

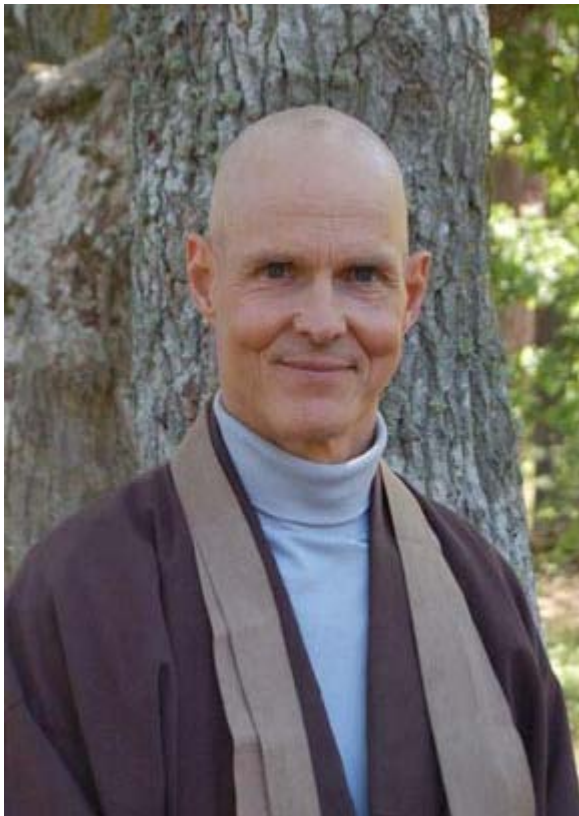
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Issue 12: Winter

Birth



Reb Anderson.

Editorial

by Devin Ashwood

In this issue, we open to the concept of 'birth'. It seems an auspicious time to be contemplating birth as the evolving process of Dancing Mountain's birth takes form. This edition contains the summary of a pivotal meeting between core Dancing Mountains

In this issue...

Dharma Talk

[Where Are All the Buddhas Born?](#)

by Reb Anderson

News

[Update and Development of Dancing Mountains](#)

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Extract

[Hakuin's "Song of Meditation"](#)

From: *D.T. Suzuki (1935) Manual of Zen Buddhism.*

group members considering the form Dancing Mountains will take. Legal, structural and decision making issues are discussed which will affect the direction Dancing Mountains takes as it grows and the next pivotal meeting is announced. Thank you to the Community Of Interbeing for their support and to Frances for her great efforts in documenting the event.

The dharma talk 'Where are all the buddhas born?' that is included in this issue was given at the end of the last year by Tenshin Reb Anderson Roshi and transcribed by Chris Brown. I found it most moving, for me it is the kind of talk that doesn't simply convey teachings as transmit them. I found myself moving from reading to practising as my eyes moved over the page. Also, if you ever wondered where the name 'Dancing Mountains' came from, this explains all... so know that if you are part of Dancing Mountains, you are where the buddhas are being born. Enjoy!

Dharma Talk

Where Are All the Buddhas Born?

by Tenshin Reb Anderson Roshi

We have humbly arrived at the occasion of our great benefactor, Shakyamuni Buddha, resolving to sit still under the Bo Tree, until realising the way... [Read more...](#)

News

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Since 2008 Dancing Mountains sangha has continued to grow and develop. With the release of this 12th newsletter our global communications have been enhanced through our Facebook page at Dancing Mountains [Read more...](#)

Book Review

The Snow Leopard

by Peter Matthiessen

'Just as a white summer cloud, in harmony with heaven and earth freely floats in the blue

Upcoming Events

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

April 29- May 3

*Retreat and Dancing Mountains constitution and interim committee vote, North Wales.

June 20 - June 29

Reb Anderson, Nine day retreat, Felsentor, Switzerland

June 30 - July 8

Reb Anderson, Eight day retreat, Idoborg, Sweden

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

Spring issue publication date: 21st March, deadline for submission of material 8th March. Submissions to the

sky from horizon to horizon following the breath of the atmosphere-in the same way the pilgrim abandons himself to the breath of the greater life..... [Read more...](#)

Event Report

Rohatsu Sit December 8th 2010

by Michael Elsmere Ko Gan Mu Ju .

In November we discussed as a sangha the possibility of being in union with other Buddhist communities around the world by joining them in the traditional Rohatsu Sessin from 3rd to 8th December that traditionally celebrates Shakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment. [Read more...](#)

Article

Birth

by Michael Elsmere Ko Gan Mu Ju .

It is a typical winter day here in South Devon. Masses of grey cloud surge in from the Atlantic bringing fierce wind and ocean tasting rain. A close friend is dying and in the midst of my deep sorrow I wander my garden trying to come to terms with this news. [Read more...](#)

Extract

Hakuin's "Song of Meditation"

from D.T. Suzuki (1935) Manual of Zen Buddhism.

Sentient beings are primarily all Buddhas:

It is like ice and water.

Apart from water no ice can exist:

Outside sentient beings, where do we find the Buddhas?

Not knowing how near the Truth is.

People seek it far away.--what a pity! [Read more...](#)

Next issue of Mountain Silence

The Spring edition with a theme around "Engaged Buddhism". We welcome your articles, poetry, pictures, letters, retreat

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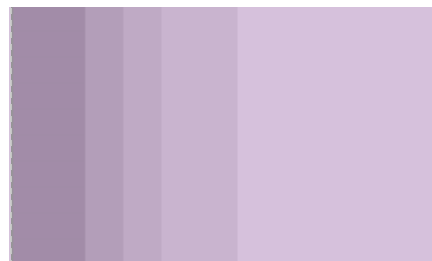
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Dancing Mountains.

reflections and book reviews! Spring issue publication date: 21st March, deadline for submission of material 8th March.

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



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devin@dancingmountains.org.uk

MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 12: Winter

News Update

Update and Development of Dancing Mountains

An update on the development of Dancing Mountains after the core community meeting on 29th November 2010 in Cheshire.

by Frances Collins.

Since 2008 Dancing Mountains sangha has continued to grow and develop. With the release of this 12th newsletter our global communications have been enhanced through our Facebook page at Dancing Mountains. I wonder what Dogen would have thought about facing such a wall. Despite being new to Facebook, I have to admit it's wonderful to be log on and see updates from San Francisco Zen Centre about the January Intensive retreat which is currently ending with the usual one week sesshin led by Reb Anderson Roshi. I think back to this time last year and my own jukai experience at Green Gulch, expressing through the bodhisattva vows, my own commitment to cultivating the bodhisattva way of life, supported within this sangha in the tradition of our teacher Shunryu Suzuki Roshi. It is clear to me that we cannot practice in isolation and that it is necessary to give as well as receive from sangha in order to live the bodhisattva vows for the benefit and liberation of all beings.

As always, invitation was extended to the whole sangha at the end of sesshin in August 2010 at Gaia House and discussion took place in the presence of Reb and Rev. Catherine Gammon. Since then, discussions have continued within the sangha and a core community has been identified by behaviours which have evolved from communication within an email loop, concerned with the organization and further development of Dancing Mountains. This has been a natural and organic process.

Members of this core community met on 29th November in Cheshire to practice together and to discuss the need for Dancing Mountains to be recognized more formally as a charitable organization, guided by a constitution that informs the general public about our particular Zen lineage and practice, whilst facilitating further growth as an ethical and charitable organization that is willing to serve all beings. Dancing

Mountains are deeply grateful to The Community of Interbeing UK (C.O.I.) who follow the teachings of Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh. In particular we are grateful for the assistance over the past five months from C.O.I. trustees Andrew Coleman and Dene Donalds. We had the good fortune of the helpful presence of Dene, a lay ordained member of C.O.I. skilfully facilitating this meeting with D.M. members Francis Checkley, Michael Ellesmere Kath Bennett, Chris Brown, and Frances Collins. Dancing Mountains offer deep gratitude to Dene for his generous use of professional business training and experience as a trustee, in discussion regarding the formal application to The Charities Commission (C.C.) UK. I aim to share here the discussions from this meeting enriched by the open and generous sharing of hard earned lessons of the Community of Interbeing.

CHOOSING THE BEST FIT

The first area of concern was to be clear about which type of organizational structure would allow Dancing Mountains to operate as a charity whilst evolving into an organization which may express itself through engaged Buddhist activities. It is clear that the type of income determines the shape of the organization. The two structures most relevant to Dancing Mountains are a charitable organization limited by guarantee or a community interest company (C.I.C.)

The three main advantages identified, of a charitable company limited by guarantee, are firstly that they are more tax efficient, second that they can be limited by guarantee and third that access exists to application for charitable funding. However, the disadvantages are relevant in that they are limited to charitable funding only and tighter legislation can be restrictive to growth and applications for assets such as property. This negatively impacts on rates paid if property is purchased later. The mandatory quarterly production of accounts makes an organization limited by guarantee less flexible than its competition the Community Interest Company.

The Community Interest Company came into existence in 2003 in UK to allow groups to act not for profit, functioning as a charity, while also allowing entrepreneurial activities. The advantages identified for the Community Interest Company include that they can be recognised as large or small organizations. C.O.I. have found that the larger structure lends well to a membership basis. Since members drive the organization this has been experienced by C.O.I. as a good model for sangha. Not as heavily regulated mandatory production of an annual report is suffice. As a charitable organization all profits and dividends cannot be claimed by directors but must be passed on to other charitable organizations.

However, directors can be paid as a fixed or variable fee or as an individual consultancy fee which avoids the company having to pay national insurance. No disadvantages have been raised regarding this model.

A C.I.C. therefore is part charity and part business. It has the advantages of flexibility and less rigid and timely legislation. Money may be raised from either external sources such as through application for charitable funds or generated through related business activities. Internal sources of income may be from membership e.g. £20 annual fee with benefits. Funds may also be generated from voluntary donations from members.

APPLICATION TO CHARITY COMMISSION

The application process consists of submission of appropriate completed documents to The Charity Commission. For those interested, the basic information can be found at CC. website at www.charity-commission.gov.uk/ who offer an 'off the shelf' Memorandum and Articles (Mem. & Arts) as the basic legal document requirements of application. Explicit qualification is important within the mem. and arts. that profit cannot be taken from the organization so that all profits to be kept in house. This helps to clarify and prevent any dispute from the outset.

A constitution is essential in order to make explicit the aims and objectives of the organization. This needs to be specific to our particular lineage with attention to our teachers' instructions for it to be identifiable as an organization different to other Buddhist /Zen orgs. e.g. C.O.I. and enclosed with application. The drafting of a constitution has been initiated but necessarily unfinished at this point as this process unfolds. Mandatory to the submission of the application to The Charity Commission is the identification of two or three trustees. However, the C.O.I. example suggests seven or eight trustees voted in by the sangha.

The importance of the appropriate choice of trustees was highlighted by Thich Nhat Hanh in his guidance for sangha in 'Interbeing', by Thay. He instructed the community to identify a core community based on commitment to practice in C.O.I. tradition. The order of Interbeing is the core organizing body of COI and consists only of ordained members.

Important points to consider when appointing trustees were identified. Pragmatically

a skills matrix needs to be considered e.g. I.T, administration, book keeping, business training; facilitator skills /experience to name a few. The ability to carry through commitment should be considered as well as

ability to be contacted with ease and the capacity to deliver the role. A secretary needs to be appointed but does not have to be a trustee. Company returns is a key role for the secretary making experience a great advantage for such a role. Also essential to application are the identification of a first director, second director and treasurer. Engaging a chartered accountant comes with the consideration of fees.

ADDITIONAL ROLES TO BE CONSIDERED

Additional roles to be considered were identified as: -

- membership secretary
- retreat co-ordinator
- editor of docs /newsletter
- book service co-ordinator
- national contact – not a trustee
- database of sangha contact list
- sangha representatives to network with other groups (C.O.I. use dharma teachers or lay ordained members)
- network of potential dharma teachers
- web master
- other roles as appropriate to DM

COMMITMENT AND SKILLS MATRIX

A most important lesson from experience, Dene stressed the need to be aware of the time and commitment attached to the role of trustee before committing. Time and energy is needed to develop and sustain organization and retreats. For example, The Community of Interbeing support young sangha members in an initiative called, 'Shining the Light' where core members facilitate /chair youth members (16yrs – 33 yrs) in discussion, encouraging them to choose their own direction which is supported by the main sangha. This is seen to raise energy and hope for the evolution of sangha.

Those committed to the Shining the Light incentive from C.O.I. meet 4 weekends a year plus one week retreat together twice.

BUILDING STRUCTURE AND COMMUNICATION

An annual general meeting is necessary for any organization. Facilitating discussion, review of existing or formation of potential legal contracts, it is also an important opportunity to renew or vote in members into existing or new roles. Planning for the year ahead includes the potential invitation and transportation of teachers to U.K. and negotiating potential venues for retreat. The experience of C.O.I. is that host organizations want to negotiate with organizations rather than individuals. Discussions may also arise about the organizational evolution and structure, potential

for buying property or application of grants among other issues.

C.O.I. advise bi- annual meeting after sesshin plus telephone conference /skype appropriately spaced between face to face meetings to promote and sustain energy.

HARD EARNED LESSONS

Dancing Mountains are grateful for the lessons from C.O.I. Whilst there may be a lot to consider, emphasis lies firmly on our need to prioritize practicing together regularly over business. Organizational meetings have been found to be most beneficial when tagged on to the end of retreats. The idea of 'Scan groups' within C.O.I. evolved over time as needs and functions were identified. The benefit of these has been in sharing the workload of the organization. Examples of activities that scan groups attend to include sangha advisory networks, proposal groups as well as regular activities such as encouraging priests and dharma teachers to visit U.K. Factoring in the raising of funds from the outset from bursaries for people who are disadvantaged has been found to be advisable. Addressing accessibility to potential venues needs to be considered to facilitate people who have additional needs e.g. C.O.I. have purchased a portable loop system which is available for hire.

NEXT STAGE - ELECTING AN INTERIM COMMITTEE

A suggestion was received favourably, at this stage of development, to appoint an Interim Committee. Dene offered the example of 'Mindfulness Ireland' (C.O.I.) which is at the same developmental stage of this process as D.M. They have chosen to set up an Interim Committee voted by the sangha to represent decision making until legitimate organizational status is achieved. Dancing Mountain sangha members could be voted in to roles at an A.G.M. within a democratic process. This reduces liability to £1 protection for the future on a larger scale (for further explanation see documentation and on C.C. website). For example, an interim committee could be 6 or 7 people who would investigate, discuss and feed back on the best fit / choice of organization structure for Dancing Mountains. A Realistic time frame from interim committee to set up has been identified as 12 months. The experience of C.O.I. has been that problems may arise when members over commit time and energy or when there is insufficient capacity or energy to move forward for individuals or for sangha. Problems have been experienced when organization has been prioritised over depth of practice.

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS

Members of Dancing Mountains sangha core group have agreed that, whilst recognizing the great efforts in its production this far, it is necessary to review the suggested constitution and make it more specific

to our sangha and lineage. It was agreed that a short residential approximately three months later could be followed by a meeting to finalise Dancing Mountains constitution and vote an interim committee.

This retreat has been organised at Trigonos, Nantle, North Wales from 29th April to 3rd May 2011. www.trigonos.org. Any individuals committed to this lineage wishing to attend this meeting to facilitate the next stage of this process are encouraged to do so.

To book, please contact Frances Collins at mountaindancing1@yahoo.co.uk. Telephone: - 01829 760 843 / 07786369682.

As a result of this proposed meeting an amended constitution will be published in the next Mountain Silence newsletter, inviting comment from the wider sangha.

Ji Den Dai U
Frances Collins

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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 12: Winter

Book Review

The Snow Leopard By Peter Matthiessen

'Just as a white summer cloud, in harmony with heaven and earth freely floats in the blue sky from horizon to horizon following the breath of the atmosphere-in the same way the pilgrim abandons himself to the breath of the greater life..... that leads him beyond the farthest horizons to an aim which is already present within him, though yet hidden from sight.'



'The Way of the White Clouds,' by Lama Govinda quoted in the prologue to 'The Snow Leopard,' by Peter Matthiessen

I have always loved travel writing, those books and writers that take me out of my armchair and transport me to other cultures, places, peoples, mountains, oceans, deserts, mysterious cities or the desolate ruins of lost empires. The very best of this type of writing is 'layered,' with the author's acute observations and inner reflection that take the reader beneath the surface of the lands and peoples through which he/she is travelling. An outstanding example of this is Peter Matthiessen's book 'The Snow Leopard' which won the American National Book Award for Non-Fiction in 1980.

By the time this was written in 1974 Matthiessen was already a major figure in the fields of biology and literature. His seminal book 'Wildlife in America,' and being co-founder of the highly influential Paris Review of Literature during the 1950's in Paris ensured this.

In 1972 he was invited by the renowned field biologist George Schaller to make a 250-mile journey through the remote Himalaya from Kathmandu to the 'Crystal Mountain,' in the Land of Dolpo trekking below the towering peaks of Annapurna and Dhauligiri. This Crystal Mountain is an ancient holy place much revered in Tibetan Buddhism whilst the Lama in the monastery of Shey Gompa was reputed to be a reincarnation of the 12th century Lama Marpa.

Matthiessen was studying buddhism and much later became a priest of the White Plum Asanga. However before coming to the practice he along with his wife Deborah Love were early pioneers of LSD and he has said his Buddhism evolved fairly naturally from these drug experiences.

Deborah died in 1972 from cancer and one night during a weekend retreat the author describes how he had a premonition of her death and during the following morning service:

'I chanted the Kannon Sutra with such fury that I 'lost' myself forgot the self-a purpose of the sutra, which is chanted in Japanese over and over, with mounting intensity. At the end the sangha gives a mighty shout that corresponds to OM, this followed instantly by sudden silence, as if the universe had stopped to listen. And on that morning, in the near darkness-the altar candle was the only light in the long room- in the dead hush, like the hush in these snow mountains, the silence swelled with the intake of my breath into a Presence of vast benevolence of which I was part.'

The Snow Leopard then is a journey, not one journey, but the many journeys on which the author embarks as he leaves his young sons behind to observe the rut of the Himalayan blue sheep and perhaps to see the almost mythical snow leopard of these remote regions. However his teacher reminds him before his departure 'expect nothing.'

Almost anywhere as the reader turns the pages there are beautiful succinct descriptions of places;

'The village creaks to the soft rhythm of an ancient treadle, and under the windows babies sway in their wicker baskets. In the serene and indiscriminate domesticity of these sunny village, sow and piglet, cow and calf, mother and infant, hen and chicks, nanny and kid commingle in a common pulse of being.'

With the eye of a trained observer he watches the fauna of the region;

'Higher where the the snow has melted, a hill fox jumps from the tussock grass and runs to a group of rocks, then turns to watch. Its black points and rich red coat are set off by the frosty face and chest and an extraordinary long thick tail, dark brown and black with a white fluffy tip. The tip remains visible long after the creature's glowing colours sink among the stones.'

Magical landscapes are spread out before us;

'After two hours of hard climbing I am higher than Black Pond and the whole canyon of the Black river ascending towards the Kang Pass lies exposed to view. Beyond the Kang soars a resplendent wall of white that dominates the sky to the south west; it is the great ice wall of Kanjiroba, a rampart of crystalline escarpments and white-winged cornices well over 22,000 feet in height. Here there is only a light air from the east, but the high wind on Kanjiroba is blowing clouds of a fine snow from points and pinnacles that turn into transparency against the blue.'

All this and deep inner reflection as well;

'my foot slips on a narrow ledge: in that split second, as needles of fear pierce heart and temples, eternity intersects with present time. Thought and action are not different, and stone, air, ice, sun, fear and self are one. What is exhilarating is to extend this acute awareness into ordinary moments, in the moment by moment experiencing of the lammergeier and the wolf, which, finding themselves at the centre of things have no need for any secret of true being.'

Another thread woven into this vivid tapestry is the history of Buddhism in Dolpo:

'Shey Gumpa,' in Tibetan Shel dgon-pa is a monastery of the Kagyu sect, which was established in the eleventh century as a departure from the Kalachakra Tantrism of the Old Sect or Nyingma. Kalachakra (Circle of Time) came to Tibet in the same century; it traditionally derives from a tantra or treatise known as Journey to Shambala, which teaches the adept how to transcend time (death) and is supposed to be the 'Book of Wisdom,' that appears in the portarits of the Bodhisattva called Manjushri.'

There are many wonderful descriptions of the people Matthiessen and Schaller meet along the way as well as the porters who trek along with them:

'Laughing the baby's mother dances holding hands with cat faced laughing Chirjing. The lute player, a dashing handsome fellow in short smock and boots, smiles at me wholeheartedly in welcome, as if I were his dearest friend on earth. Soon others come, including a man who appears to be Chirjing's suitor. Jang bu is playing his harmonica and Dawa and Gyaltzen laugh indiscriminately at all they see, but the only one of the Shey party who will dance is Tukten -Tukten Sherpa, cook and porter, alleged thief, bad drunk, old Gurkha is a dancer too, and dancing, he smiles and smiles.'

Throughout the journey they search for the hidden mystery that lies deep within this isolated region which the modern world has barely touched whilst the Snow Leopard tantalises, always watchful, a chimaera, almost mythical.

I have read this book many times since I first came across it in the eighties. Like a great picture every time I return to it it reveals hidden depths, new colours emerge. If you only read one book this year read 'The Snow Leopard,' I am certain you will not regret it!

Michael

Ko Gan Mu Ju

Radiant Light Vow No Abode Dwelling

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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 12: Winter

Event Report

Rohatsu Sit December 8th 2010

Michael Elsmere Ko Gan Mu Ju

Dancing Mountains Sangha Totnes, Rohatsu Sit December 8th 2010

A Time for Peace, An opportunity to spend time in stillness and silence

In November we discussed as a sangha the possibility of being in union with other Buddhist communities around the world by joining them in the traditional Rohatsu Sessin from 3rd to 8th December that traditionally celebrates Shakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment.

It was decided that this full sessin was beyond our capacity but instead decided to hold a one-day continuous sit from 6.30a.m. to midnight on the 8th December. This was held at the local Quaker Meeting House in the centre of Totnes so that townspeople could join us for a time of reflection during the Christmas rush if they so wished. Several passers by sat with us as did a number of sangha members and those from other sanghas. We aspire to hold a full sessin this year! A date for your diary and please let us know if you would be interested in such a sessin. Many thanks.

Dancing Mountains Zen Sangha Totnes
01803 732761 or melsmere@hotmail.com
01803 866735 Francis Checkley

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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 12: Winter

Article

Birth

Michael Elsmere Ko Gan Mu Ju

*'Life and all that lives is conceived in the mist and not in the crystal. And
who knows but a crystal is mist in decay?*

Kahil Gibran 'The Prophet'

'Birth is an expression complete this moment.'

Eihei Dogen 'Genjo Koan'

It is a typical winter day here in South Devon. Masses of grey cloud surge in from the Atlantic bringing fierce wind and ocean tasting rain. A close friend is dying and in the midst of my deep sorrow I wander my garden trying to come to terms with this news. I notice the tender yet vivid green of chives in the herb bed thrusting vigorously upward. On the branches of the old ash battered in the gale there are already the black mourning buds proclaiming new life. Vigour held in abeyance. All around me is the consolation of these miracles, signs that in the depths of winter is life and premonitions of life beneath the surface of things. Life that we can easily miss as we stride through our busy lives. It seems to me that life and death are inextricably linked, mixed, messy. As I return down the track to the house soaked through with thoughts and rain I recall Dogen's quote in his 'Genjo Koan,' 'Birth is an expression complete this moment.' What does he mean? It seems clear to me right here and now from my observations that 'in the midst of life we are in death', nothing is 'complete,' its a messy mix, beyond understanding. Perhaps Dogen is forcing the argument, this conceptualisation for doctrinal purposes related to the fiercely differing views on reincarnation and transmigration in 13th century Buddhism? Drinking tea I turn to my new copy of 'Realizing Genjo Koan,' by Shohaku Okumura. Almost immediately I find 'Life is only opposed to death in the world of thought. In reality life and death completely interpenetrate each other, although they never meet in our conceptual experience. Within our thinking minds, life is desirable and death undesirable,' Pg 94

What then does Dogen mean by 'Birth is an expression complete this

moment.' Okamura's comment seems to me a rejection of this.

As part of his comments around this Okamura goes on to discuss the meaning of the Japanese expression 'shoji,' that as a verb means 'to live or to be born,' the second part meaning 'to die or to be dead,' this being translated into English as 'birth and death' or 'life and death.' Therefore 'shoji,' is the process in which we are born, live and die. This may be viewed he writes as the equivalent of the Sanskrit word 'Jatimarana,' which again refers both to the process of being born, living and dying, and also to the four kinds of suffering, or dukkha (birth, aging, sickness and death). However it seems that the birth life and death of ordinary living beings pulled by karma is specifically termed in Japanese as either 'bundan shoji,' 'separating life and death' or 'ichigo shoji' that is 'life and death as one period,'. Yet another term, 'henyaku shoji,' 'transforming life and death,' is applied to the process that bodhisattvas evolve within. Finally 'setsuna shoji,' refers to the moment-by-moment process of the body and mind being born and then perishing as postulated within Buddhism. Perhaps it is this constant birthing to which Dogen is referring. But there is nothing straightforward here!

I had hoped to gain some clarification of my thinking in reading 'Genjo Koan,' and Okamura. I come to the conclusion or perhaps the misunderstanding that even here in Dogen the great Japanese philosopher, the founder of our lineage, there are still contradictions and the inescapable messiness that seem to be an unavoidable part of this process of attempting an understanding of birth, life and death.

This 'cloud of unknowing,' arises again as I watch a programme on the scientific understanding of the birth of the universe and the Big Bang theory. Here there is once more that deep sense of mystery which none of the 'beautiful,' equations, the deep searching of space or the mind-boggling experiments carried out in The Large Hadron Collider at CERN can dispel. It is this mysterious messiness that I believe is captured by Gibran's quote from 'The Prophet,' 'Life and all that lives is conceived in the mist and not in the crystal.' In conception there always seems to be that mist or a beginning in darkness, there is never the clarity the clear crystal of certainty, logic and knowing. In our 'all knowing,' rational age birth, life and death remain the ultimate enigmas beyond intellect and perhaps even beyond our deepest intuitions.

With thanks to:

'Realizing Genjo Koan,' by Shohaku Okumura
Wisdom Publications

Michael

MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 12: Winter

Extract

Hakuin's "Song of Meditation"

From: *D.T. Suzuki (1935) Manual of Zen Buddhism.*

Sentient beings are primarily all Buddhas:
It is like ice and water.
Apart from water no ice can exist:
Outside sentient beings, where do we find the Buddhas?
Not knowing how near the Truth is.
People seek it far away.--what a pity!
They are like him who, in the midst of water.
Cries in thirst so imploringly:
They are like the son of a rich man
Who wandered away among the poor.
The reason why we transmigrate through the six worlds
Is because we are lost in the darkness of ignorance:
Going astray further and further in the darkness.
When are we able to get away from birth-and-death?

As regards the Meditation practised in the Mahayana.
We have no words to praise it fully:
The virtues of perfection such as charity, morality, etc..
And the invocation of the Buddha's name, confession, and ascetic
discipline.
And many other good deeds of merit,--
All these issue from the practice of Meditation:
Even those who have practised it just for one sitting
Will see all their evil karma wiped clean:
Nowhere will they find the evil paths.
But the Pure Land will be near at hand.
With a reverential heart, let them to this Truth
Listen even for once.
And let them praise it, and gladly embrace it.
And they will surely be blessed most infinitely.

For such as, reflecting within themselves.

Testify to the truth of Self-nature.
To the truth that Self—nature is no—nature.
They have really 2011C beyond the ken of sophistry.
For them opens the gate of the oneness of cause and effect.
And straight runs the path of non—duality and non—trinity.
Abiding with the not—particular which is in particulars.
Whether going or returning, they remain for ever unmoved:
Taking hold of the not—thought which lies in thoughts.

In every act of theirs they hear the voice of the truth.
How boundless the sky of Samadhi unfettered!
How transparent the perfect moon-light of the fourfold Wisdom!
At that moment what do they lack?
As the Truth eternally calm reveals itself to them.
This very earth is the Lotus Land of Purity.
And this body is the body of the Buddha.

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MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 12: Winter

Dharma Talk

Where Are All the Buddhas Born?

A Dharma Talk given by Tenshin Reb Anderson Roshi on Tuesday December 7 2010, at Tassajara Zen Mountain Center.

Transcribed by Chris Brown and edited by Devin Ashwood.

We have humbly arrived at the occasion of our great benefactor, Shakyamuni Buddha, resolving to sit still under the Bo Tree, until realising the way.

Tomorrow we may perform a ceremony to celebrate the occasion of Shakyamuni realising the buddha way. We also often do a ceremony in April (sometimes in May), where we celebrate the birth of the being who became the Buddha, or the being who evolved to become the Buddha. We call it Buddha's Birthday. But it just occurred to me in the last few days that it is actually the birthday of the great bodhisattva, Gautama, prince Siddhartha. The Buddha was actually born on the occasion of attaining the way. So this is an opportunity to celebrate the attaining of the way and also the birth of a buddha.

Zen monasteries are sometimes called buddha-making, or buddha-birthing places. When the Shuso was talking about geology a few days ago, about mountains and water, I thought of another part of the scripture that she recited where the ancient teacher Yun Mun asked the assembly, "Where are all the buddhas born?" As usual, he answered the question for them, "Eastern mountains travel over the water. This is where and how buddhas are born". Dogen Zenji helps us out by commenting that it is the foot of the mountains that actually walks over the water. And he even gets more precise to point out that it's the toes of the mountain that touch the water; and where they touch the water, it splashes up. The mountain toes and the water waves are dancing together, and at that place, buddhas are born. Buddhas are born at the toes of the mountain meeting the water. Buddhas are born at mountains being mountains from their peak to their toes. Buddhas are born at the culmination of mountains being mountains. As you know, when mountains are truly mountains, mountains are not mountains. When mountains are truly mountains, they start moving over the water; they start dancing on the water, when they are truly mountains. When mountains are completely, thoroughly, intimate with being mountains, they meet the water, and buddhas are born.

We have the great good fortune of living at the toes of mountains that meet the water, right here in this valley. Also our Shuso pointed out in her talk that there's a block called the Nacimiento block, which means the "to-be-born" block, which is next to the ocean. It's the place where mountains are born. It's the place where the mountains and the water come together and mountains are born – the birthing process. This teaching is for people and other sentient beings to tell us that buddhas are born in sentient beings' intimacy with themselves. Buddhas are born where and when we are thoroughly intimate with ourselves.

This morning I heard the Shuso read the admonitions for sesshin and I thought I heard her say something like, "Harmonise with the schedule." I thought, that was unusual. Sometimes it says "Follow the schedule completely." But maybe it's, "Follow the schedule completely in order to harmonise with the schedule, and thus drop off body and mind." Becoming intimate with the schedule might involve following it or running away from it - which would involve meeting it and not meeting it. But in the end, the intimacy between ourselves and schedule is where the buddhas are born. In the buddha-making house they sometimes have a schedule. And when the sentient beings become intimate with themselves, by becoming intimate with the form of the schedule, buddhas are born, at the toes of the mountains of harmonising with the schedule.

You have heard it said many times that when we express the buddha mudra, the buddha seal – the mudra is a ring, but our sitting posture is also a mudra – when you are sitting you thoroughly exhaust the qualities of the sitting posture, and you are intimate with your sitting posture. To sit upright in correct bodily posture meets to sit upright and harmonise with that upright sitting, to be intimate with that upright sitting, to wholehearted about the bodily posture you have in the moment. In the wholeheartedness of this posture, in this moment, at the toes of the mountains of this posture – and you could also add at the fingertips (like mountain don't have) since we put our hands down in the same neighbourhood as our toes – we exhaust our posture to the toes and the fingers, and a buddha is born. It's also said that when we express the buddha's mudra in the three actions of body, speech and thought – in the three kinds of karmic consciousness – all day long, before, during and after this sesshin, we will always be involved in three kinds of karmic consciousness: mental, postural and vocal. There seems to be an encouragement for us to express the buddha's seal in our thinking, postures and vocalisations. Now everybody's sitting here so in this physical posture, express the buddhas seal by being thorough in this sitting in this moment. When you're walking during this sesshin and during the rest of your life, walk as the performance of the buddha mudra. When you are standing and speaking, express the buddha mudra in your postural and vocal karma. When you are thinking, make your

thinking the performance of the buddha mudra.

I heard also an announcement here about going to the restroom, and a further encouragement to wash one's hands after going to the restroom, and then wiping ones hands with paper towels. It seems that this is partly to promote public health in the practice place, but it's also another opportunity to be thorough in going to the restroom. There may other ways to be thorough, but some people, like maybe me, might want to go to the restroom and not wash my hands because I've got other things to do; especially if the water's cold. Should I use soap? Would that be more thorough and wholehearted? What is it like to go to the restroom and do so wholeheartedly? When we express our posture that way, by doing that kind of act, can we express the buddha mudra at the same time? The ancestor says that when we do express the buddha mudra of our karmic of posture of body, speech and thought, the whole phenomenal world turns in to enlightenment.

As I also like to remind myself and you, karmic consciousness is giddy. It's giddy because it is so excited so the point of being disorienting. It disorients us from making this consciousness the performance of the buddha way. It's so giddy, it is difficult for us to be oriented to be aware of our karmic consciousness to see if we wish this moment of action to be offered as the performance of the buddha way. When we are disoriented we may have trouble remembering that the ancestors teach that the buddha way is simple to perform: your current action is the Buddha way. Of course, that means to perform the current action intimately, thoroughly, wholeheartedly.

For example, in my case, 26 years ago at Green Gulch, we had a seven-day sesshin. The topic of the talks was the mountain and waters scripture, where it says the mountains and waters of the immediate present are the actualisation of the path of the ancient buddhas. Not the mountains and waters that we're thinking about, but the mountains and waters of the immediate present. Not our thinking that we're thinking about, but our thinking of the immediate present, which is wholehearted thinking, wholehearted for the sake of the buddha way. We give up half-hearted thinking for the Buddha way – this is the same as the mountains and rivers of the immediate present. Our karmic consciousness of the immediate present is the actualisation of the path of the ancient buddhas. Abiding together in their phenomenal expression in this way, they thoroughly culminate the qualities of exhaustiveness; 'they' being the mountains, and the karmic consciousnesses. It's so simple, but it's hard because karmic consciousness is disorienting us, is shaking us up, so it's hard for us to be present with something that's so giddy, that's so silly; so dynamic, so afflicted, so obscured. Mountains are like this too. Then the quote from Yun Men is given by Dogen: "Where are the buddha's born? Eastern mountains" - which means all of us, all living beings and non-living beings, are moving over the water – in their total

exertion they are dancing with their selflessness - that's where buddhas are born.

Anyway, I enjoyed the sesshin, I enjoyed being inspired by this teaching - to be wholehearted for the sake of the Buddha way. I didn't feel like I was resisting that teaching or the practice during the sesshin that much; except for one time, when I was feeling a bit disoriented. It started before the sesshin when my spouse told me that her car needed to be repaired, and it would cost \$1100. 26 years ago that was more money than now. We had \$1100 dollars so I said ok. I was pretty wholehearted about it: "Yeah, go ahead, I will give you all of my hard-earned money that I've saved up over all my years of Zen practice, you can use it to fix your car." Then, during sesshin, she gave me another message, which was that it would cost \$1900. But we don't have \$1900 so, I decided to borrow the rest from my father. At this point, my karmic consciousness got a bit giddy. I got a little disoriented from, "What am I supposed to be doing here? Oh yeah, be wholehearted about this karmic consciousness which is, 'that's more money than we expected'. But I'm going to be totally wholehearted and thorough with 'that's more money than we expected' - that's my job. That's not a complaint, that's a mountain to walk to the bottom of". But I only went halfway down the mountain I think, like: "Could we have another mountain, please? Slightly different?" After the sesshin was over, I got another message, which was, "actually it's going to cost \$3400". By the way, the car was worth about \$2000. At that point, karmic consciousness was very giddy, very disorienting. And in that disorientation, I didn't think "How can I be wholehearted about this dynamic situation where it's much more expensive than we thought, plus the car isn't worth that much" and so on. In that kind of disorienting situation, how can I be wholehearted? I forgot about me being totally intimate with this situation so that the mountains could move over the water. Instead I wanted to try to have a different situation. I wanted to find somebody to blame for the situation. Maybe that would make things less giddy and disorienting. There was a moment when I thought of blaming someone quite close to me, and then I thought "No, no, no, it's not her fault!" Then I thought of blaming someone even closer to me and then I thought "Oh no, it's not his fault!". Then I thought of blaming the mechanic, and I thought, "Well, that's a better option!" Then I thought "Well let's blame cars! Blame the Universe! Blame Germany!" (It was an old BMW). My mind was trying to put the responsibility for this situation someplace other than right here, in the immediate present. The teaching hadn't gone in sufficiently to my body and bones so that these karmic consciousnesses weren't disorienting me.

During that same sesshin, I had a niece born, and she had a problem with one of the arteries coming from the heart. Upon birth, it's supposed to close up, and it didn't. It just so happened that in San Francisco, at UC Medical Center, they had just a few years before developed a method

to fix that problem when it occurs in newborns. So she got the operation and didn't die. My spouse and I went to see the baby. As I remember there was no-one else in the room; she was lying there with heat lamps and a long incision in her chest, because she had open-heart surgery, and she was still sedated. She was trying to cry, but she couldn't really because she was medicated. But as best she could, she was still trying to express her pain. And she did really a good job of crying in that drugged state. I thought: "Eastern mountains move over the water". She was not trying to be someplace else – well, maybe a little bit, but she couldn't. Anyway, she reminded me to be there completely with her. When we left, walking down Parnassus I was no longer trying to blame anybody for this world, for the problems of this world; for illness, for financial problems, for unpredictable changes. I stopped trying to blame somebody for it and tried to just be here and suffer.

We've got the suffering; all we've got to do now, is be totally here. Not just for the sake of suffering, but for the buddha way; because the buddha way requires us to go to the toes of the mountain of our suffering. We have many practices to help us with that, like generosity, precepts, and patience; relaxation and gentleness. Compassion in this way will help us not blame somebody else for the problems we have. Then, we may be able to wholeheartedly sit, and express the buddha mudra in our sitting, walking and thinking, in chanting and in silence. We may be able to be quiet and make that silence a thorough, wholehearted, generous, tender, silence; moment by moment. We have a chance to be intimate with ourselves, perhaps with confidence that this is the performance of the buddha way. If I forget and I notice, then I confess and feel repentance, and I re-enlist in the buddha way.

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