michael Elsmere

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[Retreat Report](#) [Practice Period at Green Gulch](#)

By Lucy Ellis

I've just got back to the UK after seven and a half months away. Last October I went to the eight week fall practice period at San Francisco Zen Center's Green Gulch Farm. [Read more...](#)

[Retreat Report](#) [Retreat with Paul Haller in Northern Ireland](#)

By Chris & Clare Hannah

Attempts to secure a place on this retreat started us off into a world of wonderment. How does this work? What will it be like joining this community? What does this way of joining invite us into? [Read more...](#)

[Sangha Update](#) [Hebden Bridge group update](#)

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What started as a small group of friends meeting in

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[Was Socrates a Buddhist?](#)

By Anon

Upcoming Events

[Click here](#) for details of these and other events. *DM indicates a retreat using Dancing Mountains forms and liturgy.

June 20 - June 29

Reb Anderson, Nine day retreat,

a living room once a week to share sitting, laughter and cake has grown into an established Zen Sangha. [Read more...](#)

Poetry

This Love Thing

By Françoise Elvin

This love thing;
It's a tussle thing,
A hassle thing. [Read more...](#)

Poetry

Hearing the Dawn

By Rebecca Habbergham

Love
knowing
being [Read more...](#)

Poetry

Love Sandwich

By Françoise Elvin

Caught: sandwiched between
Love and more love:
How can I resist? [Read more...](#)

Poetry

SPRING

By Lena Svensson

I step back;
Falling in love
is an explosion [Read more...](#)

Poetry

Calm and peaceful

By Catherine Thompson

The tide is coming in
The sun is setting but it's still warm
Lying raised on a rock, big but one of many [Read more...](#)

Creative Writing

I am a toaster

By Catherine Thompson

And I'm fed up of having crumbs in the bottom of
me – it's irritating and
I'm sort of stuck in the corner [Read more...](#)

Book Review

Thich Nhat Hanh: Living Buddha Living Christ

By Michael Elsmere

Felsentor, Switzerland

June 25 - June 26

*Weekend retreat with Ingen Breen in Hebden Bridge.

June 30 - July 8

Reb Anderson, Eight day retreat, Idoborg, Sweden.

July 09 - July 10

*Dancing Mountains & Community of Interbeing combined retreat, Cheshire.

August 12 - August 14

*Diana Gerard, weekend retreat, Wiltshire.

23 August - 28 August

Sesshins with Ryushin Paul Haller Roshi, Northern Ireland



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

Autumn issue publication date: 21st September, deadline for submission of material 1st September.

Submissions to the Newsletter/Website:
Devin Ashwood, 07875 155464
Address: 18 Westfield, Bruton, Somerset, BA10 0BT

Buddha and Jesus are two of the most influential spiritual teachers the world has known. Today centuries after their deaths both continue to shape the lives of many millions of followers. [Read more...](#)

Article What is Love?

By Michael Elsmere

Love and biology

Is this love?

Love is an evolved state of the survival instinct

[Read more...](#)

Article Installing Love on the Human Computer

By Anon

Tech Support: Yes, how can I help you?

Customer: Well, after much consideration, I've decided to install Love. Can you guide me through the process

[Read more...](#)

Article Was Socrates a Buddhist?

By Anon

In ancient Greece (469 - 399 BC), Socrates was widely lauded for his wisdom.

Keep this philosophy (precept?) in mind the next time you hear or are about to repeat a rumor.

[Read more...](#)

Next issue of Mountain Silence

The Autumn edition will have a theme around "The Four Noble Truths". We welcome your articles, poetry, pictures, letters, retreat reflections and book reviews! Autumn issue publication date: 21st September, deadline for submission of material 1st September.

Previous issues are available on the [Dancing Mountains website](#).

devin@dancingmountains.org.uk

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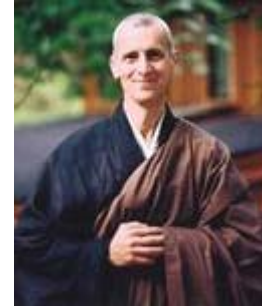
MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 14: Summer

Dharma Talk

Things I Didn't Know I Loved - July 25, 2009, at City Center

By Abbot Paul Haller Roshi



Transcribed by Chris Brown

Each person's life, each person's journey, is amazing. I would like to talk about how amazing it is to be on life's journey, and how that can be a deep support for us. It's so easy for us to be caught up in the impact of the details of our life. But to hold it in a bigger frame of reference – how do we do that?

This started me thinking about Norman Fischer's book on The Odyssey, the story of Odysseus. Here's what I find charming about the book. Odysseus goes through all these misadventures, and all these human characteristics get exposed... with disastrous consequence: stupidity, greed, laziness, hypocrisy, thirst for power. As he goes through each one, Norman sets the scene and then talks about it. So you think, about hypocrisy; surely he's going to say, "That's a terrible thing, you shouldn't be hypocritical, you should be authentic." Yet, time after time, Norman says, "This isn't so bad! We're all hypocrites!" "Thirst for power; that's not so bad! We all do that in one way or another." "Lying: yeah, we all deceive ourselves." "Greed: yeah..." Somehow, he just takes one human trait after another, and forgives it. Not only does he forgive it, but he finds something noble about the human character. From this place of ennobling the human character, then he says, be careful, this really can be a problem. There's something noble about this, but how it's related to has real consequences. Your life is not an abstract event. It's a very particular event that is influenced by how it's engaged. How do we wake up so that we can ennoble the human character and dispositions, and engage them skilfully? This is very much one of the over-arching flavours and challenges of Zen practice: "This very mind is Buddha, our original nature." In Zen, that's talking about this noble quality of our being.

Several months ago I was at a discussion between Paul Ekman, a psychologist, and Pico Iyer, a journalist and writer. They were talking about their experiences of meeting the Dalai Lama. Neither of them consider themselves 'Buddhists' in that card-carrying, robe-wearing way. Although, I think the Dalai Lama has enchanted them, in such a way that I think they are quite taken by the proposition he makes. Paul Ekman is a specialist in

emotion, and by this point had had several substantial discussions with the Dalai Lama in a setting including a number of scientists and psychologists. On one occasion, Paul Ekman had brought his daughter, 16 or 17 years old, to a preliminary informal gathering before one of these discussions. The Dalai Lama came over to talk to the two of them. Mostly he addressed the daughter, who he'd never met before. But while he was talking to the daughter, he took Paul Ekman by the hand – he was holding his hand. Paul described it as this extraordinary, yet nothing special, experience of casual friendship. Here's someone who is just being my friend, he felt, like we were two kids at kindergarten holding hands, just because it's nice to do. It's kind of reassuring when you're four or five years old, and all these big people are around you, to have someone hold your hand. So, as he stood there, and the Dalai Lama was talking to his daughter and asking questions about who she is and her life, Paul Ekman was feeling, through the physicality of touch, this unspoken intimacy, acceptance and connection – causal friendliness. He said that in its own simple way, it was quite a profound experience. It made him more sensitive to his own reactivity, his own way of holding back, or holding onto that kind of sorrow or bitterness we can have in our life; resentment, suspicion. He said that he marvelled at it, that this profundity, this deeply moving experience, was initiated by something very simple.

To my mind, this tells us something about practice. Maybe in our more thoughtful, complex and studious way of being, we search for some intricate, well-defined, truth to unlock the complexities of our being. But, sometimes it's helpful to look almost in the opposite direction, to something simple. Something we've known all our lives, since we were four, and held our best friend's hand. Something that murmurs through our lives, searching for expression. So I think of Norman's book as saying: yes, there is this enormous array of human characteristics, and when they come out in a certain way, they are indeed unsavoury. The whole of Odysseus' adventure: it's a drama story. He keeps getting into impossibly difficult situations. For example, he's travelling down a narrow gorge in a boat. If he goes this way, he'll be devoured by this monster. If he goes that way, he'll be devoured by this enormous whirlpool. Which way are you going to go? How impossibly complex life can be, when engaged in a certain way... when the goal of life is framed in a certain way.

So let me offer you a certain way of framing our life. When we go to sleep, which we do regularly, and appreciate, when we sleep soundly, waking up refreshed, it heals our body, quite literally, and often it softens our emotional difficulties... not always, but when we sleep soundly. It refreshes our mind. There's something innate in our being that knows how to reorganise, how to heal itself, how to rediscover its basic harmony. It's not something we learned in a book; we came with this capacity. Then, there's another human capacity: we eat, we breathe, to nourish our life, to give us energy, vitality. There's something about engagement that's life-affirming, life-supporting. It creates within us an optimism, an enthusiasm, a zest for life. So these are two very basic qualities that we have. To put the harshest terms on them, the first one, holding still and drawing in to re-create peacefulness and inner harmony in the service of healing and restoration, could be a kind of pushing away the world, a kind of aversion. From this perspective, at its heart, it's hatred. Let's start a war with them, because they are disrupting our inner harmony. We get angry to ward off that which is potentially dangerous. So this innate quality can take on harsh, destructive characteristics. And then the second quality of engagement, which is a necessary part of our vitality, can become desire,

greed, compulsive grasping and addiction. So part of the challenge is how not to forget the nobility of our core disposition, and how to learn how to be skilful with it, to see that it's a powerful force. It's asking us to learn how to handle it. As it comes forth, of course it references the circumstances that we live in. The practice of mindful awareness is about waking up and seeing what's going on in getting caught by it, and discovering through that education what is an appropriate response. How do we do that?

Let's meditate for a while. I hesitate to do this, because it's not so easy to have your mind do what you tell it. Anybody who's meditated knows this! But usually it's not totally out of our control either. So, find yourself in a settled, upright, spacious place. Grounded: touching that place of restoration; but also upright: opening to that enlivening engagement. Just contemplate: everyone here, everyone on this planet, has come from the womb. They've been a newborn baby; they've crawled; they've learnt how to walk; they've learnt how to talk. They've been a toddler, a four-year-old; they've been through the developmental phases of being a child; going through puberty, being a teenager. This is our common heritage – we have all gone through this, and it's been a challenging journey, as challenging as the journey Odysseus took - fraught with difficulties. Just for a moment, offer it yourself, and everyone else around you, and anyone you care to offer it to: wish for their well-being. Wish for your own well-being. "May I thrive on this human journey. May I remember the nobility, and not be overcome by inappropriate response. May I be well, may you be well." Contemplate that on this journey, none of us are perfect. We're not omnipotent, we're not omniscient. We have made mistakes, we will make mistakes. We've suffered as a consequence, and we've caused suffering as a consequence. Offer compassion to yourself, to others: "May they have the fortitude to hold their suffering. May they feel supported. May they not be overcome by it." Offering this to others, and to yourself. Then contemplate: we do indeed have a noble spirit, and at times it has shone through. There have been times of success, times of accomplishment, reasons for celebration, acknowledgement, and congratulations. So let's offer your good wishes, your congratulations, for the successes and joys that others have experienced; and acknowledge your own successes, joys and appreciations. Contemplate that every human life holds these sadnesses and joys, these failures and successes, these sufferings and delights. This is the nature of the human journey from birth to death. So be it. So it is. Yes indeed: you will be pushed and pulled by desire and aversion. Hold them both, as the waves and waves that come upon us in our journey, with a willingness, an acceptance, a settledness, and an equanimity.

As we engage in a practice of waking up, indeed we will touch our suffering, touch the residue of our difficult experiences. We also touch how they have formulated into a definition of who we are and what the world is, and how to engage the world. These formulations have become ingrained as habits, become part of our psychology as defence mechanisms. But also we can hold something to acknowledge: We're here today, because in living the life we're living we have witnessed experiences of wisdom. We've seen behaviours that have taught us something, whether we realised it or not. We've seen that the path of waking up is a worthy one; we've had that gift given to us, and something within us heard it, and said: "So it is. This is worthy of putting my energy into and committing my time to." There is something in when we pause and hold life in a bigger picture, when we know we're all in this together, and each of us goes from birth to death, and that none of us are perfect. We know that forgiveness plays a role in a human lives; that an honest acceptance of

who we are, rather than trying to ignore it and deny it, is an appropriate response. We know that there is something about the benevolence of causal friendliness, a steady constancy like on the breath, that is also a deep support. This is so close to equanimity: it doesn't leave us lost in a state of distress. Of course we will be pushed and pulled, we're going to lose our balance, but this equanimity has resilience to it: we fall down on our face, but then we get up. If you move too much into desire, accomplishment, performance, control, and gaining, back off a little bit. Ok, you're not getting what you want and that hurts – yes that does. Or, if you're leaning into security, safety... "I'm not doing that, it's too difficult, too uncertain. I'll just remain within what I know"... in a web of concern, maybe even fear and resentment. Look at that, but from a place of deeper knowing, not being fooled by it; not living a statement that says, "This is how to live life, from a place of fear and resentment." From a balance, not caught by fear and aversion. This requires a certain candidness about the human condition. But we're always moving into it and out of it. As Norman Fischer says, "Well, that's not so bad." I'm not sure what the rationale for hypocrisy was, but he managed! If nothing else the book is a marvel of Normans' ingenuity.

In my journey I have found an appreciation of poetry, because within it I've found an equanimity, a big picture. The human journey is just plain old amazing. I would challenge that if you'd told almost any one of us a decade ago what we are doing today, you would have been more or less incredulous: "I don't think so!" And yet, here we are. And maybe there's another decade ahead. That kind of larger appreciation. So, I'm going to quote the end of quite a long poem called "Things I didn't know I loved" by Nazim Hikmet. As he goes through the poem he quotes something quite simple, then gives an associated thought. Sometimes it has a charm and a sweetness, but sometimes it has a poignancy. For example, at one point he says, "I didn't know that I loved the blue sky." He was in prison for quite a while, and he says "I remember being in prison in the yard, looking up at the blue sky, and that was the same yard where they'd beat us." So, a kind of sweetness and sourness mixed together.

"Things I didn't know I loved", by Nazim Hikmet

*I didn't know I liked rain,
whether it falls like a fine net
or splatters against the glass.
My heart leaves me tangled up
in a net, or trapped inside a drop,
and takes off for uncharted countries.*

*I didn't know I loved rain
but why did I suddenly discover all these passions
sitting by the window on the Prague-Berlin train?
Is it because I lit my sixth cigarette?
One alone could kill me.
Is it because I'm half dead,
from thinking about someone back in Moscow,
her hair straw-blond, eyelashes blue?*

*The train plunges on through the pitch-black night -
I never knew I liked the night pitch-black.
Sparks fly from the engine -*

I didn't know I loved sparks

*I didn't know I loved so many things,
and I had to wait until sixty to find it out,
sitting by the window on the Prague-Berlin train,
watching the world disappear
as if on a journey of no return.*

In the heritage of Soto Zen, the prime mover, the catalyst, the primary agent for practicing, experiencing, realising, is this type of deep appreciation, this deep connection, to the nobility of the human spirit and condition; this re-awakening of a capacity for insight and skilfulness with the human life. The foundation for this is just sitting, and savouring each arising, even when we're in the process of being pushed and pulled, even when we're under the influence of what attracts us and pulls it into us, even when we're under the influence of our response to push away, to tighten our body, to tighten our mind, to try to control our experience. Let some engagement in our fundamental being be a gyroscope, so that as we go off balance, we come back to balance. Then, the very process of going off balance becomes a teacher. The very process of going off balance and coming back to balance teaches us about things we didn't know we loved. The very life that we're living, which in one frame of mind can seem like a web of restrictions, limitations, and entanglements, can be re-framed from a different disposition. Re-framed so that in some strange and beautiful way, we find it appropriate to appreciate to write a poem about called "Things I didn't know I loved".

Here's another poem I want to read that maybe leans too much towards... something. Maybe.

"It's this way." By Nazim Hikmet.

*I stand in the advancing light,
my hands hungry, the world beautiful.*

*My eyes can't get enough of the trees -
they're so hopeful, so green.*

*A sunny road runs through the mulberries,
I'm at the window of the prison infirmary.*

*I can't smell the medicines -
carnations must be blooming nearby.*

*It's this way:
being imprisoned is beside the point,
the point is not to surrender.*

Thank you.

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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 14: Summer

Sangha Update

By Michael Elsmere



Weekend at Trigonos Nantlle North Wales

Many of you will be aware that over the past few years a group of Dancing Mountains members have been actively working towards providing a clear working structure within which the sangha can develop and flourish. After Reb's 2010 retreat at Gaia House a small group met in November in Cheshire to modify and update the informal draft of the constitution from which the sangha had been working. This version, now outdated in our view, had been drafted as an 'interim,' working document during a meeting of four sangha members in 2008!



Frances Collins and Kath Bennett made us very welcome in Cheshire during the three-day meeting where we practiced together and had the wisdom and advice of Dene Donalds of the Order of Interbeing who has much experience in the area we were deliberating. As a result of this process Frances drafted a constitution based on that of 2008 along with extensive revisions based on her own research. This draft constitution was then circulated to the sangha and revisions and potential amendments were asked for some of these being incorporated. On Dene's advice it was also suggested that the sangha become a Community Interest Company in order to obtain the financial and

organisational advantages of this structure. It was decided to hold a further practice/discussion weekend at Trigonos from 29 April to 3 May. Trigonos www.trigonos.org is set amidst the spectacular mountains of Snowdonia. The staff were very friendly and welcoming, the accommodation comfortable and the vegetarian food delicious.

Invitations to this meeting were sent to all DM members. The following accepted: Frances Collins, Kath Bennett, Chris Brown (NE) Gill Jackman, Devin Ashwood, Francoise Elvin, Michael Elsmere (SW). Lucie Minne, Michael's wife was also present but took no part in sangha discussions. Many thanks to Dene who once again took time from his busy schedule to be with us to offer advice and encouragement.

On the first evening a schedule was decided based around noble silence, zazen and kinhin with morning service and recorded dharma talk early in the day. We walked together in the mountains in the afternoon (many thanks to Kath for her leadership and map reading) also for putting up with the complaints of 'I didn't know it was this far! 'This a lot further than yesterday etc.' Debate and discussion around the organisational matters took place in the in the evenings. Sitting together in silence swiftly brought us the deep intimacy of sangha but a large group of artists who appeared on the second day I think found our silence at breakfast a little puzzling!

Working our way through the paragraphs and sub paragraphs of the new constitution provided an opportunity for the discussion of lots of views and preferences but we came to consensus around most of the major issues. This document is now being finalised and should be circulated to the wider sangha soon.

With the arrival of Dene we began to study the implications of being a Community Interest Company and looking at the advantages and disadvantages of such organisations. If sangha members are interested the main points relating to these structures may be found at www.charity-commission.gov.uk

Devin has drawn up the required Memorandum and Articles of Association for a Community Interest Company Limited by Guarantee based on a template on the Charity Commission website and this will be available to the wider sangha within the next couple of months. Potential amendments to such documents are limited as they are based on company law.

This was an intensive weekend of practice and discussion but we all left feeling that we had made considerable progress to our aims and objectives of nurturing the life of Dancing Mountains.

We were privileged once again to experience the strength, power and insight afforded by Buddha, dharma and sangha.

I wish to thank everyone in the Trigonos group for their commitment, energy and insights around these vital aspects of DM organisation.

Many thanks also once again to Dene Donalds of The Order of Interbeing for his generosity and for making the complicated and legalistic appear clear and attainable!

Thanks to Jo of Trigonos for the wonderful photo at the head of this article.



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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

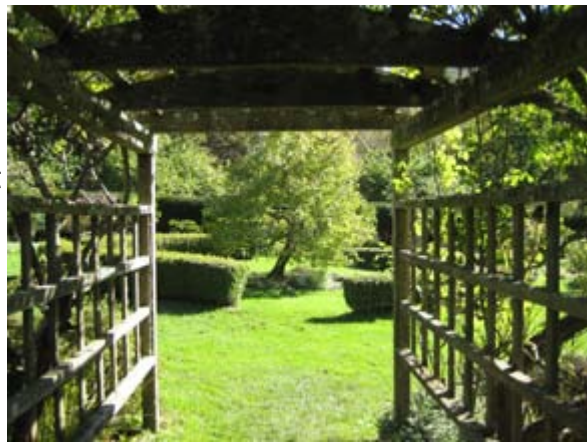
Issue 14: Summer

Retreat Report

By Lucy Ellis

Practice Period at Green Gulch

I've just got back to the UK after seven and a half months away. Last October I went to the eight week fall practice period at San Francisco Zen Center's Green Gulch Farm. I went back to Green Gulch for five weeks in January, to work in the kitchen during and after Reb Anderson's intensive winter retreat. Then some other stuff happened, then in April I went to the Satchidananda Ashram in Virginia, to train to teach Integral



Yoga. And now I'm back. The moment I got home, it felt as if I'd never been away. Everything that happened since I left last October feels like Alice in Wonderland. I keep being confused by how warm it is, and it takes a moment to remember that it's summer again, already.

I was asked if I'd like to write something about my time away – and I would! – but feelings of frustration keep coming up about how little it's possible to communicate. At Green Gulch I grew to love the Genjo Koan, mainly the bit about being in a boat in the middle of the ocean, and how the ocean looks circular, but actually its features are infinite in variety. I'm so aware that anything I write down here will just be this tiny circle of water, when I wish I could show you all the millions of inlets and cliffs and beaches of the last seven months, or even just of the practice period. But let's have a go anyway.

The first week of October last year, I left my job in London, packed my stuff into a 10' by 10' storage unit, said goodbye to my friends and family, and flew to San Francisco for the eight week fall practice period at San Francisco Zen Center's Green Gulch Farm. On arrival I had the most violent episode of food poisoning of my entire life. Or rather, my body freaked out completely at the sudden massive change that it



was being subjected to.

Before going to practice period, I had only been to two sesshins, and had never managed to develop a regular sitting practice. But ever since turning up by chance at Meiya Wender's zen forms and ceremonies retreat at Gaia House in March 2009, I'd felt this persistent attraction to zen center. So I thought maybe a good way to establish a regular home practice would be to go and practice with a community for a bit. I naively assumed that the practice period would be full of people with similar stories to me. Turned out not: all of the other 28 students had a longstanding daily sitting practice; and half of them were already residents at Green Gulch.

Due to my whole-body freak out, I arrived a day late, when these 28 sombre-looking strangers were already sitting Tangaryo (the day of continuous sitting that opens practice period). The place felt totally alien and unwelcoming. It was overcast and drizzly, and the low buildings huddled beneath massive dark trees felt gloomy and oppressive. It wasn't til much later, when the sun came out, that I started to love the place.

Green Gulch Farm
GREEN DRAGON TEMPLE

DAILY SCHEDULE
Practice Period
Fall 2010

<p>MONDAY, TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY, SATURDAY</p> <p>4:35 Wake-up Bell ends 5:00 ZAZEN 5:40 Kinhin 5:50 ZAZEN 6:30 Morning Service 7:00 Soji 7:20 Breakfast 8:30 Work Meeting 11:45 End Work 12:00 Noon Service 12:15 Lunch 1:40 Work 2:00 End Work 4:00 Study 5:15 ZAZEN 5:50 Evening Service 6:00 Dinner 7:30 ZAZEN (or Class or Dharma Talk until Refuges/End of Day) 8:10 Kinhin 8:20 ZAZEN 8:55 Three Refuges 9:00 End of Day/ Firewatch</p>	<p>THURSDAY</p> <p>4:35 Wake-up Bell ends 5:00 ZAZEN 5:40 Kinhin 5:50 ZAZEN 6:30 Morning Service 7:00 Oryoki Breakfast 7:50 Soji/Dishes 8:10 Room Cleaning 9:35 ZAZEN 10:10 Kinhin 10:20 ZAZEN 10:55 Kinhin 11:05 ZAZEN 11:35 End Zazen 11:40 Nenju Ceremony 12:15 Lunch <i>Personal Time</i> 6:00 Dinner 9:00 Firewatch</p>	<p>FRIDAY</p> <p>7:45 Breakfast BAG LUNCH or 12:15 Lunch 1:00 Dishes <i>Personal Time</i> 6:00 Dinner 7:45 ZAZEN 8:25 Three Refuges 8:30 End of Day 9:00 Firewatch</p>
<p>TUESDAY, THURSDAY, SATURDAY <i>Oryoki Breakfast</i></p> <p><i>Residents are welcome to join the Practice Period for oryoki breakfast. Please let the staff know a few days in advance if you would like to share in the oryoki meal.</i></p>	<p>SUNDAY <i>Regular morning schedule until:</i></p> <p>6:50 Soji 7:20 Breakfast 8:00 Class or 8:30 Work 10:15 Lecture 11:15 Q&A Schedule or Work Schedule (see crew head for your assignments) until: 2:00 End Work <i>Regular afternoon/evening schedule resumes.</i></p>	

The first two weeks felt like I'd joined the army for basic training. The basic schedule was overwhelming enough (wake up 4.30, five periods of zazen a day, three services, work and study), but on top of that all the free time early on was taken up with learning forms and ceremonies, training for zendo jobs and oryoki. After two weeks my back gave out in protest. There was a one-day sit where it rained all day, and from my seat in the barely-lit zendo it felt like the sun never even came up. The next day I stood up too quickly and felt a sharp pang in my lower back. The physical pain brought everything else up and I felt totally broken, physically, mentally, emotionally. I signed off work and crawled into bed in defeat. And then Arlene, Green Gulch's wonderful Tanto (head of practice) sailed into my room, all robes and compassion. She sat with me while I sobbed uncontrollably, and then swept me off to her house and fed me tea and chocolate all afternoon while doing some amazingly reassuring straight-talking about how weird Zen Center can feel.

From there, more or less, things went slowly uphill. My back gradually calmed down, although sitting remained a massive challenge physically. Mentally and emotionally, it became slightly more bearable. Maybe once every few days I'd even have a period of zazen where my mind really did quieten down to the point where it felt like I could just watch, without getting involved. I started to connect with the other practice period students, and by the end of November they all felt like old friends. We had study period most afternoons, sitting quietly at long tables in Cloud Hall next to the Zendo, and I'd find myself looking round at these people reading or sewing and feel completely filled with love for them all.

I discovered that I love living in community. I love getting up each day with a whole bunch of like-



mindful people, all making their best effort to practice. I grew to love the forms – I miss bowing when you sit down to eat with people! It amazed me how quickly it all sunk in. One time in November, I saw a guest in the zendo with a sitting bench casually slung over her arm rather than held up carefully with both

hands, and felt a reaction of shocked disapproval... and then double shock to realise how quickly I'd gone from being the person who innocently gets the form wrong, to the person who's become too attached to the form!

I loved the zendo, and services, and dharma talks and classes and practice discussions. I love the books that I had time to read. There were also moments – sometimes days at a time – that I hated, and practicing with that was invaluable. Linda Ruth, Green Gulch's abiding senior dharma teacher, led the practice period, and sitting with and talking with her over eight weeks was awesome. Her theme for the seven-day sesshin that ends practice period was "just this". Just this moment. Just this person. When I was hating sesshin, dying to run away, her teaching was – great, the "just this" of hating sesshin and dying to run away. What a precious moment. Whatever you're thinking or feeling, just turn it up a notch and suddenly it's the wonderful, fascinating experience of your own life! What amazing luck, to be here for this ride, to experience all this hatred and anger and fear – and joy and love and gratitude – and to really start to understand that all of it is just an illusion!

The first three days of sesshin were pure torture. (Schedule: wake up 4.30am; ten or eleven periods of zazen a day plus a dharma talk; no work period; all meals at your seat in the zendo). I was eating oryoki at a table because of my back injury, but sitting in a chair felt just as tortuous as sitting on a cushion. There were a couple of meals that I wept right through, and it took everything I had not to push the table over and run out of the side doors of the zendo. On the third day I saw Linda Ruth for practice discussion. I told her about all this agony and drama, and she said - that's funny, because, from the outside it looks like you're just sitting there, totally calm. Just sitting sesshin.

The fourth day I woke up and all the pain had gone. Days four and five floated by in a state of pretty much bliss, as far as I can remember. Days six and seven dragged a bit, but then the whole thing ended and I was again filled with all these amazing feelings of calm and love and gratitude to everyone and everything.



And then I slept for three days straight.

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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 14: Summer

Retreat Report

By Chris & Clare
Hannah

Retreat with Paul Haller in Northern Ireland

April 2011 – Entering the Gates of Love –

a brief account of our time with Paul Haller in Northern Ireland

Attempts to secure a place on this retreat started us off into a world of wonderment. How does this work? What will it be like joining this community? What does this way of joining invite us into?

Thanks to Facebook we connected with Stephen Williamson and from that moment onwards we were warmly and lovingly welcomed to joining the Black Mountains Sangha Sesshin with Paul Haller.

Finding ourselves meeting Stephen and others at their Centre in Belfast we journey together by taxi to the retreat venue ready to set up and dine on tea and chip butties.

Sitting with this wonderful group was touching from the outset; the unintended long open sit was just stunning in its attunement to stillness and silence; finding a place of joining with mostly unknown beings.

Paul's rich talks gently pointed to multiple ways of connecting to experience and staying as best we could with our bodily ways of knowing. Longer that previously experienced outside Kinhin was a sensory delight and a context for staying connected to the moment.

The work periods most days were joyfully spent in warm spring sunshine weeding and clearing an overgrown grotto, some ventured into some skilful rock climbing but the likes of me stayed firmly on safer ground. The daily yoga session was a great help and inspiration.

The theme of love flows though my recollection of this retreat as it did for much of the retreat itself. As Maturana has said "Love is the fundament of social phenomena and not its consequence", the love that pre-existed the retreat was found in our ways of connection.

Thanks so much to Stephen and the BM Sangha for such a great welcome and look forward to being with you again when we can – Chris & Clare



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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 14: Summer

Sangha Update

By Kate Bell

Hebden Bridge group update

What started as a small group of friends meeting in a living room once a week to share sitting, laughter and cake has grown into an established Zen Sangha. Whilst we still share sitting, laughter and cake, the group has expanded and is welcoming newcomers on a weekly basis. We meet in the local yoga centre on a Sunday evening and owing to popular demand, we have recently agreed to add another zazen session during the week. We ran a very successful 'all night' sitting last month and plan to make this a regular bi-monthly event. We have already shared several inspiring weekend retreats with several teachers and feel very lucky that Ingen Breen (student of Norman Fischer) has kindly agreed to lead our next retreat for us at the end of June. Our final piece of exciting news is that we are in the process of planning our first residential retreat in Hebden Bridge in November this year. So if anyone has any ideas about retreat themes or teachers who might be interested in visiting us, or you would just like to come along to one of our retreats, then please contact Rebecca on 07970 425932 You are all welcome and we can always find a room for those people who need to stay overnight.

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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 14: Summer

Poetry

By Francoise Elvin

This Love Thing

This love thing;
It's a tussle thing,
A hussle thing.

From the rustle of those silk skirts,
Fall the diamonds destined for flirts-

But what of those who mined them?

Dirt poor and sweating, far from home
Never quite sure where they belong;
Sifting through so much grit
In search of fragments of sky
Here on earth:

It's someone hidden putting in
The Work.
Pick-axing the crack
That will flood the
Darkness with
Light.

The salt of that sweat
Is the condiment
I will
Sprinkle on
Our
Loving.

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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 14: Summer

Poetry

By Rebecca Habergham

Hearing the Dawn

Love
knowing
being
even before this name
that this is what joins us all
beyond
before

looking for loving
asleep

searching soul
grasping for the unmet
in an empty name
and another
easy falling word
love

beds and bars
books and naked bodies
yet
densely cloaked
yet
called freedom?

freedom of the cloak
of
intoxication and passion
promises of futures and hopes met
but
eyes, averted
unable to look
sleeping seperately
the same bed
I called intimacy
love

covered

ashamed
unboundaried
bound
no container of compassion

instead
wandering
inherited dis ease
passed on through generations
subtle
unrest
learnt and relearnt

until

still
silence

awaking to
soft secrets shared
through the dawn mist
of intimacy
reflected
through dew
hanging
and falling
and becoming unseen
one
with the earth

this still space
sharing its gift
which always was
in all before

including
being

kicked to the floor
face spat in

within that
being held in love

no place to spit outside of this

but my stories and cloaks of fear
and pain
retold and held true
then
too dense and real
to see
beneath

and be
held

the hand that hurt you
was also
the hand that held you
within the same shared breath.

lessons in loving

distant echoes of a divine dance
humility and gentle embraces
laughter
no place to reach to
no other
returning

through the dawn mist
sun rising
through tears
hanging
and falling
and becoming unseen
again
in the earth.

lessons in loving

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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 14: Summer

Poetry

By Francoise Elvin

Love Sandwich

Caught: sandwiched between
Love and more love:
How can I resist?
How much longer can I pretend?

This warmth; your warmth,
Seeping stealthily into me:
Demonstrating how
Pores and capillaries
Dilate.

This sweetness and pain
Mixed forever like
Flour and swollen rain...

This bleeding like
Surrender;
Like a Queen
Who loosens her
Robe,
Which falling,
Buckles and convulses
To the ground..

I notice then the blindfold:
Your prescription
For taking me deeper
Into this: the
Saving Grace
Of my
Undoing.

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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 14: Summer

Poetry

By Lena Svensson

SPRING

I step back;
Falling in love
is an explosion
of my own possibility to love
projected in this moment
on one human being
I take a deep breath
Bodily waves cease
into the sea of my smiling
expanded heart
I was knocked down by myself
I'm lifted up by the Unborn
I fell in love with one person
I rise in compassion with all beings

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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 14: Summer

Poetry

By Catherine Thompson

Calm and peaceful

The tide is coming in
The sun is setting but it's still warm
Lying raised on a rock, big but one of many
Face toward the water below, watching the waves break
Gradually a little further up, around me
The gentle falling of the sea onto the shore,
The sucking pull as it falls back, seemingly reluctant
An empty beach
A way back across the high rocks
To my tent

Not calm

A crowded room
A private battle that has become very public
Talking over each other, tangled up
I must be heard and understood before
I can begin to hear you
You must listen, you must stop telling me
What I have done wrong
I see and hear nothing else than that
My life depends on this stopping

Combined

The tide is coming in
A crowded room
A private battle that has become very public
The tide is coming in
The sun is setting but it's still warm
Talking over each other, tangled up
I must be heard and understood
Before I can begin to hear you
You must listen, you must stop telling me
What I have done wrong
I see and hear nothing else than that
My life depends on this stopping
The gentle falling of the sea onto the shore

The sucking pull as it falls back, seemingly reluctant
An empty beach
A way back across the high rocks
To my tent

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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 14: Summer

Creative Writing

By Catherine Thompson

I am a toaster

And I'm fed up of having crumbs in the bottom of me – it's irritating and

I'm sort of stuck in the corner – I don't move but I've got a pretty good view. I can see out the window and anyone walking into the kitchen – it's hilarious what they look like first thing in the morning.

I'm white and a bit plain, actually to be honest I don't think I'm plain, nice lines and white and sort of sleek. I do think I'm quite attractive. They bought a new kettle though – it's black and goes blue in the bit where the water is boiling – I get on alright with it but get a bit grumpy when it lights up...but enough about the other kitchen appliances, we're talking about me.

I love having the job of toasting things, and I love being used..Bread and crumpets are what normally come my way.

Suppose when I'm not toasting I sometimes feel a bit cold and empty but that's not all the time – I love toasting but I wouldn't want to toast all the time – it can feel a bit odd when something is put in me and the thrill when the lever is pushed down.

I'm just wondering what I am now when I'm not toasting..but then I thought I have a sort of basket on top of me that warms things – bit gentler but they don't use that much.

No-one's ever asked me what it's like being a toaster before – is that what you asked? I feel quite important.

Now thinking about that smell of toast – they love it, heard them talking the other day, saying that someone had decided it was the world's favourite smell

I did that – me

Can't seem to smell it myself though, not even sure I can smell

I feel warm though when I'm toasting, I'm surprised by how much thinking I'm doing – seems that really that's all the experience I can access at the moment, the toasting and that warm feeling and the thinking

I have these sort of jaggedy metal platforms in me
Oh and I just felt the spring

And I'm feeling a bit worn out with all this introspection now

And I just wondered if I ever got hungry but I don't actually know

You ask me to tell you what it's like being a toaster and now you've got me wondering

And something funny just occurred to me – I don't have any choice (or do I) when the toast springs up but sometimes it makes people jump

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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 14: Summer

Book Review

By Michael Elsmere

Living Buddha Living Christ

by Thich Nhat Hanh

Buddha and Jesus are two of the most influential spiritual teachers the world has known. Today centuries after their deaths both continue to shape the lives of many millions of followers. Despite the fact that the teachings at the heart of both faiths emphasise love, compassion and tolerance we often find many examples of bigotry, narrowness and unthinking fundamentalism that cause division. In this book 'Living Buddha Living Christ,' Thich Nhat Hanh takes us eloquently beyond this narrowness and asks us to let go of views and to meditate on our essential humanity and oneness. Through scriptural reference and teachings from Buddhism and Christianity he underlines the unity of vision that lies at the heart of both faiths.

Elaine Pagels in her introduction directs us to the loving compassion that was so central to the early Christians. Later in its history this emphasis was to some degree masked by new trends and politics within the young church. The Gnostic Gospels that the discoveries at Nag Hammadi in Upper Egypt in 1945 revealed emphasised the role of rigorous self-searching to find 'gnosis' or self-understanding. The Gospel of Thomas states;

'let the one who seeks not stop seeking until he finds. When he finds he shall be troubled. When he becomes troubled he will be amazed and shall come to transcend all things.'

Thich Nhat Hanh does not avoid describing the youthful difficulties that prevented him having a close understanding and tolerance of Christianity. In Vietnam at that time Buddhists were often discriminated against in favour of Christianity. It was only through his later meetings with Martin Luther King and other inspirational Christians that he came to understand and recognise the power of love that is its essence.

'We have different roots, traditions and ways of seeing but we share the common qualities of love, understanding and acceptance.'

Living Buddha Living Christ

Thich Nhat Hanh

Riverhead Books

ISBN 1-57322-568-1

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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 14: Summer

Article

By Michael Elsmere

What is Love?

Love and biology
Is this love?

Love is an evolved state of the survival instinct, primarily used to keep human beings together against menaces and to facilitate the continuation of the species through reproduction.

I love my iphone!
Is this love?

Can this really be love? It may be argued that we all understand that the word love in this context is being misused. We all know somehow that we cannot actually 'love,' an object such as a mobile phone or a film. Or can we? By attaching this word love to cars, houses, and other material objects commerce and the media are hoping to invoke or are invoking the emotions that are actually implicit in the word 'love,' when used in its true sense. Which is?

I love her/him.
Is this love?

Is love desire? Most of us humans seem to be caught inextricably into this fusion of desire/pleasure and love. What sex seems to give us is a way of totally losing ourselves in the other. But this of course is only a temporary state. So we need constant repetition of that state in which all our problems and our very selves just disappear. What else makes our hearts beat so fast? What else makes us swoon with feeling? What else renders us so intensely alive? Adoring someone, sleeping with someone, the emotional exchange, the companionship - is this what we mean by love? Our culture appears to accept that romantic love is the pinnacle of life. Popular literature, movies, TV, art, and music celebrate this western view of love that grew out of medieval chivalry and the adoration of the Virgin Mary. These feelings obliterate reason as poets have long reminded us. This, is it would, seem is part of its charm and power. We want to be swept up and spirited out of our usual lives. "Want" here is important for it is this 'wanting' of love that leads us to become desperate. But this want or demand to be 'safe' in relationship can often provoke sorrow and insecurity. Can we find security in relationship in this way? Most of us want the security of loving and being loved, but can this exist if we are each selfishly seeking personal security?

I love my wife/partner.

Is this love?

Involved in this love of our wives/partners is sexual pleasure, of having someone to help look after our children. We depend on him/ her. He/she has given us his/her body, his/her emotions, his/her encouragement along with a certain feeling of security and well-being. But sometimes this goes wrong. He/she gets bored with us, or falls in love with someone else and our whole emotional balance is destroyed and this disturbance, which is disagreeable is called jealousy. There is pain in it, often anxiety, hate and violence. So perhaps the real situation here is a 'deal,' that can be stated, as long as you belong to me, are useful to me I love you. The moment you don't I might begin to hate you. As long as I can rely on you to satisfy my demands, sexual and otherwise, I love you, but the moment you cease to supply what I want I don't like you. Is this love?

I love my son/daughter.

Is this love?

Most parents think they are responsible for their children and this sense of responsibility takes the form of control, of telling their offspring what they should do and what they should not do, what they should become and what they should not become. Most parents want their children to have a happy life within society. But often it is respectability parents worship and they are really concerned only with becoming perfect bourgeoisie and ensuring their children fit this mould also. When preparing their children to merge into society in this unthinking way parents are unknowingly (because they also have been brought up in that manner) perpetuating the short sightedness, materialism and delusion within that society. Is this love and tender care? It could be viewed as the parent's pride and their living vicariously through their offspring.

I love my country.

Is this love?

In time of war we are often given permission by governments to go off and murder and inflict misery and worse on our 'enemies'. Enormous sums of money in the world's economies are devoted to supplying soldier/citizens with the armaments to do this. Can patriotism ever be love?

The ultimate sacrifice

Is this love?

'Greater love hath no man/woman than this that he/she lay down his/her life for his/her friends.'

Is this love?

Karuna is compassion and mercy, which reduces the suffering of others. It is complementary to wisdom and is necessary for enlightenment.

Is this love?

Metta is a benevolent love. This love is 'unconditional,' and requires self-acceptance and self knowledge. So this is quite different from ordinary useage of the word 'love,' which is as we have seen often about attachment and rarely therefore occurs without self-interest. Metta conveys the sense of a certain detachment an an unselfish interest in others' welfare.

Is this love?

The Bodhisattva is an ideal in Mahayana Buddhism. To take the path of the Bodhisattva is to hold the idea of enlightenment within an unselfish, altruistic love for all sentient beings

Is this love?

"So can the mind come upon love without discipline, without thought, without enforcement, without any book, any teacher or leader - come upon it as one comes upon a lovely sunset? It seems to me that one thing is absolutely necessary and that is passion without motive - passion that is not the result of some commitment or attachment, passion that is not lust. A man who does not know what passion is will never know love because love can come into being only when there is total self-abandonment. A mind that is seeking is not a passionate mind and to come upon love without seeking it is the only way to find it - to come upon it unknowingly and not as the result of any effort or experience. Such a love, you will find, is not of time; such a love is both personal and impersonal, is both the one and the many. Like a flower that has perfume you can smell it or pass it by. That flower is for everybody and for the one who takes trouble to breathe it deeply and look at it with delight. Whether one is very near in the garden, or very far away, it is the same to the flower because it is full of that perfume and therefore it is sharing with everybody."

Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895 –1986)

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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 14: Summer

Article

By Anon

Installing Love on the Human Computer:

Tech Support: Yes, how can I help you?

Customer: Well, after much consideration, I've decided to install Love. Can you guide me through the process?

Tech Support: Yes. I can help you. Are you ready to proceed?

Customer: Well, I'm not very technical, but I think I'm ready. What do I do first?

Tech Support: The first step is to open your Heart. Have you located your Heart?

Customer: Yes, but there are several other programs running now. Is it okay to install Love while they are running?

Tech Support: What programs are running ?

Customer: Let's see, I have Past Hurt, Low Self-Esteem, Grudge and Resentment running right now.

Tech Support: No problem, Love will gradually erase Past Hurt from your current operating system. It may remain in your permanent memory but it will no longer disrupt other programs. Love will eventually override Low Self-Esteem with a module of its own called High Self-Esteem. However, you have to completely turn off Grudge and Resentment. Those programs prevent Love from being properly installed. Can you turn those off?

Customer: I don't know how to turn them off. Can you tell me how?

Tech Support: With pleasure. Go to your start menu and invoke Forgiveness. Do this as many times as necessary until Grudge and Resentment have been completely erased.

Customer: Okay, done! Love has started installing itself. Is that normal?

Tech Support: Yes, but remember that you have only the base program. You need to begin connecting to other Hearts in order to get the upgrades.

Customer: Oops! I have an error message already. It says, "Error - Program not run on external components." What should I do?

Tech Support: Don't worry. It means that the Love program is set up to run on Internal Hearts, but has not yet been run on your Heart. In non-technical terms, it simply means you have to Love yourself before you can Love others.

Customer: So, what should I do?

Tech Support: Pull down Self-Acceptance; then click on the following files: Forgive-Self; Realize Your Worth; and Acknowledge your Limitations.

Customer: Okay, done.

Tech Support: Now, copy them to the "My Heart" directory. The system will overwrite any conflicting files and begin patching faulty programming. Also, you need to delete Verbose Self-Criticism from all directories and empty your Recycle Bin to make sure it is completely gone and never comes back.

Customer: Got it. Hey! My heart is filling up with new files. Smile is playing on my monitor and Peace and Contentment are copying themselves all over My Heart. Is this normal?

Tech Support: Sometimes. For others it takes awhile, but eventually everything gets it at the proper time. So Love is installed and running.

One more thing before we hang up. Love is Freeware. Be sure to give it and its various modules to everyone you meet. They will in turn share it with others and return some cool modules back to you.

Customer: Thank you, God.

God/Tech Support: You're Welcome, Anytime.

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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 14: Summer

Article

By Anon

Was Socrates a Buddhist?

In ancient Greece (469 - 399 BC), Socrates was widely lauded for his wisdom.

Keep this philosophy (precept?) in mind the next time you hear or are about to repeat a rumor.

One day the great philosopher came upon an acquaintance, who ran up to him excitedly and said,

"Socrates, do you know what I just heard about one of your students...?"

"Wait a moment," Socrates replied. "Before you tell me, I'd like you to pass a little test. It's called the Test of Three."

"Test of Three?"

"That's correct," Socrates continued.

"Before you talk to me about my student let's take a moment to test what you're going to say. The first test is Truth.

Have you made absolutely sure that what you are about to tell me is true?"

"No," the man replied, "actually I just heard about it."

"All right," said Socrates. "So you don't really know if it's true or not. Now let's try the second test, the test of Goodness.

Is what you are about to tell me about my student something good?"

"No, on the contrary..."

"So," Socrates continued, "you want to tell me something bad about him even though you're not certain it's true?"

The man shrugged, a little embarrassed.

Socrates continued, "You may still pass though because there is a third test - the filter of Usefulness.

Is what you want to tell me about my student going to be useful to me?"

"No, not really.."

"Well," concluded Socrates, "if what you want to tell me is neither true nor good nor even useful, why tell it to me at all?"

The man was defeated and ashamed and said no more..

"Socrates was famous in Athens for saying, "Know thyself." It is said that one of his students said to him, "Socrates, you go around saying "Know thyself," but do you know yourself?" Socrates was said to have replied, "No, but I understand something about this not knowing".

Jon Kabat-Zinn

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