

—*Portobello Buddhist Priory*—



A Temple of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives



Reverend Master Jiyu-Kennett

1924-1996

‘When I am gone,
And the house seems empty,
Do not thou, o plum tree by the eaves,
The spring forget’

Newsletter

January—April 2024

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Newsletter

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Please note: the Priory website at www.portobellobuddhist.org.uk has an up to date schedule of events at the Priory. Group visits around Scotland will be arranged on a case by case basis by the Prior.

We'll continue coming together for meditation, dharma and ceremony on the Zoom platform each Wednesday evening. We also physically meet in the Priory on Sunday mornings and—currently—on Friday evenings (once per month.)

Again, please consult the Priory website for the most up to date information.

— *The centenary of Reverend Master Jiyu-Kennett's birth* —

Our **Order of Buddhist Contemplatives** was founded in 1978 by Rev. Master P.T.N.H. Jiyu-Kennett, a Buddhist Master in the Serene Reflection Meditation (Soto Zen) tradition. Born in England in 1924, Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett became a Buddhist in the Theravada tradition.

She was later introduced to Rinzai Zen Buddhism by D.T. Suzuki in London where she held membership in, and lectured at, the London Buddhist Society. She studied at Trinity College of Music, London, where she was awarded a Fellowship and obtained the degree of Bachelor of Music from Durham University.

Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett began her priest training in 1962, having been ordained into the Chinese Buddhist Sangha in Malaysia by the Very Reverend Seck Kim Seng, Archbishop of Malacca. She then went to Japan at the invita-

tion of the Very Reverend Keido Chisan Koho Zenji, Chief Abbot of Dai Hon Zan Soji-ji, one of the two chief training monasteries of Soto Zen, in order to train there in that tradition. In 1963 she received the Dharma Transmission from Koho Zenji and later was certified by him as Roshi (Zen Master). She also received a First-Kyoshi and a Sei Degree, roughly equivalent to a Master and a Doctor of Divinity in Buddhism. She held several positions during her years in Japan including that of Foreign Guestmaster of Soji-ji and Abbess of her own temple in Mie Prefecture.



It had always been Koho Zenji's sincere wish that Soto Zen Buddhism be successfully transmitted to the West by a Westerner. He worked very hard to make it possible for Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett to train in Japan and, after his death, she left Japan in order to carry out his wish. In November 1969, Rev. Master

Jiyu-Kennett came to San Francisco on a lecture tour. The Zen Mission Society was founded the following year and moved to Mount Shasta for the founding of Shasta Abbey in November of 1970. In 1978 the name 'Zen Mission Society' was changed to 'The Order of Buddhist Contemplatives'.



Reverend Master Jiyu-Kennett asking a question in a ceremony called shosan



Following where the blood of the Buddha's will lead — leading a procession during Jukai ceremonies

In addition to being the First Abbess of Shasta Abbey, Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett was an instructor at the University of California and the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, and a lecturer at universities throughout the world. She founded numerous Buddhist temples and meditation groups in Britain, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United States. Her books include *Zen is Eternal Life*, a manual of Zen Buddhist training; *The Wild, White Goose*, Volumes I and II, the diaries of her years in Japan; *How to Grow a Lotus Blossom or How a Zen Buddhist Prepares for Death*; *The Book of Life*, a treatise on karma and health, coauthored by Rev. Daizui MacPhillamy, and

The Liturgy of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives for the Laity. Towards

the end of her life, she edited three new translations of Serene Reflection writings and ceremonies: *The Denkoroku or The Record of the Transmission of the Light*, *Buddhist Writings on Meditation and Daily Practice: The Serene Reflection Meditation Tradition*, and *The Monastic Office*. A collection of her oral teachings, edited by Rev. Daizui MacPhillamy, has been published as *Roar of the Tigress*, Volumes I and II.

Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett died in November 1996.

(In acknowledgement to the OBC for the above text & photographs contained within its website at obcon.org)

The following is a quotation from her Memorial Service:

‘Her Dharma Eye was as bright as the moon and her Light of Wisdom lit the darkness of those in delusion. Because of her deep meditation, she knew true freedom and her heart was as constant as an iron rock; she could not help but to rescue all the deluded and spread the Dharma. Just as Indra pointed a blade of grass at the Earth and a magnificent temple sprang up on that very spot, so wherever a True Heart exists, the Dharma springs up also; in the same way has our Founder made possible this temple as our training place.’

‘To behold all beings with the eye of compassion, and to speak kindly to them, is the meaning of tenderness. If one would understand tenderness, one must speak to others whilst thinking that one loves all living things as if they were one’s own children. By praising those who exhibit virtue, and feeling sorry for those who do not, our enemies become our friends and they who are our friends have their friendship strengthened: this all through the power of tenderness. Whenever one speaks kindly to another his face brightens and his heart is warmed; if a kind word be spoken in his absence the impression will be a deep one: tenderness can have a revolutionary impact upon the mind of man.’

- p.100, ‘Zen Is Eternal Life’, Reverend Master Jiyu-Kennet

— Prior's Notes —

“If you want to see the brave, look at those who can forgive. If you want to see the heroic, look at those who can love in return for hatred.”

- The Bhagavad Gita

I once heard that in a certain African tribe when someone causes suffering to another, they are put into the centre of a circle around which the people gather and sing the ‘song of their birth’ to remind the person of their original beauty. The tribe seemed to enact a ceremony that recognised that love, not just punishment, is a remedy for losing one’s way.

During Jukai, where we formally become Buddhists, we have a ceremony called Sange which seems to offer a similar enactment; essentially we take our Dharma position in the Sangha journey, where expressions of our true relationship with the world are enacted as compassion, love and wisdom. Surrounding and grounding such ceremonial forms is the ongoing meditation practice. Here we notice the ways habitual thoughts drive our impulses in the present. When these thoughts are based on suffering and confusion we lose sight of our ‘original beauty’ - our interconnected life - and we stumble forward dominated by fear and clinging.

It’s important when seeing this in meditation that we don’t generate a judgemental self and so add to the confusion. We can sit still with these memories and stories of hubris and self-doubt without getting pulled off our ‘mountain seat of freedom’.

A compassionate awareness recognises we were trying to do the best we could then, to the extent we could see what was driving us karmically. Not feeling our own ‘beauty’ we tried to grab it from the world. We ‘carried the self forward to the world’ instead of allowing the world to deliver itself to us, as us.

So every time we don't simply identify with the 'me' dramas but let them come and go, arise, be accepted and let go of, we strengthen the capacity for presence to fully respond to what is good to do. To look into the eyes of those with whom we have difficulty and sense the same presence there, that is beyond their words and actions.

A helpful piece of graffiti someone reported seeing states: 'The holiest spot on Earth is one where an ancient hatred has become a present love'. This could be an encounter in any war-torn place on Earth today but also in any human heart.



*Zazen—transcription of a talk given by Reverend Master
Daishin in July 2023*

*Due to the level of interest shown in this talk when it was played during
a Priory Dharma evening, a transcription of it has been made & is of-
fered to the sangha.*

What I want to talk about this morning is zazen - what else! - and I've been thinking a lot recently about illusion and the way that we sometimes characterise training in Buddhism as a pathway from illusion to enlightenment. We want to be kind - who doesn't? - but what stops us being kind is, I think, essentially how we see the world.

We tend to see the world in certain ways that characterise it that, for ourselves anyway, form it. And personally when I'm not kind, it's because something's getting in there: I feel defensive, or there's some other element at work and I'm not seeing straight. So illusion is in that sense something quite real; something we have to work with and deal with.

And then we hear about enlightenment and nirvana; and that our training is a process of, as it were, shedding delusion and realising enlightenment. And that's a pretty good rule of thumb way of starting to think about it. But as we go on, as we get older - are we ever going to get to the point where we've shed illusion (*laughs*)? Will we ever enter enlightenment?

Dividing the world up like that - maybe that's another illusion. One of the ways of thinking about zazen or talking about zazen I'm sure you're all familiar with - 'Do not try to think, do not try not to think' - well, expanding that a bit to the different translations and ways of expressing this, one of the ways that Dogen refers to that in Rules for Meditation is that he uses a dialogue. Someone asks the Master 'What are you thinking in the state of meditation?' And he replies 'Not thinking'. So he asks 'How do I think not thinking?' And the reply is 'Non-thinking'.

So what I want to do is to expand on that a bit, and talk about that in the context of illusion. Who doesn't think in meditation? (*laughs*) Of course

there's thinking going on; and at the same time there's a wish to refrain. One way the Precepts talk about this is 'Do not sell the wine of delusion'. Well, in sitting I don't want to sell the wine of delusion to myself: I don't want to be thinking in a way that is generating something that isn't true.

And so how do I avoid generating something that isn't true? In the Diamond Sutra there's the rather startling statement that the Buddha never said a word. That doesn't make sense at face value, but it does from the perspective of non-thinking. While we're thinking, we want to not think; so there is an activity of refraining. We see ourselves thinking, and we may not think the words, but our instinct is – 'Oh no, I don't want to be doing that: I want to let that go'.

So there is a degree of activity involved in *zazen*; both the thinking to start with and then the effort at not thinking. The effort to let go: that's kind of necessary. Just as necessary as it is that we take the Precepts, because we recognize that there's the possibility of our acting wrongly. We don't want to act wrongly: we want to refrain from acting wrongly, and to a certain extent that is setting ourselves up in a certain way that helps us to refrain from acting wrongly.

While we're in that sort of place, there's a kind of tension between acting right and acting wrong, and so - are we doing it right, are we doing it wrong? Am I in the world of illusion or am I in the world of enlightenment? And if I think I'm in the world of enlightenment, well, is that because I really am in the world of enlightenment? Because I think I'm in the world of enlightenment? Okay, illusion!

What does it mean to not be in illusion? The Scripture of Great Wisdom says 'no eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind' but one way I've come to think about that is - no eye as eye, no ear as ear, and so on. No mind as mind; but don't we still have eyes, ears, nose, bodies, minds? We still live in the world.

Nirvana isn't actually somewhere else, so there is a way of thinking about training being a movement from illusion to enlightenment that actually traps us in illusion. We can find ourselves in the state of recognizing that we're thinking in meditation - and trying not to think. The effort of trying not to think is a kind of thinking, of course, so there's a circular process that we're caught in.

So something else has to come in here; something more, if you like; and I think

it's helpful, at least to begin with, to think of it as something more (actually of course it isn't, but you've got to start somewhere.)

So for me when I'm sitting, if I think of it in terms of doing, then what I'm trying to do is not make myself not make illusion; to not make an image, if you like; if I have an image of myself, it's probably going to be unreal. In fact, it definitely is going to be unreal: it may have quite a lot of correspondence with things that other people would recognise, or it may have very little that other people would recognize - but either way, what it is is a kind of construction, and - as it were - a picture that I have of who I am.

And if I say to myself: I don't want the picture, I want just who I am. I want to reach through that picture, I want to know what this really is: okay, well that's, if you like, the call to sit. That's the wish for enlightenment, and I want to know that because I want to be kind. I want to live in this world in a way that isn't just regarding it as illusion, as regarding it as something more than that. But at the same time, I don't want to create a kind of fiction or a phantom that I then believe in; that I then try to convince myself of.

So when the Buddha never said a word, what's trying to be got at there, is that the Buddha is basically teaching: 'Let go of illusion' - and that even ends up being 'Let go of your illusion of my teaching'. And when you let go of illusion, there is no teaching: there is no word that the Buddha said. But that doesn't mean - oh my God, I've lost it - - emptiness - - nothing there at all!

Because look what happens in Zazen: when there's thinking, and there's the effort not to think. After a time - sometimes it takes us a half a week of meditation to get to the point! - but every now and then, I think you're all probably familiar to some extent with what happens when it goes quiet; when you're not involving yourself in that thinking, not thinking. There's something - I don't know - it doesn't come from anywhere, it doesn't go anywhere, but it's sufficient. And there's something other - more - than thinking/not thinking, and that (in the terminology Dogen's quoting) is not non-thinking.

And the thing about non-thinking is you can't say anything about it in the sense that in one's mind, one cannot picture it. One certainly cannot possess it but it's something that nevertheless we are completely part of. The thing that I can say

about non-thinking is that, yes, you can't grasp it but it has no characteristic and that's not because it doesn't have characteristics - forgive me if I'm talking in circles - but it has no characteristic. In other words there's nothing we can say: we are not distinguishing things; we're not separating things.

I might say when we trust and sit and let go, we're not making distinctions. We're not needing to separate ourselves from anyone else: we're not needing to be this or that. We don't read the world in any particular way. One might say it's indeterminate. I don't mean that I can't make up my mind about something - it's not indeterminate in that sense - it's indeterminate in the sense that we are not determining something.

I find that this reflects back on my sense of perception of the world in the ordinary (or you might say in the everyday mind) kind of way. When I perceive the world through my senses, my brain somehow makes sense of what I see. It makes sense of what I see through the use of memory: I know what a person looks like, or a dog looks like. I came in here yesterday and now I come in here today, and I'm in a familiar setting because I remember more than just the spatial relationship of things. Because I'm so accustomed to it I don't need to think about it. All of this creates a kind of picture and a sort of frame of reference within which I know the world. And if that frame of reference was wiped out I would be completely lost. Completely lost.

And so there's something about the frame of reference that is as if it's something that I see the world through. I bring my frame of reference, and it has to do with basic perception of colour and light, and the relationship of things to each other spatially and so on, and time as well, and it extends to who I think I am and who I think other people are; and whether I feel safe or unsafe in the world - - all kinds of things like that feed into that sense of how I perceive the world. And all of that is in a sense inside my head.

So what then is the world? Is there a world outside of my head? Is there something more than what's in my head? I think this is where sometimes we go wrong. We think that the world that we put together in our head - which we might see as the constructed world - is the world of illusion. And that somehow beyond that is the world of enlightenment.

Well, if that's true, then I think we're all stuck in illusion, because how is it pos-

sible that we can be in the world, and not have this generation of a sense of place; a sense of purpose; a sense of being; a sense of who we are? All those things are not necessarily wildly inaccurate; but they are in some ways a construct. And what we're doing in thinking non-thinking is trying to relax into not needing to create something. Not needing to make something.

All those hours we spend in meditation, we see what making something is like. What we're doing is seeing what it is to make something, and we see it again and again and again: and it's awfully hard to just let that go. But that's what it comes to: we need to let that go.

It's quite difficult to let that go if we don't understand the context in which we're letting it go. It's rather like me asking you to let go of your life; the life you know; everything you know. Blimey!

But on the other hand, if from the inside you're seeing that actually you're not being asked to throw anything away; what you're being asked is to see that you're doing something that you don't need to do, in the sense of relying on a constructed sense of the world – because that's all you know. And within the sitting we're gradually coming to know that there's actually something that's not constructed. It crops up now and then: we have a kind of fleeting sense of it. We have the sense of something that we didn't make happen: it just kind of was there, and it's gone and we say oh darn, what did I do to make that go away? We want it back again –

Well, we have to get past that. And there's all the foibles and difficulties that we encounter in meditation, but the whole thing is that there is a point where there's no eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind because we're not making eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind, and yet there is eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind. You see what I'm saying: that there's a distinction there. I suppose in one way we could say it's when I'm not clinging to eye, ear, nose, body, mind, when I'm not clinging to a sense of who I am, of where I am in the world. But I am actually willing to let the world be what the world is, without making the world into something.

Now we're cooking! Now there's something here at work that is other than, as it were, the creating of the illusion, the creating of the frame of reference.

But there's still a bit of a problem here. I've been thinking recently about the illusion and wondering – what about my family? What about the people that I love? What about the whole sense of the call that comes from the world, the need to act? If it's just an illusion generated in my mind, then this is like a dream, isn't it, so what the heck?

No, no, that just plainly doesn't do: so we can't really in the end divide the world between thinking and non-thinking; between generating a frame of reference (because I would be utterly lost without a frame of reference) and not. We can't make a hard distinction between that and non-thinking, or if you like between samsara, the world of illusion or the world of clinging, and nirvana - non-thinking.

So somehow or other, part of the work of training is to see - how does this actually fit together? And in our tradition, in Dogen's teaching in particular, the whole emphasis on non-duality. It has to be non-duality, in the sense that it's even a step beyond being many and being one. It's beyond that, so when we talk of non-duality I don't mean One: because if nothing is distinguished then how can I relate to anyone else? There has to be distinction for there to be relation; and when there is no relation there is nothing to do. The Buddha never said a word. But when there is relation, there's me and you: so we need both relation and non-thinking. We need both samsara and nirvana; and when we talk about non-duality we don't make a distinction between those two.

When I sit in my Hermitage in Wales, am I sitting in nirvana? No. When I go to the flesh pots of Welshpool (hardly!) am I entering samsara? No, I don't think so. When I talk to the woman serving me on the checkout at Tesco, there's something there I want to engage with in some way. She wants to engage in some way, even just to say hello. And we do the business, and on we go. And there's a way of doing that somehow that is not the generation of samsara, let alone nirvana; and somehow there's something there that I have to preserve. Or in samsara there is something there that I have to avoid.

I don't think we can really say that there is samsara and there is nirvana; and that's really the essence of non-thinking. We live in the world; we don't have to make the world and yet we do make the world. And so we see ourselves making the world; and there's a way of being with that that in a sense lets it be - that is

open with it; that recognizes that, for instance for myself, I can see, yes, I am prejudiced. I meet people sometimes and it's sort of like something comes between me and them because of who they appear to be; and the images that draws up in my mind, the kind of expectations that that brings; and that's (*snaps his fingers*) just like that, that that happens.

So then it's like - what do you do with that? And I can say, you know, you racist pig. And no, that's not going to be terribly helpful. It's something that occurs, and I need to see it, yes, but not judge it; not condemn it. I know I don't want that in the sense that I do wish to be kind.

And I've come to see that the wish to be kind; the wish to help beings is actually not my wish in the sense that it is generated by me, that it is as it were my virtue. I don't think so. I think rather it is having some inkling of non-thinking; there is some sense of the connection of beings. There is some sense of the undividedness of people; of beings; of everything.

And I think in a way that's what kindness is: it's a recognition not even of connection, it's deeper than that. It's not that you and I are connected, therefore because we're connected, I will be kind or I will try to be kind. It's far deeper than that: kindness is the very nature of reality. How could you sit and let things fall away and not know kindness, of course.

And yet, still, it doesn't always work out that way. Driving here, I came to a rather complicated roundabout where three rows of traffic were joining three other rows of traffic; and a lorry came straight through, screaming past. Well thank you, that's really helpful (*laughter*). And I was not thinking kind thoughts. And that kind of thing happens quite often; for me, anyway, there's that sense of irritation that comes. Yes okay, and so what do I do with that?

Is it then – oh, I'm a samsaric being. So yes, there's something arising here, but it's also - I don't have to hold on to it. And so when I'm keeping the precepts in not wanting to sell the wine of delusion, my object is not to be pure. It's not to be impure, but it's not to be pure. I just don't want to make illusion. And I certainly don't want to sell myself illusion, or anyone else. And in a certain sense I can't say a word in that way, because as soon as you say a word, then you bring in all the elements that make up the everyday mind, the ordinary world. But yes, you cannot get away without saying a word.

This is Dogen's famous comment about Vimalakirti's thundering silence – well, that's all very well, but you've got to say something. And in a way they're both right. We get nowhere without Vimalakirti's famous silence, and we also have to say something.

And one of the things that I've been realizing is that we don't have to have an opinion: we don't have to have a view. And indeed one of the things that's being pointed to when, say, the Buddha never said a word, was the Buddha was not advocating a view. We often come across this in reading Buddhist texts such as neither trying to think, nor trying not to think; neither birth nor death; neither existence nor non-existence; and when we hear that, it doesn't really leave you with anything. What does it mean 'neither birth nor death'? Really?

Well, it depends where you're coming from; and from a certain perspective, of course, there is birth and death, and we cannot live in the world or be a human being and pretend that there is no birth and death. Many of us are getting older and various bits don't work anymore, and so on. Death is coming obviously, and there's a degrading of faculties and things on the way there. So what do we mean 'there is neither birth nor death'?

Well, when you sit and you let go: where is birth and death? Well, if you bring in something, then in a sense there is birth and death. But if you just sit and leave it open; let it be; just sit in the heart of being right now, then birth is actually in a certain sense an idea. Death is in a certain sense an idea. But then there is the actual reality of being born and dying: well, what is that? Can we approach that through views? No, I don't think we can. I mean we certainly can think about it through views; we can discuss it through views - and actually I think that's important to do that - but in the end we cannot perceive birth and death directly through views. We have to let go of the view and let this be what this is without forming a picture of what this is.

That's much easier said than done, but that's the direction. So again it comes around to the letting go. Put that another way, the giving of ourselves into it. I read somewhere recently of how a writer was commenting on their experience of being online, and of how people think of themselves. And one of the things that they had come across was the idea: who am I? But I want to get back to the real me and what I've been taught by my parents and teachers and society,

that's not the real me: the real me is some kind of essence within myself that is none of those things.

And that's a rather tempting idea, that there is an essence within us that is the true me. Rather alarmingly one of our spiritual ancestors, Nagarjuna, says no; that is illusion. Well, take that as a hint. But look - can you find the real you? Okay, as we sit and look, the first thing we hit is our opinions: I think this, I think that. I feel myself to be this sort of person or that sort of person. If in this situation, I would like to think that I would do this or not do that. And the more we look, the less there is to hold on.

Is there really an essence of me? Or is 'me' really something of a construct? In a sense, yes. I think that if we are looking for something upon which we can rely; that is, as it were, our touchstone, and we imagine that to be our real self, and we think of that real self in that sort of essential way, and if we really boil it down, we'll come to something that is as it were untaintable; that is utterly true, and that is what I am: I don't experience it like that. I don't come to the essence.

What I find is it kind of goes the other way around: there's a letting go, there's a freedom, there's an indeterminate, there's just nothing to hold on to. And yet, that is somehow deeply adequate, deeply sufficient; there's nothing missing. It doesn't need anything; and in that sense from the point of view of that opening of the heart, there is no birth or death - in the sense that there is just this.

And sure, there is a time of birth; and sure, there is a time of death; and by saying there is no birth and death, I'm not at all avoiding birth and death. If one tries to avoid it, that very thing is a kind of a hiccup in this. But there's something, that if I trust in letting go, if I trust in the open-heartedness, if I trust in essence in the wish that is there to be kind; then something is somehow enough. Something there is sufficient as long as I'm not grasping it and holding on to it. As soon as I grasp and hold on to it, in a sense there is birth and there is death.

But because in the end this is not a duality between samsara and nirvana, I'm finding that I'm brought back to what I was taught from the very beginning, which was that acceptance is the key to the gateless gate.

Can I accept this being, without getting into clinging? I should be this, I should be that - - just this, as it is. And there is a trust in that; that this that it is, of itself wishes to do good. Not because it requires a view, to do good.

It's in the letting go of the clinging that goodness arises. It's not in maintaining the view. We could argue this in various ways, but I think the underlying intention of the Buddha was not to create a teaching; and what we do is we learn 'the teaching' and then when we have the teaching, that is it. And then that is what is our guide; and the dharma is this thing, this set of books, this set of ideas, this set of things.

Well sure, there's lots of books. There's lots of ideas. But really what they're getting at is - what does it really mean to let go? What does it mean - really mean - to trust in the very depths of what is, when we're not creating the world; when we're not making distinctions.

And so therefore in a sense the Buddha never taught anything, in the sense that he didn't teach: 'got to do that.' He just said; 'Look at what's going on, look at the way illusion is generated. Let go of the illusion generator and then see what is -'

He didn't seek to define what the truth is, in that sense, because in a sense that's where we are, that's where we live, that's our real, our whole being. So yes, there is something - when we look within and we seek the essence - upon which we can rely.

But it's not me; it's not the essence of me. It's not the essence of any thing. It's the truth in itself. The ungraspable; and that just goes on and on and on in the sense that there's no end to that.

I found it very striking to see something that I came across recently: that we don't come from anywhere, we don't go anywhere, and there's a way of understanding the world in terms of time and evolution and the Big Bang and everything that generates from that. And within its own terms that's a very good way of understanding the world.

But actually from my perspective of being a human being in the world, that isn't actually how I am. I can learn about me in the world by studying biology and Darwin and all the rest of it; and gives me a kind of picture, and that can form the frame through which I see the world. And I can be very convinced of that; and I'm not really arguing that that frame is untrue.

I'm arguing that it is a frame and what happens when I let go of that frame? I'm

not saying I have to become a fundamentalist and go to war with Darwin or something like that. No, of course not.

There is another way of being in the world that is not being in the world in a frame; and at the same time knowing that I am in a frame. And it's not the case that when I die I am released from the frame. Well, I don't know what happens when I die but that's not the way I'm understanding it; like the real me is imprisoned in the body, or the soul is imprisoned in the body, and what we're trying to do is set the soul free. No, there isn't really constraint other than the constraint that we create. So we learn not to constrain, and we learn to let the world be as it is, and then we don't come from anywhere.

Recently I've been clearing things out, and I got a stack of diaries, and from about the early 1970s I would write a diary – not every day - and they kept me warm this winter! (*laughter*) I didn't need these things. I'm not trying to say I didn't come from there. Yes of course, we all grow, but apart from anything else they're unutterably tedious. Sitting there, I thought, well, maybe there's something here I can learn and understand; and I read them. Oh God, I'll try the next one - then the next page - so they went in the Raeburn.

I'm not saying go home and burn your diaries! Not at all: if you have them, I'm not saying that there is no value to these kinds of things. But just for me at that point, there was no need for them.

I find being alone in where I live in Wales and life being short: I don't want to leave a pile of diaries. What are monks going to do when they find them? They'll wonder whether they've got to read them. Well, it saved you the trouble, so don't worry! (*laughter*)

But there's something about – I don't actually need that. That's not what makes me, if you know what I mean. Because I'm not trying, to some degree at least, to be that 'me'. I don't need to rely on that.

So I don't really come from anywhere, and similarly I'm not sure I'm going anywhere. And that's something that I'm still exploring. I can't say I know what that means. I think the very nature of it is a movement, and a continuing opening; a continuing exploration, except it is kind of like losing oneself in the exploration, and yet also simultaneously finding oneself. Very strange, but we need to be willing to lose ourselves. We need to be willing to go into that land,

if you like, where we're not needing to constantly make. Or if we find ourselves holding on to something, or needing to make; needing to not let this go - well then, just ask – well, what is this?

Not in a 'what are you doing' kind of way, but, quietly - what is this? Let it show you its nature, and in the end I think these things show us that they are not born, not dying.

What are they then? Well, they're telling us all the time what they are; they're being what they are, and it's only ourselves in a sense that puts a veil there.



New book on Buddhism and International Humanitarian Law

It might seem odd that, as a religion which has such a focus on non-harming, Buddhism would have anything to say about the conduct of war. Indeed, Shakyamuni Buddha taught more about conflict prevention and reconciliation than about what to do during times of war. However, Buddhism is not silent on the matter and there are some teachings which interface well with modern International Humanitarian Law, a body of law which is underpinned by the Geneva Conventions and informally known as the “rules of war”. Among other things, these rules cover the protection of civilians, the humane treatment of detainees, and the inviolability of medical personnel during situations of armed conflict.

This topic is of great personal interest as I came to Zen via the military, having received Jukai at Vast Refuge Sangha, a Zen group in the Harada-Yasutani lineage which was established at the US Air Force Academy.

Throughout my time in the Air Force, I developed a strong interest in International Humanitarian Law and was impressed by its ability to constrain

the brutality of war, even in the absence of robust enforcement. After leaving the armed forces, I joined the British Red Cross where I now work as an adviser on this body of international law.

The Red Cross & Red Crescent Movement has a special connection with the Geneva Conventions, as both institutions were championed by the same group of Swiss citizens in the mid-19th Century. Although the Geneva Conventions have since been ratified by every country on Earth, modern international law has a distinctly Western flavour, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has been keen to discover how the rules which underpin the law are rooted in different religions, traditions, and other cultural practices worldwide.

Consequently, in the ‘00s, the organisation began investigating the convergences between International Humanitarian Law and Islamic jurisprudence. This work has since facilitated the ICRC’s access to civilians in need – as well as compliance with the law more generally – from groups who might not be receptive to arguments based



Participants at the 2019 Conference in Sri Lanka

on the Geneva Conventions.

More recently, the ICRC has begun to study how the teachings of Buddhism might relate to the provisions found in International Humanitarian Law. Although Buddhism is often thought of as a pacifist religion, there have been several recent armed conflicts in majority Buddhist countries – which suggest that it is a worthwhile endeavour to consider what Buddhism might say regarding the rules of war. As a veteran, a Red Crosser, and a Buddhist, I volunteered to help out with this project and it has been a real privilege to see it through this far.

Between 2019 and 2022, the ICRC held a series of conferences in Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Myanmar and Thailand which brought Buddhist nuns, monks and scholars from the major lineages in Southern, Eastern and Northern Buddhism together with members of the armed forces and humanitarian practitioners. These conferences focused on finding those areas where the teachings of Buddhism correspond with International Humanitarian Law – as well as those points on which they differ.

I'm very pleased to announce that some of the fruits of these discussions

have now been released in a book published by the ICRC and Routledge in September. This book, *Buddhism and International Humanitarian Law*, is available for free as a PDF at the link below:

<https://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/75921>

In addition, more general information on the ICRC's project on religion and humanitarian principles can be found at the following blog:

<https://blogs.icrc.org/religion-humanitarianprinciples/>

Regrettably, the war in Ukraine and the recent unrest in the Middle East demonstrate why adherence to Interna-

tional Humanitarian Law is more relevant than ever – following these rules of war can and does save lives. Although

Buddhism does not condone violence, it nevertheless offers pragmatic advice on how to reduce suffering during armed conflicts in a way that aligns well with modern international norms.

‘Though one might conquer a thousand times a thousand men in battle, the greatest conquest is of just one: oneself’ - Dhammapada 103, translation Peter Harvey

Noel Trew



Manjusri

Typically, when I start a period of zazen, I fairly quickly become distracted by thoughts. Of course, this is very common. This hasn't really changed over the time I have been practising. I think at first, I had expectations of the sitting becoming quiet and peaceful. Sometimes, this does happen, but it's usually not long before I become distracted again. Most of these distracting thoughts involve self-interest of some kind.

I find it helpful to have this image of Manjusri on my home altar along with the main Buddha statue. Manjusri is a bodhisattva, which in this context is an aspect of awakening. It is the main statue in the monks' meditation hall at our monasteries. The aspect she (or he) exemplifies is wisdom. The creature she is sitting on is the beast of the self. The self can sometimes feel like a wild animal. Here, though, the beast is tamed and looking lovingly up at Manjusri. Manjusri moves forward by riding on the beast.



What this illustrates for me, and why I have it on the altar, is the possibility of a harmonious relationship between Zazen and my self, or ego. Manjusri is not trying to get away from the beast, or fighting it. Rather, it has become tamed through her practice. Now, it is helping her move forward in life. We have evolved to have a self, and need it to navigate effectively through life. If we allow it to function naturally, when needed, it can help us.

Another traditional aspect of the iconography is that it is not clear where the beast ends and Manjusri begins. I think this illustrates that the self is not a fixed

"thing" but a set of psychological functions that come together. We often get caught up in the self by assuming it has a solidity it does not possess, even though it can sometimes feel very powerful. So the self arises in zazen and everyday life, and we see it and let go of it as best we can. That's never perfect, but as we move forward it changes us. For example, we sense the depth of life and have a greater appreciation of ordinary things.

Neil Rothwell

Helping out

At the moment I'm helping look after a herd of cows at a relative's dairy farm in Ireland. Apart from being hard physical work, this has proved an unexpected pleasure and a time for reflection and contemplation.

The cows, who are mostly all in calf and therefore are 'dry' and not needing milked, are housed for the winter in large barns with access to stalls and fresh water. A local neighbouring student farmer, Cory, comes once each day and cuts silage from a large clamp with a tractor and delivers it to the cows. My job, along with a young friend, is to assist the cows to have access to the silage that they haven't managed to reach. We use pitchforks

to scrape and lift the food towards them in the afternoon and early morning. This is hard manual labour and also takes close concentration to



avoid spiking the cows noses with our forks.

My thoughts on the ethical side of dairy farming, involving the veal and beef trade for the male calves and the obvious ending of life for the cows once they are no longer able to produce milk has for the moment to be put aside.

love and respect. Living in the moment, for both each cow and myself, as I carefully fork their food towards them is of vital importance.

Homage to the Buddha, Homage to the Dharma, Homage to the Sanga.

I regard each hungry animal as a fellow sentient being, deserving of my care,

Fedor Bunge

The Diamond Poem Game

At New Year I learnt a game to play with a group of four or more people of any age. All it requires are pens and some small pieces of paper, ideally about 4 inches square. Each person takes a piece of paper and turns it 45 degrees so that it forms a diamond shape, and each writes a word, any word, at the top of the diamond. Then everyone hands on their paper to the next person in the group, who then writes two words below this first word, trying to carry on the meaning from the first word. Then they fold over the first word before handing their paper on to the next person, who then writes three words that carry on the meaning from the second two words. They then fold over the previous two words and hand it on to the next person who writes four words and folds over the previous three words. This process of hiding the previous line carries on; however, the next person writes only three words, and the following person writes two and the final person only writes one word.

After that each person the paper hands it on one more time and unfolds the

paper and takes turns to read theirs out. The 13-word results can be hilarious, surreal and sometimes strangely poetic. It is only when I write about this now that I see that it has a connection with the story of the Elephant in the Dark. Four people, who have never seen an elephant go into its cage in total darkness and try to feel what it is like. One touches its trunk, another its leg, another its ear and the other touches its tail. When they get back out of the cage and into the light they discuss what an elephant must be like: they cannot agree or make sense of anything that they have each experienced. In the Diamond Poem Game, each player is only given a limited amount of information and must try to do their best to make sense of it. It's the same with Life, isn't it?! And Zazen gives us a space to stop trying to make sense of it.

My Diamond Poems

I flew to India in January for 3 weeks to spend time with my son and his wife, who live in Poona. They go out to work during the day, so I used it as a quiet, reflective time for sitting and catching up with various writing and music projects. Before leaving I set myself a modest challenge to write a diamond-shaped poem each day of my holiday. I modified the form slightly so that each poem only has five lines and nine words, and the last word of each verse is the first word for the next day's verse.

My idea was that each one would be an entity in itself, but also be linked in a 'chain' to the next one. The shape and brevity of this form appealed to me. Just nine words. My initial intention was that this would be a bit of frivolous fun. I wrote the first one on the plane. The second day, searching online for a rhyme for family (there are not many) led me to end the poem on the word unfortunately. This was a pivotal moment as it led me to question for the first time two judgemental words that I use frequently: fortunate and unfortunate.

From that moment onwards the act of creating each poem took on a whole new and deeper meaning. This was unexpected and it permeated my visit so that I found that each one became a ruminative exploration of some aspect of my continuing inner journey and practice. And it always left me with one word to contemplate until the next day. Once I woke in the night with the 'perfect'

poem composed in my head, but I couldn't recall it when I woke up. After that I managed to summon up enough determination to wake up if I had inspiration in the night and scrawl notes on a piece of paper that I kept by the bedside. My Dharma reading was Birth and Death by Reverend Leandra and I noticed that my mind had begun instinctively to scan for three-word resonant phrases in her text. Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. The Present Moment. A Deeper Awareness. The Great Road. Enlightenment is Now.

The Poems

(Two explanations. An Ola is an Indian taxi. And Cliff once offered me this liberating three-word advice on an occasion when he intuited that my mind had become locked in mental indecision):

FLY TO MUMBAI. OLA FOR POONA RETURNING TO FAMILY.	CHILDREN PLAYING OUTSIDE MIND WANDERS. BREATHE.	SOMETHING CALLS..... SIT
FAMILY NURTURES CALM. BUT SINGULARLY RHYMES WITH CLAMMILY, UNFORTUNATELY.	BREATHE MIND WANDERS- WHAT IS IT THAT SITS? SILENCE....	SIT. WHO SITS? HERE I SIT WHAT SITS? ZAZEN.
UNFORTUNATELY? WHO CAN USE THIS WORD? WHAT POWER? WHO?	SILENCE WHAT IS THIS JULIAN BEING THAT IS NO-SELF?	ZAZEN. I DO ZAZEN OR DOES ZAZEN DO ME?
WHO ASKS WHO? WHAT IS THIS? IT ANSWERS- SIT.	NO-SELF NO THINKING, OR NOT THINKING. NO SENSES NOTHINGNESS	ME? OR WHAT? “DON’T DO THINKING” THANK YOU, CLIFF!
SIT. BIRDS SINGING	NOTHINGNESS? NO SELF? THINKING DOESN’T HELP	CLIFF POINTS FINGER TO THE MOON SOMETHING WITHIN RESPONDS

RESPONDS
SOMETHING DEEPER
WITHIN ME RESPONDS
NO WORDS
TRUST

TRUST
TRUST WHAT?
ENLIGHTENMENT IS
NOW.
TRUST LIFE,
NOW

NOW
NEXT STEP.
PATH OF LIFE.
NEXT STEP.
NOW.

NOW.
NEXT STEP.

PATH OF LIFE.
NEXT STEP.
NOW.
NOW
JEWEL BRIGHT
PAST AND PRESENT
DISSOLVES TO
TRANQUILITY
TRANQUILITY.
JUST SITTING
CAN BE NOW
EYES OPEN
BREATHE
BREATHE
ANOTHER REMINDER
TRUTH IS NOW
NOTHING LACKING
TRUST

TRUST
THE SUN
ABOVE THE CLOUDS.
DISTRUST ALL
DOUBTS.

DOUBTS
AND FEARS?
HOLD THE COURSE!
ANOTHER STEP
FORWARDS

FORWARDS...
ANOTHER STEP.....
OLA TO MUMBAI...
ANOTHER STEP.....
ONWARDS....

Julian Goodacre

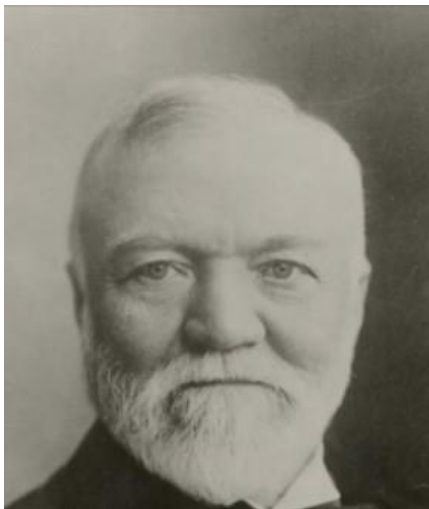


Enlightened philanthropy -

Not quite on my doorstep, but only 40 minutes away, in the town of Dunfermline, there's a small museum to a man who spent his formative childhood there. Until about a month ago, I didn't know the museum existed.

It's built on to a cottage in which this man was born and lived until, in 1848, he and his family emigrated to the U.S. following the collapse of his father's livelihood. When steam-powered looms came to Dunfermline in 1847, hundreds of hand loom weavers lost their jobs, including his father. By the time he boarded the emigration ship, for which the family had to borrow money to pay for their passage, the 13-year old Scot had tasted poverty; and he never forgot it. *"It was burnt into my heart then that my father had to beg for work."*

His name was Andrew Carnegie; and 20 years after his poverty-stricken family's uncomfortable sea voyage in steerage to the U.S., he was a multi-millionaire. 30 years after that, he sold his steel business for approximately \$5 billion, and became the richest man in the world. Photographs of him at this time show a small man - he was 5'3" tall - with a serious expression and a face rather like that of a pug-dog.



He was an unusual man; in his own way deeply principled and at the same time not without vulnerabilities, including a sensitivity about his height and lack of education. He had only had 4 years of primary school education and felt the absence keenly. His own epitaph on his gravestone was: *'A Man Who Knew How to Enlist in His Services Better Men Than Himself.'*

I confess that in part, the reason for writing this is that I came away from the museum with a curious sense of affection for

him: I liked him, not least for his very human vulnerabilities.

When he was 33 he wrote a letter to himself in which he said; “ - *The amassing of wealth is one of the worst species of idolatry. No idol more debasing than the worship of money. Whatever I engage in I must push inordinately therefore should I be careful to choose the life which will be the most elevating in character. To continue much longer - - with most of my thoughts wholly upon the way to make money in the shortest time, must degrade me beyond hope of permanent recovery.*”

The self-awareness and honesty of this note is startling; and there is perhaps the faintest echo of the Buddha choosing to renounce his life of ease and luxury in the palace in which his protective father had enfolded him.

Carnegie pledged that he would give away his wealth; and said he would ‘*resign business*’ at 35. He didn’t; he was 64 when he sold his steel business, at which point his companies were making more steel than the whole of the UK.

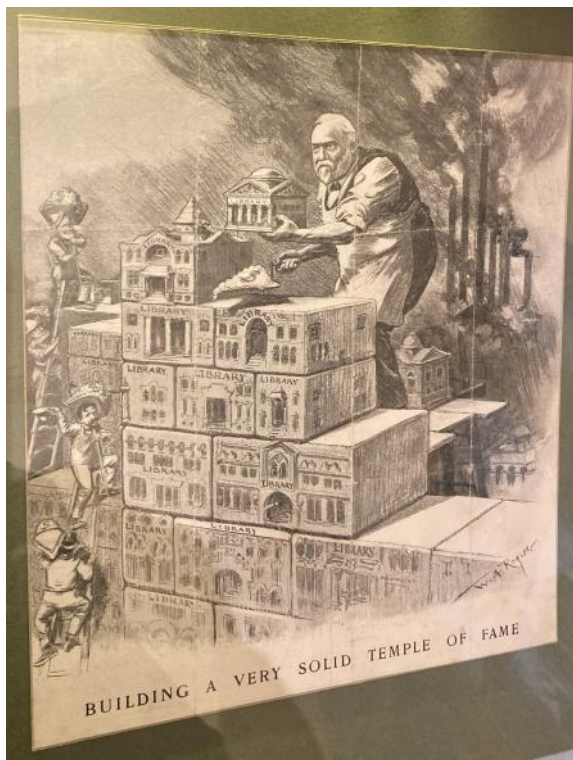
Although it took him longer than planned, the aspiration expressed in that letter had clearly been gestating. In his 50s he wrote ‘The Gospel of Wealth’ in which he laid out what he saw as the proper principles of the administration of wealth; “*The man of wealth thus becoming the mere trustee and agent for his poorer brethren - - the man who dies rich dies disgraced.*” He admired the politician William Gladstone, and especially his statement that “*the desire to hoard is the lowest form of intellectual degradation.*”

He appeared to have a deep intuitive understanding of Erich Fromm’s dictum that greed ‘*is a bottomless pit which exhausts the person in an endless effort to satisfy the need without ever reaching satisfaction*’ and in 1901 he began the enormous task of giving away his wealth. He could simply have done so by giving it to charity, but he chose a more strategic approach. The concept of bringing ‘light’ to people – through books and libraries, parks and works of art, music, education and other public institutions – was deeply important to him. The statistics were staggering: he built over 2,500 libraries across the world, for example. My father was a beneficiary: as a young, poor boy in Glasgow, the ordered peace of the public library from which he was able to borrow books changed his

life. Like the writer Jack London, *'opening the books'* had a transformative effect. It's something that we might not fully understand in today's culture.

By 1911, he realised he was running out of time to give away all his money, so he created the largest philanthropic trust that had ever existed, and put his remaining vast wealth into this. His work is carried on to this day by 22 global institutions through this and other trusts he set up.

Despite his philanthropy and the clarity of his reasons for doing it, there was sadly a degree of cynicism expressed about his motives, as shown in this cartoon which suggests he was doing it merely for self-promotion.



Peace was his other preoccupation, and in his later years he devoted unstinting energy to try to avert the outbreak of the First World War. He was one of the first to call for a 'league of nations' and he built the 'Palace of Peace' in The Hague that would later evolve into the World Court. In desperation as war approached, he even attempted to bribe the German Kaiser into choosing peace with a multi-million pound package; and later sent peace envoys to Germany just before the outbreak of war, right up until the bitter end.

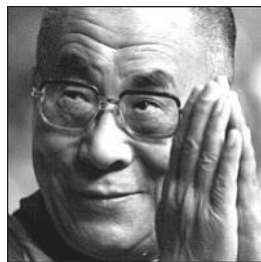
When, despite his efforts, war broke out he sank into depression: his wife Louisa said her husband's "heart was broken". The last entry in his daily diary which he had faithfully kept throughout his life was written on the day war broke out. His health never recovered. Again, the faintest of echoes with a story I remember reading – perhaps apocryphal - in

which the Buddha, having tried unsuccessfully to broker peace between two Indian clans, sat on a hillside seeing them fighting, and wept.

In 2004, the 'Pillar of Peace' was erected in Pittencrieff Park in Dunfermline, in honour of the Dalai Lama's visit to the town in the same year. Pittencrieff Park had been bought by Andrew Carnegie in 1902 and donated to the people of the town as a public park. The pillar has 4 faces, on each of which is inscribed 'May Peace Prevail On Earth' in 4 languages – English, Gaelic, Japanese and Tibetan.

I like to think that perhaps the Dalai Lama took the time to visit this small Scottish town at least in part as a mark of respect for Andrew Carnegie of whom it might be said that he had, in his own particular and distinctive way, 'The Mind That Seeks The Way'.

Willie Grieve



*The Dalai Lama in
Scotland in 2004*



The Pillar of Peace, Pittencrieff Park, Dunfermline

Gift Aid Declaration

To: **Portobello Buddhist Priory**

Your Name _____

Full Home address _____

Postcode _____ Date _____

Please reclaim tax on my donations as follows (delete as appropriate):

I want to Gift Aid any donations I make in the future or have made in the past 4 years.

I want to Gift Aid my donation of [amount] given on [date]

You must pay at least as much income tax or capital gains tax as the amount of tax that we would reclaim on your donations and remember to notify us if this changes.

If this declaration applies to future changes, you are entitled to notify us of the cancellation of your declaration at any time.

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Date _____