



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

Lions Gate Buddhist Priory

NEWSLETTER

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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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2789 BOTANIE CREEK ROAD, P.O. BOX 701, LYTTON, B.C. V0K 1Z0, CANADA

PHONE: 1-250-999-3911 EMAIL: lionsgatebuddhistpriory@gmail.com

WEB SITE: www.lionsgatebuddhistpriory.ca

The Five Diamond Points: The Fifth 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 sixth 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 Fifth Diamond Point which penetrates all the way to the centre: this is the seeking out and the finding of the jewel of the innate knowledge of the Buddha Nature within oneself, and penetrating with it all the way to the knowledge of the Unborn.

We’ve talked about the first Diamond Point, which is the naive, open and seeking mind; the second Diamond Point, which is the use of the will to turn the Wheel within oneself; the third Diamond Point, which is faith to continue; the fourth Diamond Point, which is Pure Meditation; and now, the fifth Diamond Point, which is the innate knowledge of the Buddha Nature.

Seeking out and finding this jewel within oneself requires the application of the naive and open mind, the grasping of the will, faith, and Pure Meditation. To do this requires the abandonment of the cynical mind; replacing the worldly, chattering mind with the diamond-focused mind. This is the real meaning of

mind-full-ness; the soft and flexible mind.

The abandonment of the cynical mind is, in particular, of great importance if one is going to see the Jewel of one's innate and original Buddha Nature. Even seeing it once is not enough; it still requires the great effort of taking it all the way to the centre.

Knowledge of the Unborn for oneself — in one's skin, flesh, bones, and marrow — is the centre towards which all the other Diamond Points are directing. It is essential to actualise this and not leave it merely as a theory or an idea. This requires the acknowledgement of one's deep dissatisfaction with oneself and with things as they are. This is very evident in the life of Shakyamuni Buddha who, before he renounced the world, tried all sorts of ways to cut through worldly delusion and to benefit beings. He came to the point where his dissatisfaction and his need to find a solution was greater than anything else.

To take any of these Diamond Points and penetrate all the way to the centre is not easy. One of the most important teachings that Dogen received from Tendo Nyojo was: "Put aside all speculation and do not think that it is easy." Do not expect it to be easy.

Anyone, whether lay or monastic — whether man or woman or any other gender, no matter from what background, no matter what their level of education, no matter what their social class — can practice this. It is not a question of needing to study all the scriptures, listen to all the Dharma talks, know what all the books say. It is only necessary to take one of these Points and use it to penetrate all the way to the centre.

It is frequent for people to stop when they have calmed down the coarser aspects that they do not like of themselves, but training goes way, way, way beyond this.

In the statues of Kanzeon, she holds a jewel. The Scripture says the jewel illuminates darkness, clarifies water, heals illnesses. This jewel is the knowledge, innate and accomplished, of the Buddha Nature within oneself, of the Unborn living within oneself, experienced in one's skin, flesh, bones, and marrow.

Consider for a moment skin, flesh, bones, and marrow; the Unborn, the Blood of the Buddhas flowing through oneself. This is the true purpose of the mudras and meridians. Too many times people take spiritual training as an actualisation of the self, when in fact it is going far, far beyond; studying the self, forgetting the self, awakening to everything. When we transform and let go of our karmic life, then True Life emerges. True Life is the participation in all things as the Bodhisattva practice. What is the Bodhisattva practice? It is to let go of selfishness.

Why do you cling to that which only exists for a brief period of time? Is this the true meaning of the warning against ambition, of constantly trying to promote oneself? Do not think in terms of various types of self, large and small. Abandon selfishness when it arises. Abandon selfishness at the smallest level. Do not think that this is easy.

I pray that you may come to understand this. I always 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

We have had a busy summer, with retreats, many visitors, and ceremonies, while continuing our daily practice and meditation. The weather has been mostly fine, and we have been able to get much work done on the property.

We held one week-long retreat in September and several weekend retreats throughout the summer and fall. The retreats went well and smoothly, and we thank everyone who attended for all their help and for their meditation and training.

On Sunday, September 2, we held the annual Feeding of the Hungry Ghosts (Segaki) ceremony at Segaki Lookout on the Priory property. Thirteen people attended this ceremony on a bright warm day. It is a memorial ceremony of Great Compassion, during which the merit of our training is offered to all those who have died, especially those who have died in unfortunate or tragic circumstances. During this ceremony, the names of the dead whom people wish to be remembered are read quietly while the congregation circumambulates and offers incense. The altar is filled with pure food “from the mountains, fields, and seas.” This is one of the most elaborate ceremonies of the Buddhist year, and we thank everyone who participated and helped out in the preparations. After the ceremony, we all went up to Bodhidharma Hall to share a festive celebratory meal.

Other ceremonies we held over the past few months were the Bhaisajyaguru (Medicine Buddha) ceremony, the Kwan Yin Ceremony at the Chinese History Museum in Lytton which was well-attended, and the Bodhidharma Festival in October.

And on Sunday, October 21, Rev. Master Koten gave the Buddha’s Precepts in the Ceremony of Lay Ordination to Panda Ruth Jerry. Panda lives in Thunder Bay,

Ontario, and she was unable to travel the great distance to the Priory, so the ceremony was done over the internet via Skype. Computer monitors were placed so that both the Celebrant and the Ordinee could see each other. It was the first time we have done a lay ordination using this technology, and we discovered that it was a smooth and seamless process. Several of the local congregation were present, and Panda had some friends at her place as witnesses. As well, Rev. Helen, Prior of Redding Zen Buddhist Priory in California, and several of the Redding congregation witnessed the ceremony through Skype. Afterwards Rev. Master Koten offered a short Dharma Talk on the meaning of the Precepts and how to keep them. Our warmest congratulations go out to Panda, and we wish her success in her ongoing training as a Buddhist.

We have welcomed many visitors over the summer and into the fall, both for scheduled retreats and non-retreat times. Visitors came from the local area, from around BC and from other parts of Canada. We welcome visitors at any time, for day-visits or longer periods. Please let us know if you're intending to visit, as we are not always here.

We were busy with work projects around the property this summer. We purchased seven loads of firewood from our neighbour which had to be split and stacked for the winter, and we are in the process of gathering more firewood from the land, including several trees near Segaki Lookout which died due to a late frost this spring. From the garden, we harvested tomatoes, carrots, parsnips, beets, squash, potatoes, greens and other good things. We harvested wild rose petals in the early summer, which we made into rose-petal rosaries and tasty, sweet syrup, and in the fall, rosehips for jam. We also preserved apricots, cherries, apples, and other fruits we received from generous local people. We planted a flower garden around the outhouse and a water garden down by Dragon Well. John has been enlarging the driveway area, and he dug and levelled a terrace near the house for our picnic table.

On Saturday, October 13, Rev. Master Koten participated in a public talk with his friend, Lama Tsewang, at the Yoga House in Kelowna, BC. It was entitled “Old Friends: A Dialogue with the Zen and Tibetan Traditions of Buddhism.” Thirty people attended the discussion, and it seemed to be well-received, with much discussion and many good questions from the audience. The two “old friends” are hoping that a similar talk can be held in Vancouver in the not-too-distant future. Many thanks to Peter Robinson who worked hard to put this event together.

In April, we told you about a small building that we were planning on Fearlessness Peak near the Kwan Yin statue. Our first effort fell through due to a variety of causes, but we are still hopeful that the building will be constructed before the winter comes. The Skeetchestn First Nations Band in Savona, BC, who are the people constructing the building kit, have agreed to do the actual erecting of structure. First step is pouring a concrete base, and we are hoping that it will get underway very shortly. Mike from Skeetchestn has told us that, because the building components are manufactured off-site, the actual construction can be completed in a matter of a few days.

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: papayas, mangos, avocados, tamarinds, breads, granola, chutneys, nut milk, papadams, apple cider vinegar, Balsamic vinegar, olive oil, lemons, fresh ginger, protein powder, Rice Crispies, Bisquick flour, jackfruit chips, homemade

jams, melons, apples, nectarines, strawberries, cookies, olives, tea, salad dressing, chocolate, salad greens, carrots, various cheeses, celery, evaporated milk, peanuts, soft drinks, assorted canned beans, biscuits, pickles, dates, potato chips, Cheerios, dates, jams, fruit juices, blueberries, bananas, cakes, sour cream, tofu, peaches, zucchini, walnuts, coffee, popcorn, coconut cream, milk, cream, donuts, Kraft Dinner, green onions, Twizzlers, almonds, buns for the Segaki altar, Japanese treats, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, seaweed, veggie wieners and buns, granola bars, pie, spring rolls, broccoli, muffins, rice, cooked meals, pastas, cashews, canned fruit, hazelnuts, maple syrup, moon cakes, butter, matzoh balls, plums, tomatoes, durian, corn, flour, dried beans, mayonnaise, soup mix, canned tomatoes, canned mushrooms, canned beets, cauliflower, homemade sauerkraut, homemade salsa, multigrain cereal, corn meal, soy milk, chapatis, treats and food for dogs and cat, a dish brush, batteries, dish soap, a tablecloth, firewood, paper towels, tissue, toilet paper, incense, a Buddhist scroll. Thank you to everyone at the Lytton Farmers Market who gave us fresh fruits and vegetables; to Lorna Fandrich who gave us cattails to plant at the water areas; to everyone who offered food, accommodation, and transportation to traveling monks; to all who continue to support us through their generous offerings of time, skill, and money; and thank you for everyone's training and good wishes, the merit of which is limitless and cannot be counted.

OFFERING BOWL

We could make use of the following: AAA, and C batteries . (We have plenty of AA batteries at the moment); some bed (sleeping) pillows; unscented dish soap; liquid laundry detergent.

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@gmail.com

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

EDMONTON BUDDHIST MEDITATION GROUP
10825 – 80 AVENUE
EDMONTON, AB T6E 1V9
WEB: www.serenereflection.org PHONE: (780) 433-3088

Shasta Abbey

Nov. 9-11 Introductory Retreat
Nov. 15-17 Silent Meditation Retreat
Dec. 28- Jan. 1 New Year Celebratory 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:

SHASTA ABBEY
3724 SUMMIT DRIVE MT. SHASTA, CA 96067-9102 U.S.A
PHONE: (530) 926-420