



*"The highest mountains are the abode of the lions;
In the deepest waters the dragons dwell."*

Lions Gate Buddhist Priory

NEWSLETTER

July 2017

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Lions Gate Buddhist Priory is a branch of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives (OBC). Our practice is Serene Reflection Meditation (Sōtō Zen) and emphasizes basic Buddhist meditation and the keeping of the Precepts within the training of everyday life.

Rev. Kōten Benson, the Prior since 1986, is a Dharma Heir of Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett, founder of the OBC, who died in 1996. He was ordained in 1978 by Rev. Master Jiyu, and recognized by her as a Buddhist Master in 1983.

The Priory has three monks in residence and is located at Dragon Flower Mountain, one hundred and sixty acres of land in the Botanie Valley, near the village of Lytton in the B.C. interior. The land is off-grid and conditions are primitive as we strive to plant a mandala of Buddhist training in the mountains. There are regular retreats; visitors and guests are always welcome. Lay members and friends of the Priory meet regularly in Vancouver and Lytton, B.C. and there is a meditation group in Edmonton, Alberta.

The Priory is a registered charitable society supported entirely by donations from members and friends.

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ARTICLE

The Five Diamond Points

Rev. Master Koten Benson

This is a transcript of a Dharma Talk offered by Rev. Master Koten to the Priory community recently. It has been lightly edited for reading purposes. Transcribed by Rev. Aurelian.

Homage to the Buddha.

Homage to the Dharma.

Homage to the Sangha,

This is called “The five diamond points that penetrate to the very essence of the matter.”

The first one is the keeping of the pure and bright mind. This is sometimes called the first mind in the initial stages of training. But it is not, in all aspects, the same as at the beginning. Reverend Master Haryo, the present head of the Order, very much exemplifies this. When, at an Advisory Council meeting, if things get overclouded and confused by people being overwhelmed by the opinions and views which they are continually subjected to by the external world, it is as if he takes out a vajra that is kept polished and golden and bright, and reminds us what the essential matter is.

In the beginning, we look with great sincerity even though we do not always recognise it, and we go at the problem— the koan, as it were — with great determination and a certain amount of naivety, a certain amount of putting everything else aside in order to concentrate on the training and on finding the Truth.

It is easy, as one goes on throughout the years, to become discouraged or to become overwhelmed by the ideas and views and opinions of the world, which can cause one to feel tired, and to feel that the way is obscured. Dogen says “It is very difficult to keep the initial humility to the very end. But,” he says, “it is absolutely essential to do so.” The merit of first mind is the most widest and completely fathomless. Even if Buddhas explain it fully, such explanation can never be enough.

The second diamond point is: when despair and discouragement accumulate, as it were, in our kidneys, the seat of the will; when they accumulate, when the ideas and opinions and views get in the way and we feel stodgy and unable to move, when we feel as if the water of the spirit is bunged-up inside of us, then it is necessary to grasp hold of the will and turn. It is necessary to raise the water of the spirit from the base of the spine up, as if one were grasping something and deliberately turning it. This is done through the positive use of the will; through deliberately — even when one does not feel like it, especially when one does not feel like it — turning the wheel, turning the will, turning the effort; going past the place of obscurity and turning, grasping the will and turning the wheel.

The third diamond point is faith. Faith is not the belief in particular things. It is, rather, active willingness and the activity of continuing on. Faith flows. It is not about accepting particular ideas, views, or doctrines. It is about trusting the teaching of the Buddha and applying it to one's actual daily life, applying it to what is actually in front of oneself. By so practicing faith one is, as it were, holding up a light to be seen by others. This is very much the essence of the monastic life: to hold up the light through one's own training, which is the only way it can be held up; and thus, to benefit the world. This is the primary aspect of teaching, and if it is not present, then teaching through words will not be of any use. Truly practicing faith means to dig down deep inside of ourselves and really apply ourselves.

The fourth diamond point is the flexibility, resonance, flowing of meditation. Do not think that meditation is some state of mind. If you do so, you will be constantly pulling and pushing your mind in order to make it conform to some sort of deluded ideal. Meditation is the flow of the real, true, profound Buddha Nature. It exists. We can know it, and, thus know our real life, the life beyond the karma. The real life. To sit still, to sit down, to let be, to stop conjuring the mind, to stop conjuring the smoke of the ideas and opinions and views, and having to have it this way and not liking it that way. The disease of the mind, the feverish mind. The blessedness of meditation, the wondrous opportunity (which many people do not have) to be able to take some time and just sit and just be: the power of this — when we meditate, we drink the water of the spirit; we absorb it into ourselves, we pour it over ourselves. There is nothing more wondrous than this.

The fifth diamond point is the knowledge of the Unborn, the knowledge, the experience of the Unborn living within oneself, the true life living within oneself, the true flame, the true light. This is not a theory. We are not doing an experiment. The Ancestors have continually practiced, exemplified, taught, explained, pointed to, shown this. It is not beyond our capabilities. The

pillar exists within us. We just need to sit within it, abandoning all the unnecessary, abandoning all the wastes of time. If you can do this, you can live in this in the middle of joy and sorrow, in the middle of aches and pains, in the middle of bantering and silence. May you come to understand this. I pray that you may come to understand this.

Homage to all the Buddhas in all worlds.

Homage to all the Bodhisattvas in all worlds.

Homage to the Scripture of Great Wisdom.

NEWS

Spring was several weeks late in arriving this year. We were happy to welcome back warmer, sunny days and the explosion of new green growth, flowers, and songbirds.

We vacated the mobile home (Kwan Yin Hall) at the base of our driveway at the end of April. We are very grateful to Amandah for renting it to us at a reasonable price over the past year, which gave us a warm meditation hall during the winter. The move necessitated us getting Raven Cottage in shape for a monk's residence. We cleaned it up, did all the finishing touches required, and Andrew installed a propane heater which vents safely to the outside. The cabin is tiny but serves the needs of one monk very well.

We have worked on other projects over the spring and early summer as well. Andrew finished the new deck on the east side of Bodhidharma Hall. John planted a vegetable garden, with tomatoes, potatoes, beans, radishes, cucumbers, squash, peas, and herbs. This is the first vegetable garden we've planted up here.

In late April, we moved the Kwan Yin statue, which had been the central image on our altar in Kwan Yin Hall, to the Chinese History Museum in Lytton, which describes the rich history of Chinese people's presence in the area since the gold rush of the mid-1800's. As many readers know, this museum is on the exact site of the original Chinese Joss House (temple) which contained an image of Kwan Yin and which stood from 1881 to 1928. Rev. Master Koten was celebrant at a private ceremony in early May for the eye-opening and sitting-still of the statue. About a week later, we all attended the public grand opening of the museum. It was a great success, with about 150 people in attendance, a considerable turnout for such a small village. Rev. Master Koten was invited to give a Buddhist blessing. There were speeches and a surprise lion dance by a troupe from Vancouver, and a reception followed. The museum seems to be attracting many visitors. Since its opening we have been holding our Tuesday evening weekly meditation meetings at the museum.

From May 14 - May 20, we offered our week-long Wesak Retreat, the first of several retreats of the season. Four guests attended, and with the five current residents of the Priory, we had a good retreat. The weather cooperated, with warm, sunny spring days. This retreat ended with a Wesak Ceremony on May 21 at Prajnatarra Hall, our "log cabin zendo," and a festive al-fresco meal at Bodhidharma Hall of hot-dogs and other goodies. The meal was an offering from Rev. Master Ando in honour of her recently deceased father Klaus Mueller. During the retreat, Rev. Master Koten offered a series of Dharma Talks each morning on the meaning of Wesak; these, along with many other Dharma Talks, can be found on our website at <http://www.lionsgatebuddhistpriory.ca/Dharma%20Talks.htm> A second retreat was offered during the July long weekend. We welcomed one guest, Reverend Kuya Minogue, a priest in the Soto Zen lineage from Creston BC.

Rev. Master Aurelian visited Portland Buddhist Priory to represent Lions Gate at the Installation Ceremony of Rev. Leon as Prior. It was really good to be there to affirm our support for Rev.

Leon and the Portland Priory. Many thanks to him for inviting us, and to everyone who made us feel welcome. We wish him all the best in the future.

In late May, Rev. Valeria went to Edmonton for ten days to visit the meditation group there. The visit went very well. She attended several meditation meetings and led a half-day retreat. Thank you to everyone who showed up, helped out, offered meals and accommodations, and made the visit a success. Then, in mid-June, Rev. Master Aurelian went to Kelowna to lead a one-day retreat at the home of Peter Robinson, who leads a small meditation group there. There were about eight people in attendance, who came from various meditation and faith traditions.

The annual general meeting of the Lions Gate Buddhist Priory Society, which is the legal non-profit society of the Priory, was held on June 9 this year. The financial statements were presented and accepted, a new board of directors was elected, and Rev. Master Aurelian presented the plans for our moving of a Kwan Yin statue and the proposed building project.

The statue is one that was offered to us by the abbot of the Tu Vien Kwang Nguyen Buddhist temple in Langley after he came to visit here a few years ago. The statue is very beautiful, of Kwan Yin pouring out the waters of compassion. It was carved in Vietnam. It is solid granite, weighing approximately 10 tons and standing about 14 ft high. Moving it here will be a big undertaking, and we are grateful to all who have contributed funds towards it. A local contractor will be building the base this summer, and a local road maintenance company will be fixing up the road. We are hoping to have the statue moved before mid-September. An industrial moving company from the lower mainland has been hired for the job; it will require a large truck and cranes at either end.

The building project is a long-term project to construct a Buddha Hall and monastic and guest residences in Great Wisdom Park. We are working with an architect from Surrey, Gerry Blonski, who has produced sketches of a very beautiful set of buildings. We will let people know once we have firmer plans.

Many of you have inquired as to our safety during this very active fire season in the BC interior. At the time of this writing, July 17, we are grateful to report that there are no active fires in our immediate area, although there has been a lot of smoke. There is a very large and serious wildfire in the Ashcroft/Cache Creek area about an hour's drive away. Many people have been evacuated, and many have lost their homes. We are offering merit for all those who have been affected throughout the province.

We are offering one more week-long and several more weekend retreats this summer and fall. If you're interested in attending any of them, please let us know. The dates and details can be found on our website. As well, we welcome visitors for long or short visits or stays.

IN GRATITUDE

The Priory is entirely supported by the generous donations and gifts from members and friends. We receive no funding from any government or other agencies. We are deeply grateful for all that we receive.

In addition to monetary donations, some of the gifts we have received over the previous months include the following: tofu, green onion cakes, avocados, yogurt, sour cream, cakes, crackers, breads and buns, pistachios, peanuts, tea, veggie stir-fry, candies, popcorn, perogies, samosas, lasagna, salad, brownies, fruit, pastries, doughnuts, canned tomatoes, soups, sauces, jelly, gluten, bottled coffee drinks, restaurant meals, jam, protein powder, chocolate bars, fruit juices, cheese, shredded coconut, nuts, soy sauce, olive oil, pies, evaporated milk, tempeh, seitan, salad greens, kale, lentils, onions, carrots, mushrooms, ginger, pickles, sweet potatoes, celery, peppers, cucumbers, cabbage, basil, spring rolls, sauces, Asian vegetables, noodles, muffins, puffed tofu, chips, coffee, oranges, melons, cinnamon buns, grapefruit, tomatoes, naan bread, green pea crisps, Chinese dumplings, green peas, raisins, chia seeds, avocado oil, instant noodles, bamboo shoots, maple syrup, Girl Scout cookies, bagels, honey, peanut butter, cheese puffs, spinach pie, paneer, veggie meats, milk, granola, breakfast cereals, chocolate spread, ketchup, mayonnaise, sugar, pickles, canned corn, salsa, butter, vinegar, tomato sauce, canned soup, cat food, dog food.

Medicine for monks, Segaki sacristy items, carrying bag, a Value Village credit card, sponges, disinfectant wipes, work gloves, brooms, toilet paper, a gong with a cushion and striker, clothing for monks, paper towels, tissue, dish soap, bar soap, laundry detergent, lighters, garbage bags, steel wool, glass jars.

Thank you to Ruth for sewing a new robe for Rev. Master Koten; to our neighbours and friends Sherri and Rainer, Karen Kimble, and Patsy Gessey for the potted plants and tomato seedlings; to Rev. Master Ando for the hot dogs, and buns in honour of her deceased father; to everyone who offered food and accommodations to traveling monks; and to everyone who has benefited this place of training through selfless generosity, the merit of which is incalculable.

OFFERING BOWL

The Priory could use a soldering iron.

-In gassho

SCHEDULE & UPCOMING RETREATS



The congregation of Lions Gate Buddhist Priory is meeting regularly in Vancouver; and in Lytton the monks are offering meditation each Tuesday evening at the Chinese History Museum at 145 Main Street in Lytton. Meditation instruction for beginners will start at 6:00pm followed by meditation and walking meditation at 6:30. Tea will follow. No previous experience is necessary. All are welcome. In Lytton there is also a ceremony on Sundays at 2625 Botanie Creek Road, starting at 10 am. For further information or to arrange for meditation instruction please contact lionsgatebuddhistpriory@lyttonbc.net

A meditation group of the OBC is located in Edmonton, Alberta. For information please contact:

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WEB: www.serenereflection.org PHONE: (780) 433-3088

Shasta Abbey

August 11-13	Introductory Retreat
August 20-27	Teachings of our Tradition Retreat
October 11-13	Silent Meditation Retreat
October 18-22	Lay Ministers Retreat
October 26-29	Feeding of the Hungry Ghosts Retreat

Shasta Abbey also offers resident lay training throughout most of the year, under arrangement with their Guestmaster. Please contact the Guestmaster if you are interested in this option.

For more information please contact:

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