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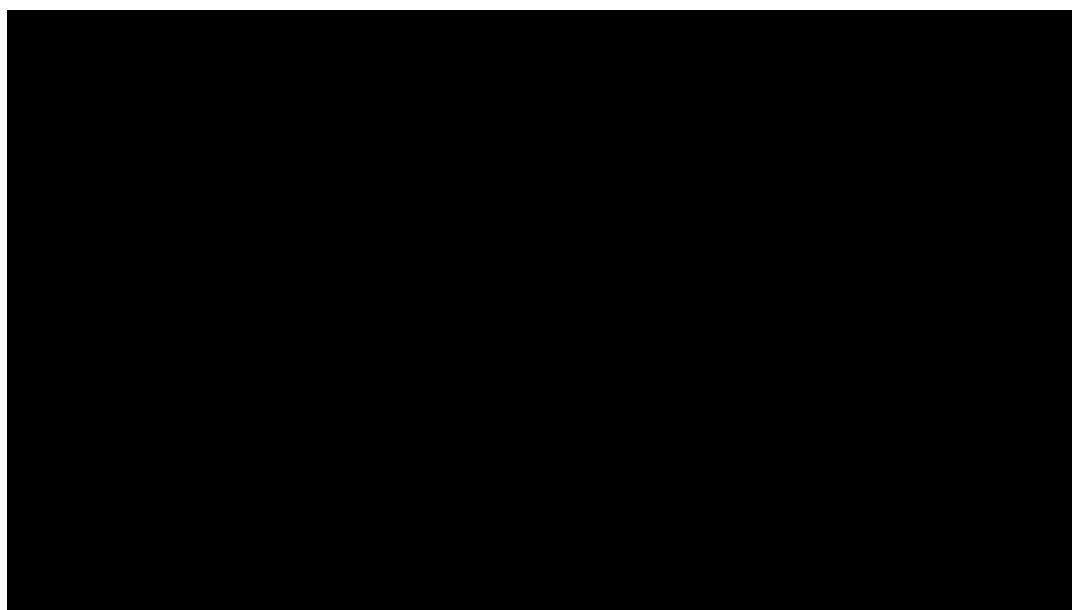


MOUNTAIN SILENCE

NEWSLETTER OF THE DANCING MOUNTAINS ZEN SANGHA

Issue 15: Autumn 2011

The Four Noble Truths



Meditation Flashmob in Hebden Bridge, Youtube video by Rachel Hawthorn

Editorial

by Devin Ashwood

As we head into the autumn of a year without a visit from our dear teacher Reb Anderson Roshi, the efforts of our sangha to keep his practice alive in our country and in our hearts begin to become apparent. The burgeoning diversity and quantity of events organised by the sangha are testimony to a commitment to upholding the forms and ceremonies that have been transmitted here by Reb and other teachers and disciples in the lineage of Shunryu Suzuki Roshi. I am consistently given heart as I read in this issue of the inspiration and creativity of my friends here who find new and creative ways to connect in the spirit of Zen practice.

This edition takes us back to the beginning of this movement called buddhism. The fundamental first teaching given by the Buddha. The four noble truths, hailing as they do from the 'hinayana' sutras, are often surprisingly overlooked by students of Zen who may be attracted to some of the ceremonial practices of liberation such as Zazen but who have little interest in the teachings that got the whole wheel rolling.

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Book Review

Reb Anderson Roshi in the talk transcribed in this edition makes clear how this first talk given by the Buddha is directly relevant to our practice right now, in this very moment and every moment. He asks:

"Do you see the truth of suffering right now?"

"Do you see that abandoning any kind of manipulation, any kind of messing with what's happening is the realization of freedom?"

It is all here for your attention.

In the service of developing our programme, inviting teachers over and subsidising the costs for people to attend retreats with them, we would like to invite you to develop fundraising ideas.

We are also looking for people to get involved in everything from newsletter and website development to developing the organisations legal structure and practice opportunities. Please get in touch if you can help with any of this.

It is your energy that will carry this movement of freedom or let it fade. Please join us in working for a more compassionate and wise world where we can all take responsibility for the practice of liberation being available to all.

Myoyu has contacted us from SFZC with the idea of getting Suzuki Roshi calendar or diaries for 2012 sent here, for presents or possibly for fundraising purposes. If you would like to pursue this, please get in touch.

Dharma Talk

The Eightfold Noble Path

by Reb Anderson Roshi

The cosmic vision of the Buddha Shakyamuni is that there are two modes of existence open to living beings - two and only two with no in between... [Read more...](#)

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Sangha Update

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By Kate Bell

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Upcoming Events

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

November 18 - November 20
*Ingen Breen, Non-residential retreat, Totnes.

November 18
Brad Warner (Hardcore Zen!), Talk, Manchester.

November 19
Brad Warner (Hardcore Zen!), Day retreat, Manchester.

November 25 - November 27
*Ingen Breen, Residential retreat, Hebden Bridge.

Retreat Report

Fukanzazengi retreat in Warminster

By Michael Kogan Muju

As part of Dancing Mountains' growing number of regional retreats Devin organised the weekend entitled above. We were very fortunate to have as our guide Kaiyo Diana Gerard... [Read more...](#)

Retreat Report

The Sound of Music with One Hand Clapping - retreat at Felsentor

By Mark Øvland

In June this year I was lucky enough to sit my first sesshin with Reb, hosted in a picture-perfect temple halfway up a Swiss Alp... [Read more...](#)

Book Review

Robert M Pirsig: Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance

By Michael Elsmere

And what is good Phaedrus?
And what is not good?
Need we ask anyone to tell us these things?. [Read more...](#)

Retreat Report

Combined retreat with COI

By Chris Brown

In July 2011 we ran a joint Zen weekend retreat combining the traditions of Shunryu Suzuki and The Community of Interbeing.. [Read more...](#)

Poetry

By the White Lighthouse

By Francoise Elvin

Because your bright face
reminds me of unhampered
precious things,
still ignorant of
patience or pretence... [Read more...](#)

Poetry

Apples in Avalon

By Francoise Elvin

Sometimes I
want you inside me,
then I
let myself fall into
the Russian Doll Reality
that all ready is... [Read more...](#)

Poetry

New Plantation

By Francoise Elvin



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

Winter issue publication date: 21st December, deadline for submission of material 1st December.

Submissions to the Newsletter/Website:

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Donations

Download a printable [subscription form](#) for one-off or regular donations to Dancing Mountains.

Nomenclature;
nomen-clutter,
nomen-clatter:-
Names;
sutures on fresh wounds... [Read more...](#)

Poetry

By Frances Collins

Partners of light and shadow
the beating wings of a moth... [Read more...](#)

Event

By Matthew Ryan

Zen Priest , Author & Punk Rock Bass Player
In Manchester, the enigma that is Brad Warner will be coming to Manchester
on Saturday November 19... [Read more...](#)

Next issue of Mountain Silence

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

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

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For enquiries related to this newsletter please email: devin@dancingmountains.org.uk

MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 15: Autumn

Dharma Talk

The Eightfold Noble Path - November, 1996, at San Francisco Zen Center

By Reb Anderson Roshi



Transcribed by Frances Collins
Edited by Devin Ashwood

The cosmic vision of the Buddha Shakyamuni is that there are two modes of existence open to living beings - two and only two with no in between.

One mode is called the circle, samsara. The other is called cessation, nirvana. These are the two ways that we can live. Practicing the eightfold path is the realization of nirvana. Not practicing the eightfold path is the realization of samsara. The eightfold path is what I often speak of as being upright. Being upright is the eightfold path.

Being upright realizes nirvana. Not being upright realizes samsara. The eightfold path, being upright, is not messing with samsara. Not messing with samsara is nirvana. Messing with nirvana is samsara. The course of learning how to stop messing with samsara and thus realize the uncreated, unmade, unfabricated nirvana is the eightfold path. Nirvana is the un-messing, uncreated way of responding to life, even life in samsara. Nirvana can exist in the middle of samsara. The fourth noble truth was first spoken of as the eightfold noble path leading to the cessation of suffering. The fourth truth is the eightfold path leading to the realization of nirvana - the cessation of suffering.

Later disciples of Buddha would say that the eightfold path is the way of realizing nirvana. The eightfold path leads to and is the realization of the cessation of suffering. The first aspect of the eightfold path is called right view or right understanding. It is the eye of the path. It is the guide dog for the blind. It is also the ear of the path and the nose of the path, the tongue and the body of the path. Right view sees, looks at, and meditates upon the four noble truths. It looks at the path. It looks at all the other aspects of the path, watches them and guides them. It also looks at the other truths. It watches suffering. It watches the cause of suffering. It sees the end of suffering. It looks at samsara and looks at nirvana at the same time. It sees the relationship between samsara and nirvana. It sees delusion and it sees enlightenment

...at the same time. This is right view. It just sees. It doesn't prefer nirvana over delusion, nirvana over samsara. It sees both at the same time. It sees the first truth of suffering. It sees this is the truth of suffering. It sees it all the time.

It sees this is the condition for suffering. It sees this is the end of suffering. It sees this is the realization of the end of suffering. It sees that. This is right view. Right view sees this in the present. Right now, right view is to see the first truth.

Do you see right now the first truth?

Do you see the truth of suffering right now?

Do you see right now that in brief, the truth of suffering is that to see the self and the five aggregates as separate is suffering?

Do you see that right now?

Do you see right now that seeing yourself as separate from any other living being is suffering?

Do you see that?

Do you feel that?

Do you smell that?

Do you touch that?

Do you taste that?

Right now!

Do you see the condition for the arising of suffering?

Do you see the delusion that you're separate from other beings as the condition of suffering?

Do you see the craving for something other than this as the condition for suffering?

Do you see it right now?

Do you see right now that the abandonment of the delusion that you are separate from other beings, that the abandonment of the delusion that you are separate from your own five aggregates will be cessation of suffering?

Do you see that right now?

Do you see that seeing that is the way of realizing the cessation of suffering?

Do you see that not seeing that is the condition for endless suffering?

Do you see that?

If you see all that, this is called right view.

Do you see that?

Do you hear that?

Do you see that abandoning any kind of manipulation, any kind of messing with what's happening is the realization of freedom, peace and the end of suffering?

This is called right view. Right view sees, right view hears, right view smells, right view tastes the laws of karma. It sees how karma drives the wheel of suffering. It sees. It studies karma. It studies the delusion of separateness that gives rise to the delusion of individual action. It watches the action. It sees the result. It sees the suffering caused by this. It sees the response to suffering. It watches this wheel of karmic misery. It sees the laws of karma. It studies them. It sees that rebirth is necessary in order to understand these laws. This is right view. It sees the other seven aspects of the eightfold path. It watches

them and it sees that they're operating all of the time. It sees if there is right thinking, if there is right speech. It looks to see if there is right action, if there is right livelihood. Is there right mindfulness? Is there right effort? Is there right concentration? It watches. It looks for the other seven. It sees the other seven....right now.

Do you see the other seven right now? If you do this is called right view. If you don't and you want right view, open your eyes and see the other seven right now. Right view is the guide. It's the teacher. It provides the curriculum of study of freedom. It doesn't overlook what must be studied in order to be free of suffering. Right view sees the laws of karma operating right now and sees the dharma in the midst of the karma. Dharma is the way the karma is working.

Do you see the karma?

Do you see the dharma?

Right view is moral development in the midst of karma and the observation of the laws of karma.

Right view is the guide.

Right view is the guiding aspect of wisdom.

Do you have right view to guide you in your moment to moment practice of the eightfold path?

Do you have right view now?

Is there right view now?

Would anyone like some postural adjustment?

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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 15: Autumn 2011

Article

By Michael Kogan Muju

*We take a handful of sand
from the endless landscape
of awareness and call that
handful of sand the world.*

Robert Pirsig

Personal Reflections on The 4 Noble Truths.



The essence of Buddhism lies in the first insights of Sakyamuni Buddha as he sat under the Bodhi tree and saw the morning star glimmering on the horizon. Following his enlightenment the Buddha was quoted as saying the following;

“It is through not understanding and not realizing four fundamental truths that I, disciples, as well as you, have had to wander for so long through an endless round of births, deaths and rebirths.

These four truths are;
the noble truth of suffering,
the noble truth of the origin of suffering,
the noble truth of the extinction of suffering,
and the noble truth of the path that leads to the extinction of suffering.

This world is driven by pleasure, delighted with pleasure, and enchanted with pleasure. Consequently, all individuals who follow such a path based in the pursuit of pleasure will have great difficulty understanding the law of conditionality, and will not understand the dependent origination of all things in the visible and the invisible realms. It is incomprehensible to them how to end all formations of thought, and through this find the abandonment of every endless cycle of rebirth, the fading away of

desire, detachment, and extinction ending in the discovery of nirvana; however, there are beings whose eyes are only a little cloudy and they may understand the truth.”

Although the central teachings of the Buddha are entitled the 'Four Noble Truths,' it was a number of years into my practice before I began to really take note of them. I think my first reaction was to the constant repetition of that word 'suffering'. I felt that it gave the philosophy a grim pessimistic feeling that I hadn't encountered in my brief readings in Thich Nhat Hanh and Jack Kornfield. It was only much later that I came to realise that the English translation of the Pali word 'dukkha,' which is constantly repeated in the Four Noble Truths was not the happiest of choices on the part of translators! The dictionary defines Suffering; as the bearing of pain, inconvenience, or loss; pain endured; distress, loss, or injury incurred; as sufferings by pain or sorrow; sufferings by want or by wrongs being in pain or grief; having loss, injury, distress, etc. whereas 'dukkha,' could perhaps more accurately be described as 'dissatisfaction,' or 'disquietude'. Having in a number of talks and books heard and seen different views on the etymology of the Pali word I decided to do some research in the great library of the www! The following history and nexus of meanings emerged which illuminates the term 'dukkha,' and eradicates the heavy Christian/western overtones.

It is perhaps amusing to note the etymology of the words 'sukha,' (pleasure, comfort, bliss) and 'dukha,' (misery, unhappiness, pain). The ancient Aryans who brought the Sanskrit language to India were a nomadic, horse and cattle-breeding people who travelled in horse or ox-drawn vehicles. 'Su,' and 'du,' are prefixes indicating 'good,' or 'bad'. The word 'kha,' in later Sanskrit meaning 'sky, 'ether,' or 'space,' was originally the word for 'hole,' particularly an axle hole of one of the Aryan's vehicles. Thus 'sukha,' ... meant, originally, "having a good axle hole," whilst 'dukkha,' meant "having a poor axle hole," leading to discomfort. The Sanskrit prefix 'su' is used as an emphasis suggesting wholesome, high, evolved, desirable, strong. (Sargeant, et. al. (2009: p. 303))

In classic Sanskrit, the term 'dukkha,' was often compared to a large potter's wheel that would screech as it was spun around, and did not turn smoothly. The opposite then of 'dukkha,' was the term 'sukha,' which brought to mind a potter's wheel that turned smoothly and noiselessly. In other Buddhist influenced cultures similar imagery was used to describe 'dukkh'. An example from China is the cart with one wheel that is slightly damaged so that the rider is jolted each time the wheel rolls over the broken spot.

Another teacher I heard, extending the imagery of the axle hole, described 'dukkha,' as to be compared to the sand and grit that was ingrained in the grease or lubrication of the axle hole. So out of this etymology emerged a much clearer more earthy meaning of what 'dukkha,' meant in Pali although, apparently, this language was not spoken by the Buddha! The paramount power in India for two centuries, spanning both before and after Sakyamuni was the Kingdom of Kosala, of which the Buddha's birth kingdom, Magadha, was a fiefdom. Magadhi seems to have been a dialect of Kosalan, and there is some evidence that this was the language that the Buddha spoke.

It has been said that the Buddha may have derived the logical structure of his truths by noting the methodology used by ancient Indian physicians.

Here the doctor would understand that the patient was ill by observing his or her symptoms.

There is suffering

Using his knowledge and experience and questioning the patient, he would try to find out what they had been doing or had eaten or what had happened to them that was making them ill.

There is a cause to suffering

He would then encourage his patients by telling them that their health could be restored.

There is a way to end suffering

And finally he would prepare the appropriate medicine, give it to the patient and instruct them how to take it.

There is an end to suffering by following the prescription.

The Buddha said many times that his role was to show us the way out of suffering. I recognise that such a pragmatic and rational explanation of how the Buddha came to organise his experience beneath the Bhodi tree doesn't fit with the legends but it does seem consistent with the nature and style of many of his teachings and thoughts. This balancing of a deeply sensitive intuition along with a pragmatic earthy approach to life is one of many qualities that attracts me to Buddhism.

We might also remember that at first, stunned by the magnitude of his awakening, Siddhartha contemplated keeping his knowledge to himself, he could not conceive how he might convey the Four Noble Truths to the world. According to some accounts once he had been persuaded by a visit from the Indian god Sahampati to change his mind his first attempt to teach was a complete failure! On his way from Bodh Gaya to Varanasi he met an ascetic who noting the Buddha's tranquility questioned him. The Buddha answered that he was the perfectly enlightened one the Buddha. The ascetic somewhat taken aback by this seemingly arrogant statement walked away! Clearly on the rest of the journey to the deer park in Varanasi Sakyamuni must have pondered on this experience. By the time he met his five former ascetic friends he had decided that a different approach was needed if he was to teach successfully.

After having attended a recent talk on The Four Noble Truths I was suddenly powerfully struck by just how original and revolutionary the realisation of the Buddha was. It was probably another 500 years with the teaching of Jesus and 'love one another as I love you,' and 'Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth,' before anything comparable was to be uttered again. In addition if we take note of the revolutionary scientific findings of Copernicus, Newton or Einstein they are, in so far as I understand them, eclipsed by the grandeur and logic of the Buddha's original vision. These simple utterances of the Buddha remain a path toward freedom for all.

'One thing and one thing only do I teach, suffering and how to end suffering' (Majjhima Nikaya 1.140).

Acknowledgement:

To www.handfulofsand.com for the image at the beginning of this article and the quote from Robert Pirsig whose book 'Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance,' was the first 'Zen' book I read and didn't understand!

Michael (Kogan Muju)

Radiant Light Vow No Abode dwelling

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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

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Retreat Report

By Kath Bennett

Sitting Like a Mountain

Reb Anderson Roshi at Felsentor, Switzerland June 2011

I didn't really know what I was letting myself in for when I booked this retreat. Perhaps that was a good thing. There was just a sense of 'rightness' about it all - open to the experience. What I did know was that I wanted to experience sitting with Reb again.

The efforts of sesshin were continually surpassed by the practice and the location. Images on a website cannot do justice to



the setting and the views out across Lake Lucerne. The front gardens became the spot where many wandered taking in the views of the snow capped Alp, the water and the ever changing sunsets. We certainly had fine examples of mountains to emulate in our practice – still, silent and upright!

Knowing Chris & Clare were going, I contacted them to 'join up' en route – we duly met in Zurich airport and I was happy to follow 'in their footsteps' as we made our way via Lucerne to Felsentor. Approaching the location via the lake was wonderful and enabled a brief glimpse of the hotel nestling in the trees high up on the hillside. After a cogwheel train and then a short gentle dander downhill the site is approached in a seemingly mystical way – it just unfolds before your eyes!

Over the next few hours our fellow retreatants from all over Europe arrived, new friendships formed and old acquaintances re-established. The sangha fluctuated over the retreat with late arrivals and early departures. There were probably 28 in all with Wendy, Mark (from Gaia) Chris, Clare and myself making up the 5 strong UK contingent.

It didn't take me long to settle into my dorm beneath the zendo and anticipate the start of the retreat. I found my seat and waited. I had borrowed sitting robes from Frances and though initially self-conscious, they felt right and became great teachers as I had to learn to live with the folds of cloth – worn with awareness, waiting to 'trip you up', literally!

What struck me first was the amount of forms and ceremonies. Initially feeling daunted and noticing the 'need to get it right mind' I settled to just watch & learn. I loved the sounds of the bells and the hanh greeting you to practice;

loved the rituals and the chants, loved it all – well nearly all; really struggled reciting the Heart Sutra in German! There was a deep sense of commitment and presence from everyone and the stillness of sitting had both energy and an ease that supported the long days of practice.



Kinhin took place either inside the zendo or on the surrounding veranda. The latter provided a cooling break and was particularly delightful when we were given light afternoon showers – watching & listening to the rain drip off the overhanging roof as we walked, sheltered beneath.

As so often on retreat the highlights of the day were often around meals and the staff at

Felsentor did not disappoint. Each mealtime the tables were spread with mouth-watering selections with occasional treats like ‘coconut rice pudding cake’ thrown in! A veritable feast!

Reb also did not disappoint and did what I have come to expect of him – the unexpected. His talks, again seemingly pertinent to all, focused around simply finding and cultivating stillness in our daily lives and acting from that point; just being ‘ordinary’. They were of course interspersed with his wonderful stories from both the teachings and his family life and how easily he expressed our lives through them. Reb sat with us frequently and his dokosans had their inherent precision and intensity nothing new there then. One of his song - ‘Summertime and the living is easy’ – aptly expressed the tender message of the retreat.

And so the sesshin continued – the sounds heralding the phases of the day, the body becoming used to the routine and the mind settling (at times) to ‘just sit’. Long lunch breaks allowed for a walk – you could go uphill and come down or go downhill and climb back up – each had their delights.

The retreat ended in an ‘extra-ordinary’ way with a breakfast of pastries, fruits and other delights that set everyone up for their journeys across Europe. With seamless Swiss efficiency I was whisked back to the UK through what felt like a time warp. I found I needed days to re-enter everyday life, partly due to a caffeine addiction I’d developed on retreat!

End result – I’d go again for a whole host of reasons.

Kath Bennett

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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 15: Autumn 2011

Sangha Update

By Rebecca Habergham and friends



Hebden Bridge group update

Hello all, greetings from the currently rainy and wild Hebden Bridge.

We would like to share with you a taste of what we have been doing since we all last met in the Dancing Mountains Newsletter. The Summer has shared with us lots of opportunity for our group to sit together, share a variety of events and blossom and bloom.

[Ingen Breen](#)

[Sister Kovida](#)

[Mid Week Sit](#)

[Flash Mob style meditation](#)

[Our Group](#)

[Nutclough mid week sit](#)

Ingen Breen

We have had a brilliant weekend with Ingen as you all know. It now feels he is very much part of the Sangha here as he fit in so beautifully to Hebden Bridge. We are very grateful to him for sharing his everyday zen with us in his gentle, poignant and moving way.

We are organising our first weekend Residential with Ingen on 25th~27th November. We are busy sorting out advertising and all for this larger event which is new to our group, so again we will let you know how we get on. It would be great if some of you decide to come to this retreat with us.

Sister Kovida

Sister Kovida, who is a friend of Tam, a member of our Sangha, joined us for a Sunday evening sit. She is a nun of the Western Theravada Forest Tradition. She led the evening in a very gentle and intimate dance using physical movement alongside sitting practice.

Mid Week Sit

We decided early Summer to offer another weekly sit for those who could not make Sunday and others that wanted an extra opportunity to sit with a group. We are committed to seeing how it goes until Christmas and have enough money from donations on Sunday to carry this group even if we have small numbers. We have had from 1 to 8 sitting and feel that it will be sustainable in the longer term. The following is a beautiful email which Lou Curbishley sent out the day after the first sit to the Sangha, gives a soft sense of the evening shared.

Nutclough

Hi All,

I just wanted to share with you!

Last night was the very first mid-week sitting at Nutclough. What a special time we had.

The room is beautiful...wooden floors, soft lighting, exposed woodwork and a superb inglenook fireplace.

Fern, who is the co-ordinator at Nutclough, ensured that we had everything we needed, including a table, which we covered in Frances's shawl, then placed Janet's Buddha, fresh flowers, incense and a lighted candle on...it really set the scene.

There were 8 of us in total, one of the 8 was Fern (how lovely that she wanted to join us) and the other unexpected sitter was Nic. He was staying at Nutclough as a house guest last night and wanted to join us...he is currently touring the country on his push bike and is recording his adventures on a blog...maybe the group will be featured!

Hoping you may be able to go along at some stage and experience it for yourselves.

With much love,

Lou xx

Flash Mob style meditation

We have had our first flash mob in Hebden Bridge which was captured beautifully on video by Rachel Hawthorn from our Sangha:

[Youtube video](#)



It was a really intimate experience as we gathered and sat through the weather of four seasons, clouds passing, shadows moving, laughter dancing, water running, birds curious, coming and going, bussle and stillness.

We are planning another one to mark the International Day of Peace on September 21st. One group member Janet Woodhead has been particularly busy visiting local church groups, mosques, schools and shops to open the space of peaceful sitting across all. It feels this may create some lovely links across faiths and within our community here. We will let you know how we get on with that.

Our Group

As with all groups we have lots of questions about where we are going if anywhere! How we will get there, how much form and ceremony, to have a teacher or not to have a teacher. So many questions....There are meetings of struggle and discomfort and others of laughter and peace, most a mixture of all. We want to offer time to share our learning with other groups that meet across the country as I am sure we can all learn alot from each other. So please contact us if you feel we can be useful.

Ok, until the next time, we are very grateful for all the energy and commitment offered from all you folk in Dancing Mountains. We commit to continuing to offer all we can for you in return.

May there be peace between all beings, inside and out.xx

Rebecca

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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 15: Autumn 2011

Retreat Report

By Michael Kogan Muju

Fukanzazengi

Kaiyo Diana Gerard at Warminster, August 2011

A Weekend Retreat of Zen Practice and Meditation with Kaiyo Diana Gerard
12th, 13th & 14th of August 2011 at The Manor House Warminster Wiltshire



As part of Dancing Mountains' growing number of regional retreats Devin organised the weekend entitled above. We were very fortunate to have as our guide Kaiyo Diana Gerard who began her Buddhist practice in 1974 at Samye Ling Tibetan Centre in Scotland. She has been a student at Zen Centre's three practice centres since 1994 and was ordained as a priest by Tenshin Reb Anderson in 1998. Diana chose on this retreat to give talks about Eihei Dogen's writings relating to meditation practice entitled 'Fukanzazengi.'

The venue was The Centre for Addiction Treatment Studies in Warminster which trains students in addiction counselling. It is a spacious Georgian Manor House which has been converted and equipped to create a comfortable venue for groups such as our own. The main room on the ground floor with its superb original oak flooring was converted into a quiet, light filled and spacious zendo for the weekend.



Seventeen of us from north, east, south, and west sanghas assembled together around 16.30 on Friday 12 August and after a preliminary meeting to discuss the schedule we sat together to initiate the weekend. There was to be the usual emphasis on sitting together along with kinhin and services. Talks and interviews were offered by Diana on both days,

I am surprised, even on these short retreats, at how quickly we develop a strong yet tranquil atmosphere that pervades our time together. I noticed it at Trigonos on the Easter retreat and for me it was palpable again here. Perhaps it's related to the fact that many of us have now practiced together a number of times and that we have

increasing experience of retreats? Of course the venue always plays a part in this and The Manor House was a graceful container for our energy.

Diana gave two interesting talks on 'Fukanzazengi'. After returning from China in 1227 Dogen was determined to teach what he termed 'true buddhism' and as part of this process wrote down for his monks 'Universal Guidelines for the Practice of Zazen,' 'Fukanzazengi'. He continued to revise this throughout his life until arriving at the format that we have today. Clearly, in a couple of short talks, we could only touch upon the historical allusions and depths of this work but Diana with her succinct and clear delivery clarified in some degree my understanding of this work.

Each morning Diana tutored and instructed several of us in forms and ritual. This was illuminating, puzzling and challenging as usual and it's always interesting to see the different nuances on forms that different teachers have! Thanks to Josh and Lucy who for the first time took on very successfully the roles of Tenkin (Mokugyo player) and Kokyo (Chant leader).

An unusual and perhaps unique feature of the weekend was the showing of the film 'Zen,' directed by Takahashi Banmei!!!! 'Zen,' is an elegant and fascinating look into the life and times of Dogen and follows him as an orphan child, inspired by his mother's dying words, through to him as a young monk wandering in China where he experiences his awakening. After reaching enlightenment Dogen returns to Japan to spread his teachings of silent meditation, attracting both dedicated followers and fierce detractors who cast him as a heretic. In his travels and teachings, Dogen encounters many different people. Some guide him, some follow him, and some test him, but all become crucial figures in his spiritual journey of peace and meditation.

The retreat ended at 4.30pm on Sunday after a full day of sitting, services and a talk.

I would like to give grateful thanks to Kaiyo Diana Gerard for her teachings and presence, to Devin for meticulously organising the retreat and the wonderful accommodation and to all the participants, especially those who travelled so far to be with us. I left feeling inspired and thankful I am part of such a devoted and sustaining sangha. Deep bows to all.

Michael
Kogan Muju
Radiant Light Vow No Abode Dwelling

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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 15: Autumn 2011

Retreat Report

By Mark Øvland

The Sound of Music with One Hand Clapping

Reb Anderson Roshi at Felsentor, Switzerland June 2011



In June this year I was lucky enough to sit my first sesshin with Reb, hosted in a picture-perfect temple halfway up a Swiss Alp. However, what had taken me there was not an interest in Zen – my practice to that point having been woven quite happily with the threads of Vedanta and Vipassana – but the wish of a dear friend, a Felsentor veteran, to accompany her on a pilgrimage to see her

teacher. So what would I make of it?

As it happens, the timing could not have been more perfect. A fortnight prior to flying out of Heathrow, my karmic consciousness had been holding fast to a story – a story that said the Mahayana was not authentic, that it was mere fancy, a fairytale without basis. The catalyst for change may have been this-or-that book, a meeting with this-or-that person, it doesn't really matter (and I can't quite remember!) – but a week later the story had changed; something had shifted, opened. The time had clearly come for my horizon to widen, and with blinkers removed I found myself in a vast new territory, seeing deeply and for the first time the wondrous truths lying at the heart of the Mahayana, and Vajrayana, traditions.

And so, with this newly established beginner's mind, this being open to any possibility, I journeyed to Switzerland: a dry sponge ready and willing to absorb the dharma in whichever form it might present itself. I was ripe for Reb!

The smiles and stories of the collected sangha filled the air on the opening day, their shared fondness for each other so evident as eyes met for the first time in a year. And my own smile was to stretch continuously over the following ten or eleven days as I delighted in every little detail: I saw snow-clad peaks scattered across the skyline, felt the charitable tenderness of the moss underfoot, and gazed wonderingly upon the lives of the hundreds of villagers at the toes of the mountain (an auspicious place to hang out I was later to learn!). The scene was idyllic, and the soundtrack the perfect

complement – silence intermittently pierced by the ringing of cow-bells and the clunk of the han.

I was there to practice though, and in this respect there were two elements of the retreat that were especially new to me: staring at a wall and entertaining so much ritual. As for the first of these, I had made a vow to keep my eyes open during every period of zazen, no matter how tempting it might have been to rest my gaze on the back of my eyelids, the practice to which I was solely accustomed. 'When in Rome', I thought.

Through the first couple of days my mind questioned the personal efficacy of this style, as I struggled to look at the wall without looking at the wall. But as the mind settled, and my gaze softened, I began to appreciate the qualities of such an approach and above all recognized the inherent beauty in keeping one's eyes open to the world.

It was this enforced acknowledgement of those around me that left the deepest impression on my practice, and I felt genuinely touched by the small formal gestures we each observed around sitting and eating, as we bowed to those beside us. I was not practicing alone, but with and for all beings – this I felt to a degree far greater than I had experienced on any previous retreat.

Aside from the bowing to each other, the general formality of the sesshin, with its impeccable services and rituals, struck a chord deep within me. It held everything together, kept the focus sharp, kept the mind tuned in. An aspect of practice I had formally shied away from, I now found myself relishing: it really worked.

And then there were the dharma talks! I learnt a great deal from Reb. At the risk of sounding like I came away having grasped his teachings – a cardinal sin, I understand – it must nevertheless be admitted that he made Zen make sense. What had previously seemed so enigmatic and unapproachable I heard effortlessly expounded in a clear and comprehensible way. I left undeniably nourished, and from one teaching in particular. These words have stayed with me, ringing in my ears and in my heart, most days: that to be a Buddha is to be totally ordinary; to realise enlightenment is to be completely oneself.

All this said, to separate out as I have the scenery from the form, or the sangha from the teachings, or any one part of the sesshin from any other, is to unnecessarily and unfairly dissect what can only be experienced as a whole. The retreat was perfect and complete, each feature dependent on every other, no element any more significant than the next.

I had no idea what to expect from the trip, and there was no way I could have expected what I experienced. It was the perfect introduction to the world of Soto Zen, and for all the conditions that came together to allow this occasion to manifest, I'm eternally grateful. I loved every moment, and left a full and saturated sponge!

See you next year?

Mark Øvland

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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

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Book Review

By Michael Kogan Muju

Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance

By Robert M Pirsig

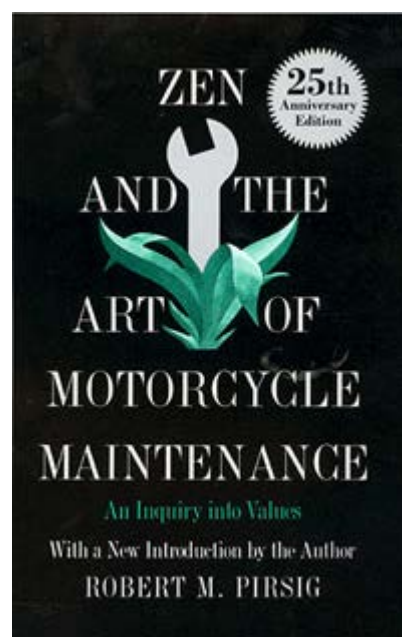
And what is good Phaedrus?

And what is not good?

Need we ask anyone to tell us these things?

'Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance,' was to become one of most influential novels of the 70's. It became something of a cult book amongst the beat generation when it was published in 1974. Previously turned down by over 121 publishers it has since sold over well 5million copies. That it was rejected by so many publishers is not so hard to understand as it is a densely argued philosophical investigation of values as its sub title suggests. The book is almost impossible to characterize but, perhaps the closest to it is Hermann Hesse's 'The Glass Bead Game', or 'Steppenwolf,' but 'On the Road,' by Jack Kerouac covers some of the same territory. The title is a not so subtle allusion to the 'Zen in the Art of Archery,' by Eugen Herrigel. This German philosopher had trained for six years in Japan in 1930s learning the chivalrous art of archery from a Zen master. But in the introduction to his book, Pirsig explains that, despite its title, "it should in no way be associated with that great body of factual information relating to orthodox Zen Buddhist practice. It's not very factual on motorcycles either."

The book describes a 17-day motorcycle journey from Minnesota to California by the author and his son Chris and a couple who are close friends. This journey is punctuated by numerous philosophical discussions tied together by the story of the narrator's own past self, who is referred as 'Phaedrus,' one of the figures in Plato's dialogues. Phaedrus is a teacher of creative and technical writing at a small college who had become engrossed in the question of what defines 'good,' writing, and what, in general, defines our views of what is good or quality. How we decide this is central to the discussion on the journey and also how we know the difference. Two potential ways we look at the world, here termed the Classical and the Romantic, are examined. The Classical divides the motorcycle (for instance) into its components. The Romantic only sees the complete and finished motorcycle. These two ways of looking at reality are both typical of humans, but are



entirely incompatible.

As the story and the discourse unfold on different levels, we discover that 'Phaedrus' became obsessed with the idea of reconciling these two sets of values - a quest that took him deep into philosophy and eventually to such strange paths that he stepped outside the 'Church of Reason' and was considered insane. After treatment in a mental institution, his 'Phaedrus,' personality was removed, leaving him with only the relics of what he used to be and know, like archaeological ruins in a field. The journey, on a third level, is not only to rediscover Phaedrus but also to piece together from these 'ruins' the conclusions he came to. Finally he presents us with an entirely new 'third' way of looking at reality. He aims towards a perception of the world that embraces both sides the rational and the romantic. This means encompassing "irrational" sources of wisdom and understanding. In particular, this must include bursts of creativity and intuition that seemingly come from nowhere and are not (in his view) rationally explicable. Phaedrus seeks to demonstrate that rationality and a Zen-like "being in the moment" can harmoniously coexist and suggests that such a combination of rationality and romanticism, a new middle way, can potentially bring a higher quality of life



Whether you accept his conclusions or not this book is a brilliant achievement - sad, funny, wise, moving, uplifting, enlightening - it works on many different levels and lingers in the mind over the years. Definitely a fine thought provoking read if you have a philosophical turn of mind or are interested in finding your own third way.

Michael
Kogan Muju
Radiant Light Vow No Abode Dwelling

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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

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Retreat Report

By Chris Brown

Combined Retreat with COI

In July 2011 we ran a joint Zen weekend retreat combining the traditions of Shunryu Suzuki and (The Community of Interbeing (COI)). On the first day we introduced the forms and ceremonies of practice as adopted by Dancing Mountains, with a strong emphasis on sitting zazen and silence, a recorded dharma talk from Reb Anderson, and the opportunity for our COI friends to experience Japanese-style



chanting. On the second day we switched to a COI retreat with its contrasting but complementary style of practice, with more melodic chanting and a recorded dharma talk from Thich Nhat Hanh. This photo shows the 'survivors' from the second day, while a number of others not included here also attended the first day. We are grateful for the support, acceptance and warmth we felt from the COI members who attended and are looking forward to sharing more time together for practice in the future.

Chris

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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

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Poetry

By Francoise Elvin

By the White Lighthouse (for my niece Lisa, aged 2)

Because your bright face
reminds me of unhampered
precious things,
still ignorant of
patience or pretence,

Because you stood on the
dumpy metal bollard
at the end of the pier and waited for me
to plant my feet firmly
and hunker down low;

Because when I gave the word you
Jumped so freely, over and over,
into the safety net of my arms;
Trusting the
delicious giddy
sensation of
hurling yourself
momentarily
into the void...

Because your laughter
reminds me so
precisely of what it is
to let go....and find another
waiting for you there when you do...

Because, as if by
Seal of Royal
Approval,
dwelling up there
somewhere in the clouds,
the plane leaving
Edinburgh
tilted and swung



over the same scene
and I saw it from
above, bounded by
the sea's signature
inimitable blue,

Because of all this Lisa,
I remain, by the White
Lighthouse,
bound to you.

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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

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Poetry

By Francoise Elvin

Apples in Avalon

Sometimes I
want you inside me,
then I
let myself fall into
the Russian Doll Reality
that all ready is.

...a bit like...
loving the indulgence of
a new game of hide-and-seek
whilst inwardly already savouring
that just-caught-feeling.

Most days,
I take ropes with me everywhere.
Pretending to be
one of life's mountaineers...

Secretly I'm lassoing love
to make it stay;
one of life's mutineers.

Pretending not to notice my
Duplicity,
Life keeps feeding me
Second Chances:

Apples in Avalon.

One day
generous laughter
will tear down the walls
of the house I hide in.

All of my redecorations
are a fidgeting supplication:

...Waiting for that day.

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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

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Poetry

By Francoise Elvin

New Plantation

Nomenclature;
nomen-clutter,
nomen-clatter:-
Names;
sutures on fresh wounds.

Self-seeded grasses,
honey-haze,
punctured
by purple-stalked
umbellifers
withered to a
frame.

The back-drop rises:
saplings thickly set;
green unction for the
raw tentacles of my eyes:

A some-day canopy on it's
virgin voyage into the blue...
leaves drunk on the
broken barrel of fresh rain.

As light fades, and drizzle sets in,
I find a way to the
unbroken promise of my solitude
at last.

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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

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Poetry

By Frances Collins

Partners of light and shadow
the beating wings of a moth
freedom compelled to seek itself
already present

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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

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Event

By Matthew Ryan

Brad Warner

Zen Priest , Author & Punk Rock Bass Player
In Manchester

The enigma that is Brad Warner will be coming to Manchester on Saturday November 19 2011 to host a 1 day meditation retreat. Brad will also be giving a talk on Friday 18th November on everything from the Dharma (the teachings of the Buddha) to the origins of punk rock !!

This is a unique opportunity to sit and to listen to one of the world's leading contemporary Buddhist thinkers- this will be Brad's first (and maybe last once he's sampled the weather) visit and workshop in Manchester – not to be missed.



Friday 18th November 7pm-9pm Talk 'Dharma in modern day living'

In this talk Brad will be talking about his own experience with Buddhism and the struggle to put into practice the Dharma in modern day living. There will be a Question and Answer session at the end of the talk – so please bring your questions with you!

Saturday 19th November 10am-4pm A day of Meditation

Brad will be leading students through the key components of 'zazen' the zen form of meditation. This will be open to all students including **complete beginners**.

Where : Village Hall Palatine Road Didsbury Manchester (please call for directions)

Cost : Fri £10 Sat £20 £25 if both sessions are booked together

Info and bookings: info@yoga-manchester.co.uk / 07983 605 295

Brad Warner Biog

Brad is the author of Hardcore Zen, Sit Down & Shut Up, Zen Wrapped in Karma Dipped in Chocolate, and Sex, Sin and Zen. He began studying Zen in the early 80's under Tim McCarthy, a student of Kobun Chino Roshi. Brad was ordained in the Soto School of Zen by Gudo Nishijima Roshi, co-translator of the only complete English edition of Dogen Zenji's 12th century masterpiece Shobogenzo. Before moving to California, Brad taught zazen classes and led

retreats in Japan for several years. He now teaches and leads numerous retreats each year in the US, Canada, Europe and Japan. Brad is president of Dogen Sangha International

<http://hardcorezen.blogspot.com/>

NB you do not have to have any knowledge of Buddhism, meditation or punk rock to attend this workshop!

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