



Pine Gate

Newsletter of the Pine Gate Sangha

Vol. 1 Issue 3: Fall- 2002

Pine Gate is the voice of Ottawa's Pine Gate sangha, who practice engaged Buddhism in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh. Friends of the sangha also contribute to the newsletter. Submissions are invited, articles of 500 – 700 words, poems and insights that reflect engaged practice and personal experience are appreciated. The Pine Gate sangha has many leaders and the newsletter is an organic outcome of sangha insight. Effortlessly it appears.

Ian Prattis provides dharma talks and teachings that encourage practice through deep non-action, so that engaged practice (action) emerges from understanding and compassion. His wife, Carolyn, teaches a regular Qi-Gong class at Pine Gate Meditation Hall as an introduction to mindfulness practice.

The Pine Gate sangha welcomes old and new members to its regular and special activities.

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Hand of the Buddha Retreat in Plum Village, June 1 – 21, 2002 Ian Prattis

Three sounds of the bell before the first Dharma talk. Thay sat silently in front of 700 retreatants. He remained in this silence, utterly still, for thirty minutes and then began to speak. I felt he was inviting everyone into this stillness to enjoy the freshness of what he was to communicate. He spoke of sangha building as the noblest profession of the 21st century, and of how the Buddha transformed himself to manifest as the sangha. His opening dharma talk, which included the silence, was so very full. In subsequent talks Thay took us on a journey through the Lotus Sutra so that we could understand that between the Absolute and Relative Dimensions there was an Action Dimension which is actualized through the Six Paramitas and the Three Dharma Seals. The necessity of action arising from the deep silence of non-action was a constant reminder of how this retreat began. And on it went with incisive and pertinent issues of dharma freshly applied to the issues of our troubled times. The Middle East, hungry ghosts, the 12 links of Interdependent Co-Arising, small gods, the war on drugs and terrorism, miracles and so much more. Thay's clarity and compassion spoke directly to the heart of each person there. Before meeting with the younger participants of the retreat, Thay announced that he was entitled to be there as he was 29 years old! The retreat closed with the chant to the Bodhisattva of

Compassion – Avalokiteshvara. In between the opening and the closing there was so much, too much for me to relate in a satisfactory manner.

I lived in Upper Hamlet with the monks. My family for work and dharma discussion was mostly German. All men, who showed such gentleness and kindness as we shared history, tea ceremonies and dinner. As the vegetable chopping team we seemed to operate much as an organism, not following any particular regimen but always getting the job done amidst songs, mindfulness bells and a lot of good natured humor. Our dharma discussions enabled many deep insights to surface. At the other end of the spectrum we dazzled the Upper Hamlet with “The Buddha Boogie” – a dance we performed for the final tea ceremony. The monks put on a play, which acted out the Pine Gate story, from which my home sangha takes its name. Perhaps I can convey a little of the immensity experienced with some brief cameos of insight poetry written towards the end of the retreat, sitting in silence by the lotus pond in Upper Hamlet.

The wind my breath
Fires my heart.
Silently in stillness
The spring within
Murmurs Emptiness,
Fullness.

Raindrops gather
On a lotus leaf,
Reflecting the cosmos
With each sunbeam
Caressing perfection.

Thay at 29 years young
Embraces us with bodhichitta
Transforming the 21st century.

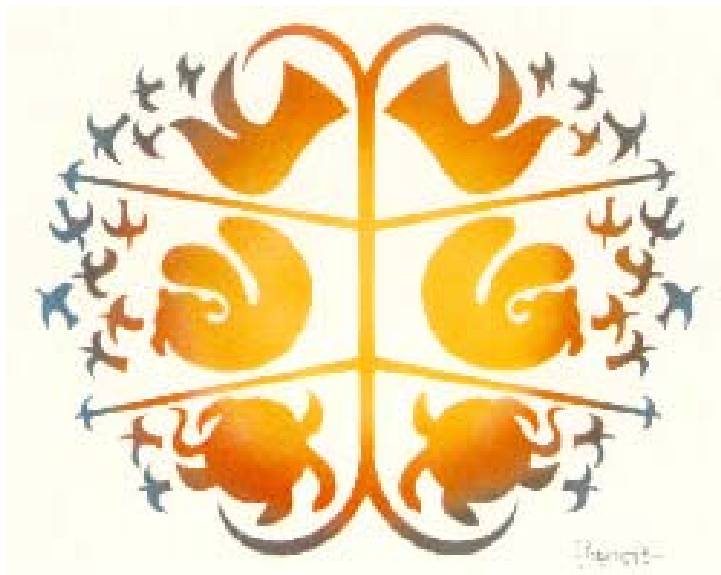
Sun, rain and chocolate,
It is all the same
To a mind filled with joy.

Sitting on the toilet
I am awake
To all that is around me,
And all that is leaving me.

Fragrant incense and the mind of love
Sends a fax to the cosmos.
A wake-up call for all beings.

I am ready to leave
With a transformed consciousness
So that my home in Canada
Becomes a Plum Village extension.

I felt the silence and stillness of Thay’s opening Dharma talk deepen during the latter part of the retreat. I talked very little and was full of joy for no apparent reason. On one of the last days I received an invitation from Thay to have breakfast in his hermitage in Upper Hamlet. I was at the end of the breakfast line up so



Tree of Life by Simon Brascoupe

could only gather a small bowl of cereal in my hand before arriving at the hermitage. After placing a cushion so that I could have a view of the wonderful valley spread below the hermitage, Thay shared his breakfast, which was quite sumptuous and very nutritious. It was good to see him so strong and vital, just Thay in his suchness.

I found the Hand of the Buddha retreat quite stunning. There was so much to nourish us.

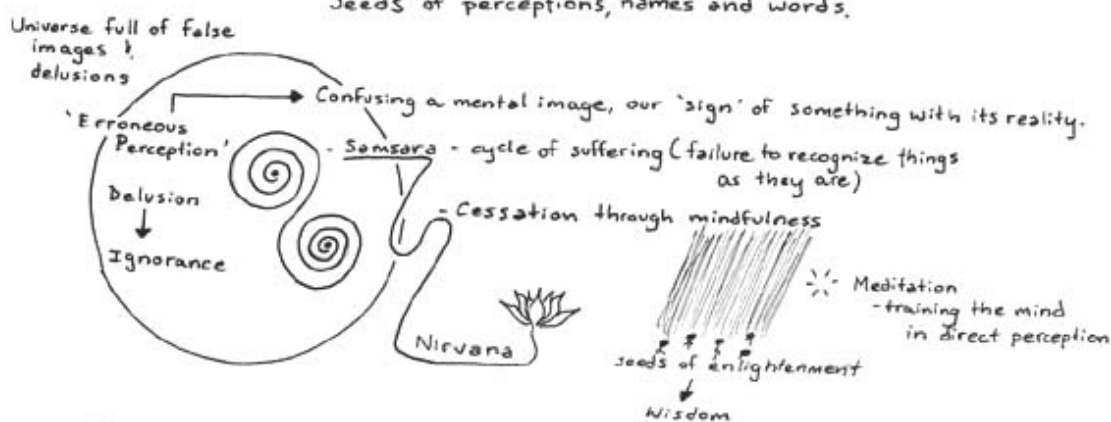
Transformation At The Base: Verse Two

David Geary

David is studying Pilgrimage and Consciousness for his Master's degree in anthropology at Carleton University. His fieldwork in India includes the Footsteps of the Buddha Pilgrimage with Shantum Seth. His artistic and graphic talent is applied to Thay's 50 verses.

& TWO: Varieties of Seeds

In us are infinite varieties of seeds —
 Seeds of samsara, nirvana, delusion, and enlightenment
 Seeds of suffering and happiness,
 Seeds of perceptions, names and words.



"Table"



Object of our perception
 • Every word assigned to a phenomena
 ↳ pointing to something - object -

"House"



- ① Universal / Particular
 "house" as a whole
 - combination of its parts:
 bricks, wood, nails
- ② Unity / Diversity
 "house" as idea of unity
 - universal notion with
 countless variation
- ③ Formation / Disintegration
 "house" being built
 - at same time it is in
 process of disintegration

Monthly Peace Walk

Sanghas all over the world are committing to a Peace Walk every third Sunday of the month. Lyn Fine, a dharma teacher in San Francisco writes "These walks began on Mother's Day, May 12, with a walk in Jerusalem and many other places. Walking meditation proved to be so transformative for those who participated - sangha members and those new to the practice - that people wanted to continue it. On Sunday, July 21, walking for peace was offered by sanghas around the world."

At a Pine Gate sangha gathering in July a consensus was reached to participate in Peace Walks in an unstructured manner, trusting in the sangha as an organism that has responsibility, compassion and service at its core.

The proposal is to walk in our own neighborhoods all across the city and region every third Sunday. And to view the entire city as a sangha. To bring friends, family and sangha members who live in our vicinity to a Peace Walk in a nearby park or along a river bank. This means we are all teachers as we introduce walking meditation and silence to new friends to the practice. In this way we create pockets of light throughout the city, and our collective participation evolves in its own unique way that we can share when we gather as a sangha. People will come.

"The slow pace and the silence of this walk can help us to step into the source of understanding and compassion within us and to hold everyone with care. Please join us."

From Thich Nhat Hanh:

"We walk for ourselves,
We walk for everyone,
Always hand in hand.
Walk and touch peace every moment.
Walk and touch happiness every moment.
Each step brings a fresh breeze.
Every step makes a flower bloom under our feet.
Kiss the earth with your feet.
Print on earth your love and happiness
Earth will be safe
When we feel in us enough safety."

Middle East Peace Walks

Eliana

A single file of men, women and children walking in silence from Haifa to the Galilee. Five days meandering through Jewish and Arab villages. During the walk there is silence. No speaking. All shapes, sizes, Jewish and Arab - all wearing a simple white ribbon - silently and slowly weaving their way through the Galilee, beginning in Haifa, ending in Magd al Kurum and then Amirim for an annual Sulkha (spiritual reconciliation gathering attended by Sheikhs of Moslem and Druze faith, Rabbi, Priest and Sister and the spiritually committed).

No arms, no weaponry.

We arrived to the Peace School in Magd Al Kurum in the evening and placed our sleeping bags on the roof where we were invited to sleep. I spoke with the son of the school principal - Bahir. Bahir is in the 11th grade. His favorite subjects are computers and electronics. When asked what he loves most about it - his answer: "Usually when you build something - you begin with physical material that already exists. You are limited by your physical resources. With electronics and computers - you have nothing physical to start with - only your mind and your thoughts. But with your mind and your thoughts you can create anything, an entire new world. This is what I love about it."

Basma, a mother from the Arab village of Tamra in the Galilee explained that for the last six years she has dressed in black, seen only black and blood. She has wondered why she is alive and what will change to give her hope in the dreams that she secretly had, to participate with others in something bigger and better than the violence and unending terror, which plagues the middle-east. She said that when she saw the silent group pass her window - her heart stopped. She felt compelled to join them. Her daughter warned her of danger and repercussion for betraying the cause of her people. Refusing to listen, Basma walked to the door, opened it, and joined the group in silence.

Cynics amongst you may wonder "these are a few peace fanatics, what difference can a few people make?" This was the thought of one woman - an extremist from one of the settlements who decided to come on the walk out of curiosity. At the parting discussion she admitted to judging the peaceniks and rejecting their ways as impractical when she daily experiences the horrors of terror on both sides of the line in her settlement town. She wondered whether the peaceniks would be as open to hearing and meeting with those in the Jewish settlements to allow for dialogue amongst Jew and Jew on opposite ends of the spectrum. She also admitted that since walking the five days, her attitude and willingness to listen opened tremendously. It was courageous of her to speak her truth - it was courageous of the group to listen and accept.

At the Sulkha a Jewish father whose son had been killed last week in a terrorist bombing decided that he would use his son's murder to avenge terror with peace. It was very difficult for him to sit through the discussions and circles of Arabs and Jews expressing their fears their hurt, their varying reality.

The miracle of the last five days is that there were people from ALL persuasions. A prominent Zulu chief who, along with Nelson Mandela had been instrumental in the peaceful resistance and ultimate resolve of the archaic South African system of conflict between black and white arrived from South Africa to provide hope and inspiration.

The day ended with a feast - Druze Debka dancing and a musical concert, which lasted long into the evening.

If there is a heaven - this was close to it.

Just prior to Itzhak Rabin's assassination, I wondered why we don't take to the streets as they did in India with Ghandi. I thought that this would be so simple a solution. My hopes were crushed with Rabin's murder - but I have refused to give in. This week my dreams are being fulfilled. We will continue the walks - one silent little step at a time.

Eyal - an Israeli Jew expressed it simply and poignantly: "There is always violence. There is always murder. These come from fear. There will always be fear. There is always peace. There is always love. They all exist at the same time. It is a matter of choice".

Each ONE of US makes a difference.

I share my good with you so that it may strengthen in all our hearts and minds... for the highest good of all.

What is your choice?

Peace Walk in Ottawa

DATE: Sunday, September 15, 2002

TIME: Gather at 10.30am, Peace Walk begins at 11.00am

LOCATION: Parking Lot at bottom of Parkdale. The last one on the LHS before Parkdale meets the Parkway. Cross street on the RHS is Emmerson.

DURATION: Approximately 1 hour. We will walk quietly along the Ottawa River Parkway, then across the bridge to Quebec and back again.

PURPOSE: To walk "for" Peace, not to demonstrate "against." No banners, slogans, shouting, demonstrating, blaming - just our solid example of Being Peace.

BRING: Picnic lunch, water bottles etc., so we can sit in groups of twenty by the shade next to the river and discuss practical steps towards Peace.

Dear members of the Pine Gate sangha, please all come to this Peace Walk. It would be good to have a sangha member every 50 yards of the procession. This enables your example of quiet walking in meditation to infuse friends who may be unfamiliar to the practice. Simple guidelines for walking meditation will be provided before we begin and the sangha example is a shining light from the teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh. When we sit for a picnic lunch it would be good to have a sangha member in each group of twenty to help facilitate the discussion. In this we are all leaders and teachers.

Our participation assists the turning of the dharma wheel to the Action Dimension and thus we participate in the Consciousness Revolution that seeks to transform the world by transforming ourselves, our communities and our nation in the direction of Peace. Please send this notice through your many networks to friends and organizations who are likely to support this enterprise. You may be surprised how many people will come.

GROUNDED

Camila Reimers

After a week retreat with Thay in Boston, I expected to come back in clouds - as many times happened to me after meditation retreats in the past - being half of my time in this world and the other half in outer space. Many of my co-workers and friends asked me if it was difficult for me to come back to "the real world" and I found myself saying, "Not at all, because I'm in touch with my body and I feel completely grounded."

That's the beauty of Thay's teachings; you learn to balance body, mind and soul. When you are aware and conscious of your breathing, there is no escape to the clouds because there is grounding in your body. You don't have to wait for the extraordinary to happen in the future, because it is happening now, each minute of the present moment. If you are like me (always looking for excuses not to do what you know has to be done), being grounded has a 'disadvantage': it pushes you to take action and go beyond words. I always knew that I want peace in the world but now I'm extending the knowing to commitment and I want to start walking for Peace. Many members of our sangha are already doing it.

I invite everyone in my neighborhood to join me in this walk for peace by the canal, every third Sunday of the month at 10:00am. We'll meet at the entrance of 475 Elgin (at Catherine), walk in silence by the canal and come back for ice cream or coffee if someone wants to talk or discuss on the subject.

Following Thay's teachings, I propose the following words for the walking:

In: I'm aware I'm breathing in
Out: I'm aware I'm breathing out
In: I'm peaceful
Out: I'm peace
In: My neighbourhood is peaceful
Out: My neighbourhood is peace
In: Ottawa is peaceful
Out: Ottawa is peace
In: My country is peaceful
Out: My country is peace
In: The world is peaceful
Out: The world is peace

The Peace Alternative

Ian Prattis

On behalf of Peace Groups in Canada

9/11 changed the world. We are in a war that has no winners. To prevent the spread of violence and global war we ask all nations and peoples to stop and pause. To say out loud "The killing stops here and it stops with me." To commit to "Peace begins right here and it begins with me."

Terror, revenge, smart missiles and suicide bombers will not give us peace or security. In the post 9/11 world the wellbeing and security of the US is intimately connected to the wellbeing and security of the world. In this new world our old solutions no longer work. We can no longer take up arms and martyrdom. If we are to survive, we must now champion peace, global care, and non-violent reconciliation.

We must begin by listening deeply to those we are in conflict with. We start at home by looking deeply into our own society and tradition, listening to the suffering of our own people. We nurture peace through local and national forums of deep and compassionate listening. This act heals deep wounds, for compassionate listening relieves the burden of suffering and discrimination.

We step forward as new leaders, recreating our nation on the foundation of understanding that emerges. The compassion and goodwill present in the US can inspire other nations.

Internationally we propose a parallel process of deep listening through the creation of peace parliaments whose mandate is to offer courageous alternatives to war. These parliaments would create a safe place for peoples to share their difficulties and hopes for a peaceful world.

Peace parliaments and deep listening provide the middle way between war and indifference. People will come. Nations will come. The time is now.

Please take action by contacting your political representatives, media, and by sending this letter through your networks. Thank you so much.

Extremes

I had been looking forward to the five-day retreat of Thich Nhat Hanh at Stonehill College for several months. As a member of the Pine Gate Sangha for almost one year I had enjoyed such genuine people, the Dharma talks and discussions and many other aspects of this wonderful community. The retreat would be an opportunity to deepen my practice of mindfulness. However I was not prepared for the extremes of the experience that lay ahead.

Six members of the Sangha had arranged to travel together in my '95 Dodge Caravan. We left Ottawa early on a crystal clear morning and enjoyed a relaxing trip together south to Malone NY then east to the Champlain Islands. Then while traveling through the mountains of Vermont, the van abruptly stalled. We coasted to a stop and I reassured everyone that it was not a major concern, as it had only happened twice before in the five years I had owned the vehicle. The vehicle simply had to sit for five minutes and we would be back on the road. On cue the van started up and we were back on the road.

The van stalled three more times before we reached the retreat. The worst instance was in the rush hour traffic of Boston, MA. During the rush hour in Boston the shoulder is used for traffic and we had no place to go. As we waited for the engine to settle, I noticed two cars approaching from the rear. Not more than 20 car lengths away, one very close behind the other, traveling at full speed. In my imagination I saw the first finding time to merge into another lane, the second car hitting us. What had been a relaxing trip was now the most harrowing experience of my life. All I could do was take my eyes off the rear-view mirror and hope.

While this chaos was occurring outside the van, the inside remained in a state of relative calm. Any words spoken were mindful and reassuring to others. Although not spoken, I sensed a trust, "Keith, you got us into this mess, we know you can get us out". Ian, sitting in the front passenger seat was cracking jokes. He was fully aware of what each one of us was experiencing, and he skillfully cut through the tension with each of his words and his presence, a source of calm.

We were on our way again within a few minutes and we arrived at the retreat safely. The experience of transplanting six people from the comfort and security of the Sangha hall to a van stalled in rush hour traffic had demonstrated the power and importance of the Sangha in my life. The Sangha is not the walls, cushions or fixtures of the hall, it is the people.

I was ready for the retreat! During the orientation, we were told to let the dharma, the teachings fall on us like rain, to just absorb into our consciousness. It was a wonderful and simple analogy, precisely what I needed to hear. At last I could remove the protective armor that I had worn for so long.

The "touching the earth" meditation was mind numbing. We bowed to our blood, spiritual and land ancestries. There was a particularly deep focus for me on my land ancestry. It brought me back to the people of my hometown of Calgary, Alberta and the landscapes of the Rocky Mountains and foothills. I spent the best of my childhood years in this area, hiking and camping along many mountain streams and lakes.

My Dharma discussion group consisted of fifteen people from all parts of eastern Canada. One person had heard about Thich Nhat Hanh just three weeks before the retreat. Another had been practicing Buddhism for thirty years. Sister Chantale asked each of us to speak about what the bell meant to us. There was tremendous variety in the responses and the sharing was very heart warming. For me the very simple sound of the bell has a deep calming and restoring effect on me. It reminded me of the cool mountain waters that I experienced as a child.

I was ready to receive and commit myself to the transmission of the Five Mindfulness Trainings. Part of this process involves writing down what we aspire to be. I had come to admire and deeply respect the members of the Sangha. Thus it seemed very natural for me to aspire to have my presence and my words be like the cool mountain water to those around me, to be calming and restoring. I also aspired to have my work evolve such that it brings out the best in me, my unique talents and skills. To never retire. I aspired to be open to all these things and finally to bring these tools into my family.

To help me on my path, I was given the Dharma name “Authentic Mountain of the Heart”. The name stirred up a simple, yet profound image of my potential. The dharma rain falling on me, percolating down through my consciousness, cascading in small, cool refreshing streams to those around me. It will be a challenge to live up to this name, a challenge I look forward to from deep within myself.

The peace that our world needs so desperately will begin within each of us.

The Cherry Garcia Sutra

Vivian Dickie

(This light hearted sutra came about when the members of the Pine Gate sangha, who attended an awesome six day retreat with Thich Nhat Hanh, were on their way home to Canada. We stopped to have an ice cream at Hero's Welcome, and sitting in the sunset by the shore of Lake Champlain we all enjoyed a Cherry Garcia, a Vermont specialty. Ian told us of an occasion when he stopped there with monastic friends from Maple Forest Monastery, and he teased them saying that they would not be allowed to leave Vermont until they had eaten a Cherry Garcia. So at the same shore by Lake Champlain they had all enjoyed one with many smiles of appreciation. And thus it was that the Cherry Garcia Sutra manifested herself!)



I heard these words at Hero's Welcome by the shore of Lake Champlain in Vermont, when the noble community of the Pine Gate sangha was gathered after the August retreat to return to their dwellings in Canada. There the Wise One gave this teaching.

“Friends, I would like to share with you the way to leave the state of Vermont and attain access to Canada. First we should acquire two U.S. dollars to buy a Cherry Garcia frozen yoghurt ice cream bar. This is a totally wholesome confection free from all artificial ingredients. As we mindfully taste each mouthful we should contemplate on our own unwholesome ingredients in order to become as pure as this noble confection. On attaining this insight the way ahead will be full of joy and free from all obstructions.”

So spoke the Wise One and the sangha took these words to heart and immediately put the teaching into practice.

Stillness Inside - Meditation at Millhaven Institution**Graham Chartier***(Steady Joy of the Heart)*

The room is still and peaceful. Twelve men sit in silence, their hands folded in their laps, their eyes looking downward or completely shut. A voice softly reminds them to focus on the relaxed flow of their breathing, not urgently but gently – to let any other thoughts go and return to concentrating on the breath.

The men are inmates at Millhaven Institution in Ontario and they spend about one hour each week in a meditation class at the institution's chapel. The voice is that of Kelsang Thekchen, a Buddhist monk in the Kadampa tradition of Mahayana Buddhism. Each week, he brings the centuries-old practice of meditation to the prisoners. Kadampa Buddhists strive to use Buddhist teachings as practical methods for transforming daily activities into a mindful path to enlightenment and to integrate their meditation practice into everyday life. As the men arrive at the chapel and settle in the chairs for the meditation class, Thekchen greets them and speaks of the goals of the practice of meditation.

"For 15 minutes we need peace, clarity and focus," he says to the men. "Meditation is quite a specific thing – it is training the mind, strengthening an inner mental muscle."

At 32, Thekchen is the same age as some of the men. While they are all dressed in the familiar jeans and T-shirts of an institution, Thekchen wears the maroon and yellow robes of a Tibetan monk. Born Darren Prout in Toronto, he studied Kadampa Buddhism as taught by the Tibetan meditation master Geshe Kelsang Gyatso. In 1998, after much study, Darren became a monk and was given the monastic name Kelsang Thekchen. Since then, he has been living and teaching in the Kuluta Buddhist Centre in Kingston.

He became interested in teaching at Millhaven Institution through a staff member who attended his classes and suggested that it would be beneficial for the inmates at Millhaven, especially newly arrived inmates in the assessment group, to have meditation classes. The stress experienced by newly arrived inmates can be very great. They arrive after sentencing and are assessed there before being transported to their assigned institutions. Thekchen offered his services to teach them and, with the full support of the institution's management and the Chaplain, the meditation class began.

"Every situation offers an opportunity for training the mind and developing inner peace"

"There are now about 12 guys who attend regularly and are happy to have an opportunity to find some peace and talk about ideas such as developing love and overcoming anger," says Thekchen. In the meditation class, Thekchen speaks to the men about some of the difficulties they face and how meditation is about "getting the mind under control so that, no matter what happens, you stay in control." Through this control, he says it is possible to transform adverse conditions, although, he adds, "transformation is difficult when guys are right in your face." "Every situation offers an opportunity for training the mind and developing inner peace," Thekchen says. "Make a strong determination to develop this peace."

"It's important," he tells the class, "to have a meditative cool in every situation." In their interactions with others he urges the men to "become aware of your own faults and of the good qualities of others."

As the class ends, an inmate tells Thekchen of his conflict with a new cellmate, saying how he warned the man not to turn on his TV too loudly in the early morning. "I warned him once and I warned him twice and I wasn't going to warn him a third time," the inmate said, suggesting an image of a smashed TV and a serious altercation. "But then I tried to look at his good qualities and I saw that he had no family, like I do, and I really felt for the guy. So he's okay – I don't mind him anymore."

"We're all just trying to find ways to stop the suffering"

Thekchen recently began teaching another meditation class at the Maximum Security Unit of Millhaven Institution where there was an initial concern that the inmates would shy away from meditation, thinking it might be perceived as weakness by predatory types. It was difficult for management to judge how the maximum security inmates would react to being told to sit silently and concentrate on their breathing by a young Buddhist monk. At first, Thekchen found the volatile men of the maximum security unit to be more difficult to reach than the newly-arrived inmates at the assessment unit.

“It took them a while to settle and there was a bit a snickering,” says Thekchen of the first meditation class with them, “but they soon saw that training the mind was like training a muscle with weights – unless you work at it, you have no control. Then they settled down.” Thekchen continues to offer a weekly meditation class to the men incarcerated in Millhaven Institution and at other institutions in the Kingston area.

“We’re all equal,” he says. “We’re all just trying to find ways to stop the suffering.”

PLAN FOR LIFE

Mother Teresa

People are often unreasonable, illogical and self-centred.

Forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives.

Be kind anyway.

If you are successful, you will win some false friends and some true enemies.

Succeed anyway.

If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you.

Be honest and frank anyway.

What you spend years building, someone may destroy overnight.

Build anyway.

If you find serenity and happiness, people may be jealous.

Be happy anyway.

The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow.

Do good anyway.

Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough.

But give the world the best you've got anyway.

You see, in the final analysis, it is all between you and God;

it was never between you and them anyway.

Qi-Gong and Mindfulness Practice

Carolyn Hill

“Breathe, you are alive!” How often have we heard this mantra of Thay’s? In most retreats Thay starts by having us breathe. “Breathing in, I know that I am breathing in. Breathing out, I know that I am breathing out”.

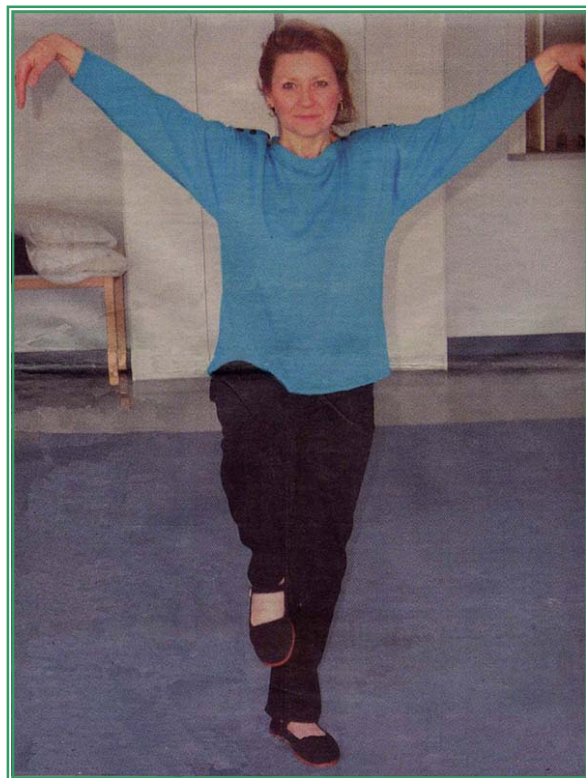
Thay also talks about healing ourselves from within, with breath. We are born with an innate wisdom and ability to heal ourselves. When we cut or bruise ourselves, we do not instruct our body on how to heal – it simply does. Of course with serious injury or illness we need medical attention and treatment. The treatment may give immediate relief and initially boost the healing process, however, our bodies eventually take over to complete the healing. With breath, we can awaken the healer within, taking responsibility and action to care for our own physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing.

Qi Gong is an ancient Chinese energy healing system. It encompasses breathing exercises, meditation and gentle movements. Qi Gong is derived from the Taoist religion with its concept of nature maintaining a balance in all things. Beings are seen as a microcosm within the macrocosm. Our energies interrelate with the energies of the universe – the basis of Interbeing.

Qi means your breath, your vital life force energy and connection with the universe. Gong means to work. Putting them together, Qi Gong means to work your breath – to cultivate, refine, circulate and store clean fresh qi, or energy, throughout your body, and at the same time rid your body of old stagnant qi.

Qi Gong is about enhancing and maintaining an optimal amount of internal energy. It loosens, realigns and strengthens the body, while nourishing and regulating physiological and psychological processes. Qi Gong improves circulation, balances yin and yang – fire and water, and strengthens and calms the heart. A balance and harmony of qi essentially means good health. Qi Gong is designed to generate qi, or energy, to clear blockages and thereby re-establish a balance and harmony of qi in the body to regain and maintain a healthy state of body, mind and spirit.

First of all, we must be aware that there is no such thing as perfect health. It does not exist. We have genetic ailments, physical disabilities, we suffer trauma and injury, we catch a virus or become infected by bacteria. Our health is like a river flowing, always changing depending upon the conditions. We therefore have different levels of wellbeing. When we are pain free with no symptoms, we believe that we are healthy. But there are always things going on in the body, physically and emotionally. Emotional factors such as sadness, negative thoughts and words or stress often cause blockages of energy, which then manifest into illness or depression. Therefore, we must always take care of our emotional as well as physical body to continuously improve our level of wellbeing.



I am grateful to have studied Qi Gong for many years, and that I can now teach and pass it on to members of the Pine Gate sangha and other members of the community. Qi Gong is another means of introducing mindfulness practice. While in class, for a period of ninety minutes each week, participants focus entirely on themselves.

Through breath and gentle movements, we awaken the healer within. We send fresh healthy qi (breath, energy) to every cell of our bodies and at the same time rid our bodies of old stagnant qi. Gentle movements help to stretch our bodies, to realign and strengthen muscles and joints, to improve flexibility. We learn how to relax our bodies and calm our mind.

Through meditation we call in the five elements of wood, fire, earth, metal and water to enhance our wellbeing. Each element connects to specific organs and organic processes. Each element also connects to specific emotions, sounds, taste, seasons, colors and so on. With our breath and guided meditations, we focus on the elements and connecting organs and organic processes bringing in healing to enhance and maintain a higher level of wellbeing.

For some, the gentle movements are the only type of exercise they can do, which has helped to increase their flexibility and stamina. Others have stopped smoking through mindfulness of their lungs. Some have been able to lower and regulate their blood pressure, while others with circulation problems actually begin to feel warmth in their hands and feet. In addition, when stressed they are able to focus upon their breath to calm themselves in difficult situations.

Through meditation and deep relaxation, we learn how to come to a stop and to look deeply so we can heighten our awareness and become more mindful of our bodies and emotions. Through practice we learn to water the positive seeds within to enhance our wellbeing. We learn how to recognize and embrace our negative seeds and habit energies, and take steps to transform them.

As participants practice and become more aware, they eagerly share how much better they feel. More importantly, all recognize the importance and power of their breath, physically and emotionally. They are empowered by their breath, which brings them peace of mind and peace of heart, which is then transferred to all those they interconnect with.

“Breathe and you know that you are alive!”

“Our sense bases – our eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind – are all deep oceans filled with danger..... A practitioner who does not light the lamp of mindfulness to guard his or her six senses is not really able to practice.” **Thich Nhat Hanh from Transformation At The Base; Parallax Press, 2001.**

Social Work and Mindfulness Practice

Chris Fitzgerald

“Give a man a fish and he will eat once; teach a man how to fish and he will feed himself and others for a lifetime”. Here we have the charity model of assistance versus the empowerment model. Social Work and the other helping professions agree, at least in principle, that it is better to empower people to help themselves than to foster dependency through the provision of charity. The former lays the groundwork for deeper, more lasting change.

As a result, organizations and agencies tend to concentrate their energies on the creation and implementation of policies and procedures which reflect the above model. However, because these same policies and procedures are also designed to “protect” workers and clients, they ironically serve to limit what one can actually do, and how one engages in practice. Simply put, they discourage, if not actually prohibit, an even more radical and profound form of engagement between workers and clients – what could be called an “enlightened” or “mindful” engagement which looks deeply into the nature of suffering and recognizes the possibility for transformation. Here, problems and issues are perceived and tackled not by simply “doing something” (e.g.

learning new coping mechanisms), but by “becoming something”. Does not “right action” and “right speech” essentially flow from, and find its proper motivation in, a quality of being - a pure, mindful heart?

Sadly, most Social Workers and organizational models do not know how to put into practice this crucial teaching. While it is true that clients can be supported and encouraged to make positive lifestyle choices, it is also true that they can choose the opposite. The heart – the “unenlightened” heart – may never be understood by the Social Work profession. To mindfully reflect on our suffering and eventually refrain from doing the things which cause us and others to suffer is a profound spiritual path – not easily embraced by the helping professions. There may of course be individuals engaged in their own spiritual practice, but this overlooks the reality of our interdependence and how that interdependence is best “lived” in the wider context of a “sangha” or supportive community. Clearly, we are not dealing with simple solutions for simple problems. The challenges facing the helping professions are, as Thich Nhat Hanh says, “part of a cycle of conditions based on deluded mind – conditions which affect individuals, society and the world”.



Mystical Bear by Simon Brascoupe

The need for peace, both within and without, exists in all institutions and organizations simply because we form the heart and mind of these structures. We as educators, parents, social workers or politicians must learn to nourish others not just with rules or information, but with our own deep looking and inner harmony. They stresses that authentic transformation and healing is not an abstraction or theoretical concept. There exist concrete practices and conditions necessary for a collective awakening:

“We need places where we can go to sit, breathe quietly, and look and listen deeply. We also need parks and other peaceful places where we can practice walking meditation alone and with others.

Educators, architects, artists, legislators, businessmen – all of us have to come together to create spaces where we can practice peace, harmony, joy and deep looking. Our schools must be more than just places for transmitting technical know-how. They must also be places where young people can learn to be happy, loving and understanding, where teachers provide their students with their own insights and joy.

We also need City Halls where responsible people can look deeply into local problems. They need to know how to calm themselves and use loving speech. We have to act responsibly, and create communities of deep looking, sharing and real harmony. We need to be able to make the best kinds of decisions together. We need peace, within and without.”

from “The Heart of the Buddha’s Teaching” by Thich Nhat Hanh.

"Adopt the pace of nature; her secret is patience.".....Ralph Waldo Emerson

NEW BOOK AVAILABLE**The Essential Spiral: Ecology and Consciousness After 9/11****By Ian Prattis, University Professor and founder of the Pine Gate Mindfulness Community in Ottawa.****Published by University Press of America, August 2002.****50% of royalties are donated to Plum Village.**

Learn to cool your anger and deal with the terrorist within by preventing your anger from translating into deadly harm through the practical meditation exercises described in this new book by mindfulness teacher Ian Prattis. You will be taken on a sweep of history that reconfigures our global order. The Consciousness Revolution is made clear through a discussion of ecology/ violence/ spirituality/ leadership/ ethics/ September 11, 2001/ globalization/ Earth wisdom/ deep listening/ and spiritual pilgrimage.

To read a sample go to: www.ianprattis.com/essentialspiral.

Order online through www.univpress.com, go to Order Information. Or call the toll free customer service number 1-800-462-6420, or fax 1-800-338-4550.

The Consciousness Revolution**Ian Prattis**

"I call for a consciousness revolution grounded in mindfulness practice."

This quote is from The Essential Spiral. The Consciousness Revolution began at Stonehill College, Mass, August 12 - 17, 2002, with Thich Nhat Hanh turning the dharma wheel to the Action Dimension. His presence and dharma talks were so lucid, direct and compelling that they evoked a grass roots response from 900 retreatants at Stonehill College.

On the second last day of the retreat a large gathering organized themselves to put into action the proposals by Thay for world peace, to actualize his declaration of mindfulness to avert war. Those gathered at this meeting operated with great attention to mindfulness as they organized a steering committee, then struck other committees with a mandate to contact influential leaders, media, international leaders, local groups; to fundraise, form a writing and communications team and a web team. A small group worked with Thay and monastics to sculpt a letter that would go out to the world to avert World War Three, which an American attack on Iraq will surely provoke.

From there, this grassroots movement has mushroomed exponentially, not just to meditators but to all people who yearn for peace. The organizers have received many offers of help and expertise. Fund raising in New York enables an ad to be placed in the New York Times with the letter inspired by Thay.

We do not have to wait for the Consciousness Revolution. It is here. We can all tell our grandchildren - we were there when the dharma wheel turned and civil society took action for world peace. To assist and support please contact: deeplistening-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

PINE GATE SANGHA ANNUAL FALL RETREAT, 2002

with Ian Prattis

**“DEVELOPING COMPASSION IN A WORLD GONE MAD –
The Sangha as a Community of Resistance”**

FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 27 – SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 29, 2002

**At “The Barn” Retreat Centre, (819) 456 2144
186 Route 366 West, Ste Cecile de Masham, (Near Wakefield), Quebec**

The Retreat program begins on Friday evening with Orientation at 9.00 pm. A light supper will be served during registration on Friday, between 6.00pm and 8.00pm. The retreat finishes mid afternoon on Sunday with a sharing circle and a closing ceremony. In between these activities are dharma talks, exercises, walking meditation, silent time with Mother Earth, as we learn to touch the seeds of that loving and compassionate nature which dwells within each one of us. It is a silent retreat so that we nurture the energy of deep compassion. From that energy we can reconstruct the world.

COST: \$125.00 – Includes lodging, and all meals

**REGISTRATION: Carolyn Hill; 1252 Rideout Cr., Ottawa, ON, K2C 2X7
726 0881; CHill@TierneyStauffer.com**

Please make checks payable to Carolyn Hill, marked Barn Retreat. A MINIMUM of 20 participants is required for the Retreat to break even. A 50% deposit secures your place at the retreat.

DIRECTIONS: “The Barn” Retreat Centre is located at the north end of Gatineau Park, 20 minutes from downtown Ottawa. It is charming and comfortable, and in late September the trees have begun to wear their autumn splendor. If you come from Toronto or Montreal on the 417, take the Vanier Parkway Exit and go until Beechwood Ave; LT on Beechwood; RT on King Edward; continue until you cross the McDonald-Cartier bridge. Follow Rte. 5 until the end; LT at Highway 105 towards Wakefield; LT on Rte 366 (just past the Wakefield turnoff). Continue on Rte. 336 in the direction of St Cecile de Masham. The Barn is 4.6 km from the 366/105 intersection. Watch for the sign on the LHS to turn into The Barn.

PINE GATE SANGHA SCHEDULE September - December 2002

DATE	TIME	EVENT
Third Sunday of each month		PEACE WALK
Thursday September 5	7.00pm – 9.00pm	Beginning Anew with the Four Noble Truths Pine Gate sangha as a Council
Tuesday September 10	7.00pm – 8.30pm	Qi-Gong Class Register with Carolyn at 613 726 0881
Thurs September 12	7.00pm – 9.00pm	Thich Nhat Hanh, Eye of the Buddha Retreat, 2000 First Dharma talk
Sunday Sept. 15	11.00am	Peace Walk Parkdale and Emmerson, nr Ottawa River Parkway
Thurs September 19	7.00pm – 9.00pm	First Dharma Talk continued
Thurs September 26	7.00pm – 9.00pm	Meditative Walk on nature trails close to the Pine Gate Meditation Hall
FRIDAY – SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 27 – 29		Annual Fall Retreat of the Pine Gate sangha “The Barn” Retreat centre, near Wakefield, Quebec
Thursday October 3	7.00pm – 9.00pm	Thich Nhat Hanh, Eye of the Buddha Retreat, 2000 Second Dharma Talk
Saturday October 5	11.00am – 2.00pm	Fall Hike and picnic in Gatineau Park Rides available.
Thursday October 10	7.00pm – 9.00pm	Second Dharma talk continued
Thursday October 17	7.00pm – 9.00pm	Five Mindfulness Trainings Recitation
Thursday October 24	7.00pm – 9.00pm	Deep Relaxation
Thursday October 31	7.00pm – 9.00pm	Guest Presenter
SATURDAY Nov 2	5.00pm – 7.00pm	Sangha gathering and Pot Luck Supper
Thursday Nov 7	7.00pm – 9.00pm	Thich Nhat Hanh, Eye of the Buddha Retreat, 2000 Third Dharma Talk
Thursday Nov 14	7.00pm – 9.00pm	Third Dharma Talk continued
Thursday Nov 21	7.00pm – 9.00pm	Tea Ceremony Poems, stories, songs, reflections on mindfulness
Thursday Nov 28	7.00pm – 9.00pm	Thich Nhat Hanh, Hand of the Buddha Retreat Fourth Dharma Talk
Thursday December 5	7.00pm – 9.00pm	Guest presenter
SATURDAY Dec 7	5.00pm – 7.00pm	Sangha gathering and Pot Luck Supper
Thursday Dec 12	7.00pm – 9.00pm	Fourth Dharma talk continued
Thursday Dec 19	7.00pm – 9.00pm	Dharma Talk “Taking Refuge” Christmas carols
SATURDAY Jan 11	10.00am – 4.00pm	Day of Mindfulness Pine Gate Meditation Hall

DIRECTIONS: Take Queensway to Woodroffe S exit; go to Baseline Rd; Right on Baseline: Right on Highgate (next lights): Right on Westbury: Left on Rideout and follow the Crescent round to 1252. All gatherings are in The Pine Gate Meditation Hall, 1252 Rideout Crescent, Ottawa, Ontario, K2C 2X7. 726-0881.