



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

Lions Gate Buddhist Priory

NEWSLETTER

April 2018

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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: The Third Point

Rev. Master Koten Benson

The following is a transcription of a Dharma Talk that was recently offered to the community at Lions Gate by Rev. Master Koten. It is the fourth part in a series on “The Five Diamond Points That Penetrate to the Very Heart of the Matter.” Transcribed by Pierre Kohl and edited by Rev. Aurelian, with minor revisions made for ease of reading.

Homage to the Buddha

Homage to the Dharma

Homage to the Sangha

The Third Diamond Point that penetrates all the way to the centre is faith, refuge in the Three Treasures. Sometimes, “sradha” or faith is translated as “confidence,” but I actually prefer the translation of “faith,” because confidence can mean any number of things. One can have confidence in oneself in a very egocentric manner, and yet faith is about something bigger than oneself.

We take refuge in the Buddha because he taught a way of training. We take refuge in the Dharma, the way of training; and we take refuge in the Sangha, the people who train with us.

We take refuge in the Buddha, and to take refuge in the Buddha means to have some level of trust or confidence that what the Buddha taught is relevant to us.

Taking refuge in the Dharma means to actually explore this and not simply stand on the outside looking in. To explore it means to study it — but also to study it with living people who are actually practicing it. It is quite different from practicing it on one’s own or from reading about it.

Taking refuge in the Sangha means that we go to people who teach the Dharma and learn from them. Although it can have broader implications and meanings. To take refuge in the Sangha

means to learn from people who are practicing, to learn from people who have more experience in practice than we do.

Faith within Buddhist practice is not a belief in something. A belief can be mistaken. A belief can be a temporary way of looking at something, upon which we can hang ideas and concepts; but faith means to actually take up something, practice it, go deeply into it, and not withhold oneself from the practice. What the Buddha taught is not capable of being understood separate from practicing it. This is a point that cannot be over-emphasized. The Buddhadharma is about practice. It is not about a view of the universe, because then again we are dealing with a particular view. How do we know that our view or our idea or our understanding of what we have read is true or — more importantly — useful to us? We can only know this by practicing it. And faith is not in any way divorced from practice. Buddhism does not usually go about proselytizing, because it isn't a case whereby a belief leads to salvation. Buddhists do not spend time thinking about how it would be nice if all the people in Africa were Buddhist. This is actually a waste of time. People who are called Buddhist or call themselves Buddhist come in all shapes, sizes and inclinations, just like every other religion. The proof in Buddhism is to practice it, to taste and see for oneself. However, many people take the admonition to “taste and see for oneself,” and then they stay outside of it, waiting until it comes to them. But in fact we have to plunge into it ourselves.

We begin this by taking the Refuges, but we begin the meaning of practice by paying attention to what we are doing. This is not the same as an idea of gliding through one's daily existence on a cloud. It means to pay attention to what one is doing, to pay attention to what is going through one's mind. It is not at all about gliding along as if on a blissful cloud. Buddhist practice is very hard work. It is about undoing old habits, undoing old ideas and opinions. If one seeks to practice the Buddha's way and yet hold back from questioning one's ideas and opinions, one will not get very far.

When entering the gate of practice, everything is up in the air. One may discover that one has been totally wrong about something. This is usually the case. One may discover that one was right about things that were only half-formed in one's mind.

And then again, as one goes on, this may be turned completely upside down and inside out.

The developing of a soft and flexible mind is of essential importance here. This is the third of the Diamond Points that penetrate all the way to the centre. The first one is initial humility of First

Mind. The second one is grasping the will and turning one's life around. And the third one is faith, as I have described.

Homage to all the Buddhas in all worlds
Homage to all the Bodhisattvas in all worlds
Homage to the Scripture of Great Wisdom.

NEWS

We had a long, cold winter this year with about a metre of snow accumulation.

At the time of this writing in early April there is still some snow on the ground, and we're having a slow start to spring, although we have seen our first buttercups and robins. We were grateful to have the truck and snowplow, which enabled us to keep the road clear.

On March 17, Rev. Valeria and Tracy Kitigawa of Edmonton attended a large public memorial in Victoria for Rev. Master Meiten McGuire, who died peacefully on January 2 of this year. She led the Vancouver Island Meditation Group in Victoria for many years. Rev. Valeria was Chaplain at the ceremony, and Rev. Master Meido of Wallowa Buddhist Priory was Celebrant.

On January 21, we attended the annual World Religion Day activities at the Parish Hall in Lytton. This is the twelfth time the celebration has been held in the village. About 17 people attended, representing many different faith traditions. We shared prayers and songs, and everyone enjoyed a potluck lunch together.

In early January, Tara Dog passed away here at the Priory. Supriti Bharna had brought Tara up here a few days earlier. Tara, a sweet-natured dog, had come down with lymphoma in the fall. We held a brief funeral ceremony for her in Prajnatara Hall. Supriti and Rev. Master attended her cremation in Abbotsford a few days later.

In February our little dog Bobi was attacked by two large neighbour-dogs. He sustained severe and extensive injuries to both rear flanks and his right front shoulder, including a broken bone. He had to undergo three surgeries. For a while we weren't sure if he would survive. John, his person, attended to him night and day. Over time, he began to eat and drink more regularly and move about. At the time of this writing, his open wounds are almost entirely closed up and he is back to his old enthusiastic and slightly mischievous self. We thank the veterinarians at Merritt Veterinary Hospital who provided such excellent care, and everyone who have offered financial support for his care, and merit and prayers for our friend during his long recovery.

In early April, we held a funeral ceremony for seven tiny newborn kittens. They belonged to Heidi, a friend from the village of Lytton, whose cat gave birth to them a few days earlier. Some were stillborn and some died shortly after birth. Rev. Valeria was the celebrant for the ceremony, and they were buried on the Priory property.

We'd like to remind you of our upcoming week-long Wesak Retreat here at the Priory. The retreat will begin with a Precepts Ceremony on Sunday evening, May 13 and end on Saturday, May 19. People are welcome to attend all or part of the retreat. If you are interested in attending, it would be helpful if you can let us know soon so we can make plans.

Also, we would like to invite everyone to our annual Wesak Ceremony Festival on **May 20 at 11:00 am. PLEASE NOTE: The ceremony will take place at Prajnatara Hall at the Priory.** Wesak is one of the most important and joyful festivals of the Buddhist year, in which we celebrate the birth, enlightenment, and teaching of the Buddha. This will be followed by a festive lunch at Bodhidharma Hall at the Priory. **(Please note that the ceremony will be held at 11:00 am, not our usual starting time of 10:00 am. This is in order to give anyone coming from the city time to get here).**

Building Project

We have good news on the building front! As a result of a kind and generous donation, we will be constructing a building on Fearlessness Peak, where the large Kwan Yin is located. The building is designed and sold as a kit by Skeetchestn Natural Resources LLP, which is owned and operated by the Skeetchestn Indian Band (of the Secwemepc First Nation) based near Savona BC. The unique design, a 12-sided post-and-beam building kit, is based on a modified version of the traditional pithouses of the Interior First Nations peoples.

We first became aware of these buildings when we stopped at the Big Sky gas station near Savona on the way to Kamloops, where several of them are used as band offices. We were given a tour of the show-home while it was being constructed, and we were really taken by the design and the obvious care and enthusiasm of the local band members who were participating in its construction. The building is made of pre-cut, kiln-dried, locally sourced timbers and structurally insulated panels. It has high ceilings rising to a skylit dome, and a real feeling of light, airiness and “lifting the spirits.” The building has a high R-factor (good insulation), and due to its design and method of construction it is much more energy efficient than conventional frame buildings.

We will use the building for ceremonies, meditation, and guest accommodation and we hope to use the same building system in the future on Great Wisdom Park for further monastic buildings.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Annual General Meeting of Lions Gate Buddhist Priory Society will be held on May 19 at 1:00 pm at the home of Victor Stepan, 2625 Botanie Creek Road, Lytton, BC. All are welcome.

IN GRATITUDE

The Priory, its community, and its activities are entirely supported by the generous donations of congregation members and friends. We receive no outside funding from government agencies or the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives. We are very grateful for everything that we receive.

Over the past months, in addition to monetary donations we received the following: meals and accommodations for monks, candied nuts, chocolates, eggs, papayas, avocados, lemons, seaweed snacks, grapes, assorted nuts and seeds, strawberries, peppers, tomatoes, bananas, noodles, broccoli, lemon squares, doughnuts, cookies and pastries, breads, crackers, chutneys, mango pickles, apple cider vinegar, samosas, paneer, sauces, cakes, rice treats, soy milk, apples, blueberries, oranges, buns, Coca-Cola, green onions, coffee, pomellos, veggie meats, tortillas, cookies, evaporated milk, popcorn, granola, fig bars, dog treats, dog and cat food, coffee filters, a serving plate, prayer flags, a baking dish, a gold ingot dish, slippers, medicine. Thank you to the anonymous person who put a book of stamps into our mailbox in Lytton. Thank you to everyone who generously made donations towards Bobi's veterinary care. Thank you to everyone who continues to support us with their time, skills and money, and thank you for everyone's training and good wishes, the merit of which is incalculable and without limit.

BEGGING BOWL

We could use a shovel and a mattock. Please contact us for details.

-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 6:00 pm 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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Shasta Abbey

May 18-20	Wesak Celebratory Retreat
June 1-3	Introductory Retreat
June 17-24	The Buddha's Teachings from the Pali Canon
July 13-August 13	Summer Intensive Retreat
July 13-15	Introductory Retreat
July 26-29	Transforming Our Daily Life

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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