



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

Lions Gate Buddhist Priory

NEWSLETTER

July 2018

Issue #120

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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The Five Diamond Points: The Fourth Point

Rev. Master Koten Benson

The following is a transcription of a Dharma Talk offered to the community at Lions Gate in August of last year. It is the fifth 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 Fourth Diamond Point that penetrates all the way to the centre is meditation. Not meditation of accomplishment, or meditation of failure, or meditation of stages, or meditation of trying to get somewhere, or of trying to suppress thought, or of trying to have elaborate or wonderful experiences. This is the meditation of letting go, the meditation of no-thing special, the meditation of not trying to calculate, not trying to control, not trying to be somebody.

“The means of training are thousandfold, and pure meditation must be done.” The means of various ways of calming the mind, of controlling the mind, of letting go of the mind are all the thousand ways of training. How we go about keeping the Precepts and the extra Precepts (which I will talk about later) — that is, the various small things that we take upon ourselves as individuals in order to help our training — these are the means of training, and pure meditation must be done.

Pure meditation is not about success. Pure meditation is not about when our minds are empty of thoughts. Pure meditation is simply to sit there. Whatever arises is no problem. Just for the moment, just for that five minutes or that half-hour, drop everything else. When it arises let go of it, just for that period of time. Everything that is of the nature of spiritual experience is included in this, and this meditation is a lifetime’s study. How we understand it in the beginning can be quite different from how we understand it in the middle and later on. This does not invalidate any of the places of understanding.

Pure meditation is not done for the purpose of arriving somewhere or gaining something. You would have all heard this before, except that you need to really understand what this means and

the implication of it. Pure meditation is not easy, but neither is it complicated. It is the basis of all jhanas and contemplations, and it is to this that we return, whatever the nature of our spiritual experiences.

“Pure meditation must be done.” This is not the same thing exactly as doing it in a schedule of every day. One can do mediation every day without actually doing pure meditation, particularly if one spends the time calculating, adding, accumulating, and other things like that. It is an essential point — if not THE essential point — of the whole Sōtō tradition that anybody can do this. This has nothing to do with learning, it has nothing to do with having read innumerable books, it has nothing to do with “intelligence.” We are, rather, practising our inheritance.

The Buddha, and then the Ancestors, throughout time have opened wide the gates to this by practising it among themselves and allowing us to practise it with them. Thus, pure meditation cannot be understood from texts. It is a living tradition. That is why it is said we must cross great distances, climb mountains, enter the forests, and seek those who practice in order to learn from them how to practise. Too much reading from books on meditation beclouds the mind, partly because many people writing about meditation do not understand it at all. As Dogen says, their words are green and unrepentant because they have not penetrated the Matter, because they think it is a form of accumulating, of adding to the self and its possessions. But this is not so at all.

Do not worry — and this is addressed to the laity — do not worry and get yourself all run around because you do not have time. You do not “have time” anyway. Rather, heed the call to turn within, and you will know its benefits. In the morning, even for a second, stop. Look. Sit still. Even for a second, even on the toilet, even on the edge of your bed, stop for a second. Do not launch the acquiring, acquisitive mind as soon as you open your eyes in the morning. Remember throughout the day to stop, to let go of the acquisitive, inquiring, grasping monkey-mind, and rest, just for a split second. Nothing is lost for so doing. Whenever you have a moment — say, when you’re on the toilet — stop. Whenever you have to wait, whether it is for the computer to boot up, or for a meeting, sit still. One of the greatest lay practitioners was a Chinese prime minister who spent all his time in meetings and was frequently waiting. He used all those opportunities to practise and, much to his surprise, gained a reputation as a master of Zen.

Do not pine for faraway mountains. Practice where you are. Throughout the day there are innumerable moments. Stop. Don’t jump to the next moment. At the end of the working day or the end of the work-period, when you shut down the computer or pull away from your desk, stop. Don’t jump to the next moment. Stop. The Buddha Mind is in continuous flow through all

things. How many times have you not taken those words seriously? Do you think that we are joking? Do you think that the ancient Ancestors, both lay and monastic, were superheroes? Do you think that they lived in less complicated times? Everyone throughout history describes their own times as overwhelming and complicated.

I can hear some of you saying, “I don’t know what I’m doing. I don’t know how to meditate.” It isn’t a contest. There isn’t a prize at the end. There aren’t blue ribbons and red ribbons. We are practicing our inheritance. We are manifesting the miraculous activities of the Buddhas and Ancestors. It is not far from you at all.

Particularly if you are working in a job, when the moment for the stopping arises, stop. All your ambitions, all the things you have constructed, your family, will pass away in time. Do not deceive yourself that this is not so. The only thing that will sustain you in the long run is the times you stop; for when illness comes, or injury, or tragedy, or death, you will stop whether you want to or not.

Learning to stop in this way is the most profound of activities. Do not be afraid. Impermanence is simply there. Do not panic. There is nowhere to fall. The flow of the Buddha Mind is everywhere, but we have to do the stopping that allows us to see it. Put aside worry and calculations. The reason you are tired and frustrated is because you are chasing something that cannot be caught.

Stop for a moment. Go deeply and experience the water. You can practice in this way. Your sincerity of mind is excellent. The Buddha Nature erupts into existence. Nothing can stop it. The Buddhas and the Ancestors constantly enter the world to benefit beings. Nobody can do anything about this. Compassion pours forth constantly. Nobody can do anything about them.

Buddhism is called a religion because not only do you have to have faith, but you have to turn around and do something about it. That is why it is beyond having an intellectual understanding. Without practice it is nothing at all. The many “isms” and their form arise and confuse. Do not be confused by another “ism” called Buddhism. Your heart and your courage are excellent.

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 slow to arrive this year, with flowers and greenery about two to three weeks later than normal. John put in a big vegetable garden, and it is now growing very well. We have enjoyed radishes, lettuce, greens, new potatoes, and herbs so far this summer. We have also planted several berry bushes on the water line, grape vines, and a peach tree around Bodhidharma Hall, and we created a small water garden at Dragon Well.

We had a successful week-long Wesak retreat in mid-May, with eight people in attendance. It culminated on May 20 with a lovely Wesak Ceremony at Prajnatarra Hall, which we festively decorated for the occasion. The congregation circumambulated during the ceremony, offering incense and pouring water over the Baby Buddha. Afterwards we shared a joyful and lively meal at Bodhidharma Hall.

On June 24 we held the 8th Annual Kwan Yin Festival Ceremony in Lytton at the Chinese History Museum. There were close to 20 people in attendance, including local residents of Lytton. Afterwards, people enjoyed a nice potluck lunch together. We thank Lorna Fandrich, the director of the museum, for generously offering the space and facilities to make this possible.

We have also celebrated ongoing festival ceremonies throughout the spring on Sundays at Victor's. Over the past few months we celebrated the Manjusri Festival and the Keizan Memorial.

We're happy to report that our little dog Bobi completely recovered from his injuries sustained last winter during an attack by two dogs, and he's back to his energetic and feisty self. We recently brought him to Merritt so that the veterinarian, Dr. Molnar, could see him. The doctor was happy to see him and told us it was one of his most memorable cases.

In April, Rev. Aurelian had the opportunity to travel to Shasta Abbey for 10 days with a lay person who generously paid the travel expenses. And in June, Rev. Master Koten travelled to Edmonton to visit the Edmonton Buddhist Meditation Group. During the visit, he met with the group several times, led a day-long meditation retreat, and had the opportunity to offer spiritual counselling to various members of the group. Thank you to everyone who generously offered help and hospitality to Rev. Master Koten during his trip. In early July, we said farewell to Rev. Valeria, who left for the US, where she will visit her family for a few weeks then travel to Shasta Abbey to spend a couple of months training there.

With the advent of warmer weather, we've been delighted to welcome more visitors. In April, our friends Lama Tsewang and Rev. Sukha, two monks of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, brought Sonam Khempo, a Buddhist Teacher from Los Angeles, and his wife Tsering. They both really like our temple and the surrounding mountains, which they said reminded them of Bhutan, and they recited blessings at various altars and shrines. We've also had visitors from the local area, and from Edmonton, Calgary, Kelowna, Oregon, Victoria, and Vancouver. We welcome visitors at any time, either for day visits, longer stays, or "just for tea."

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: prepared meals and restaurant meals; bread; much varied fresh fruits and vegetables; chocolates and candies; coffee; tea; a variety of cheeses; tempeh; tofu; desserts and pies for Wesak retreat and festival meals; maple syrup; soy sauce; corn bread mix; sauerkraut; corn chips; fresh herbs; potato chips; sugar; cookies; various nuts; veggie wieners; milk; ice cream; oatmeal; iced tea mix; canned beans and peas; yogurt; tofu dessert; dry cereal; paneer; salt; canned and dried fruit; dried and canned soups; rice; wild rice; snack bars; roti flour; pasta sauces; canned tomatoes; Starbucks Frappuccino; sponge cake; fruit cake; kale chips; Stove-Top Stuffing; Kinder eggs; crackers; chocolate bars; papadums; mango juice; yams; ginger; chutneys; ghee; peppers; spices; lemonade; cookie mix; various jams and spreads; muffins; olives; ginseng beverage; coconut milk; flour; granola; pasta; juices; peanut butter; pickles; almond butter; raisins; dried cereals; cooking oil; soft drinks; coconut water; various sauces; butter; mayonnaise; sweetened condensed milk; various veggie meats; pet foods & treats; a shovel and mattock; foot booties; medicated cream; a candle snuffer; a hat for Rev. Aurelian; horseradish plants; sandpaper; a Buddhist jigsaw puzzle; a Kwan Yin statue; offering cups; incense; jars; a bottle; an apron; several bags of garden manure; a GPS tracker; tissues, toilet paper and paper towels; a Home Hardware gift card. Thank you to Bob and Patti for all the tools and equipment including a generator. Thank you to Patsy from Lytton for the tomato seedlings. Thank you to Daikokoji Soto Zen Temple in Hawaii for the gift of a Baby Buddha statue for Wesak ceremonies and a firoshiki cloth, and to Sherron for bringing these things to us. Thank you to everyone who

generously gave of their time and offered hospitality to traveling monks. Thank you to all who have donated money towards the Priory operations. And thank you to all for your offerings of meditation and training, the merit of which is immeasurable and benefits all beings.

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

- Aug. 10-12 Introductory Retreat
- Aug. 19-26 Great Master Dogen: Scholar, Mystic, Author, Teacher, Poet Retreat
- Sept. 4-6 Silent Meditation Retreat
- Sept. 21-23 Introductory Retreat
- Oct. 5-7 Awakening to True Wisdom
- Oct. 16-18 Silent Meditation Retreat
- Oct. 25-28 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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