



Pine Gate

Newsletter of the Pine Gate Sangha

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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.

Burn Out, Take Refuge

Ian Prattis

Over the years I have observed many friends in the peace and environmental movements becoming overwhelmed and suffering deeply from stress and burn out. Despite my best efforts, they have not always been open to mindfulness practice. I do see that activism without mindfulness practice will lead to burn out and disillusion of one form or another. At the other end of the continuum, spirituality without an engaged expression is equally unbalanced.

I encourage all of us embarking on this 21st century adventure in Peace to root ourselves deeply in mindfulness practice on a daily basis. If we are at the computer all day making the necessary connections for peace, let us step away every hour to do mindful movements or walking meditation round our block. Tea and lunch breaks are not to brain storm but quite the opposite. To quiet our minds, with a cup of tea taken in silence often with a friend. If we see friends suffering from stress let us take the time to be with that friend – and invite them to do walking meditation, deep listening, a mindful meal and so on. Let us take care of our friends for peace who suffer, and also take good care of ourselves through fidelity to daily practice.

We deepen our practice, touch the stillness of non-action first of all so that our ensuing actions come from a place of effortless abundance. This is how we can take care of stress and burnout. Guidance is therefore essential. It is there in abundance from Thich Nhat Hanh (2000, Dharma Talk on Taking the hand of Suffering), as he specifies very clearly

how to reach out for help. He encourages us in times of adversity and despair to take refuge in the sangha – the community of spiritual practice. Elder brothers and sisters in the community who are steady, patient and wise can help us step out of despair and anger by practicing meditation with us, returning us to mindfulness in order to take care of our distress. Then there is taking refuge in the dharma – through practices like Beginning Anew, Touching the Earth, of heeding the Mindfulness Trainings to protect us from making harmful decisions. There is also taking refuge in the Buddha whose awakened mind is in the sutras that guide us step by step from despair to happiness. Each refuge encourages us to foster positive and wholesome mental formations rather than fostering further despair and angst. Instead of running away from our fear and distress by hiding it under addictive behaviors, we learn from taking refuge just how to embrace and transform our fear and distress – first of all by clearly recognizing it.

We have to become good gardeners of the mind to do this. It takes skill, mindfulness and retraining to become a good organic gardener, so that the garbage in us is turned into rich compost rather than rejected or repressed. It also takes much understanding based on a non-dualistic view – accepting and recognizing just what is there in the mind. So if our mind is dark with sorrow or anger we recognize that this is just so. With awareness we know how to practice walking meditation to take care of the mind-state recognized. Without the darkness and sorrow we would have no idea about the light dance of happiness. Instead of being overwhelmed by darkness and sorrow, which can so easily happen, we use our skills of practice to recognize our mental states, nurture and transform them to a state where there is no danger of being overwhelmed. This non-dualistic way of looking at our mind states makes good sense, particularly as the alternative of suppression, of not practice, of not mindfulness, keeps us caught in the garbage, deeply mired in suffering with the conviction that there is no way out of this misery. This “not” alternative rapidly leads to depression, mental illness and damage to others as well as to ourselves. The

mindfulness alternative of developing the necessary skills is a very wise and therapeutic option.

You may see for yourself the value of taking refuge in sangha eyes to guide your perceptions; of taking refuge in the practices, trainings and sutras for guidance in order to apply the energy of mindfulness to the energy of suffering. With the assistance available through taking refuge in the Three Gems – Buddha, Dharma and Sangha – the practice comes alive as a highly strategic set of tools and skills to produce transformation of the suffering caused by difficult and painful circumstances. Life is full of crises, curve balls and disasters. But even so, we do not have to be overwhelmed and crushed by them. Mindfulness practice helps us. Understanding and compassion hone our skills so that we become excellent gardeners of the mind.

I hear that beautiful song by Karen Carpenter going through my mind –

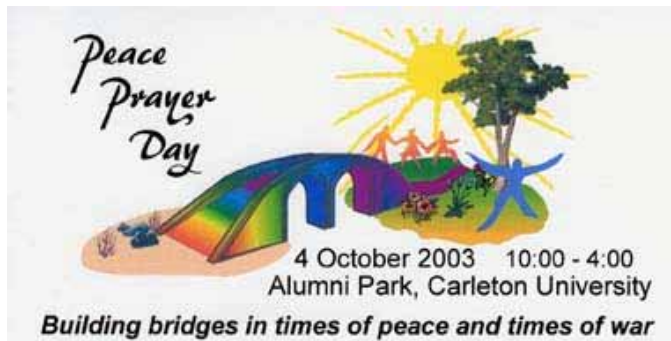
"We have only just begun."

Peace Prayer Day

Parmatma Leviton

Inspired by the U.N. World Peace Prayer Day, Ottawa's first annual Peace Prayer Day on Oct 4th will bring together many traditions in song, dance, plays, live art, meditative walking, labyrinths and drumming. It will be a day-long celebration of peace in support of international peace processes and initiatives. Circle Oct.4th on your calendar. The war in Iraq was the catalyst for new grassroots peace activism in Ottawa and a new blending of the social/ political with the spiritual. We experienced the silent vigil of 4,000 on Parliament Hill, the Social Forum which was opened by First Nations Spiritual leader William Commanda, Peace Song Circle on Parliament Hill, a flurry of interfaith activity, and much more. Even Kai Brand-Jacobson's highly political talk at the NAC emphasized "deep culture" and interpersonal "conflict transformation".

The organizing committee of the Pine Gate Sangha and Friends For Peace recognizes that we must work for peace every day of our lives whether or not it is a time of war. To create infrastructure in our social and political institutions, which value and legitimize peace processes is their goal. The root of peace in the world is the individual choosing to act collectively - in coalition with others. In order for both the individual and the community to find their full potential and strength of conviction in a restless and uncertain world, inner peace processes have now become essential.



The day will open with the First Nations drum circle and ceremonial dancers followed by a massed choir directed by Mike McDonald. They will have prepared with a day-long workshop prior to the event. There will be a labyrinth set up by United Church members. As well, the Dances of Universal Peace from the Sufi tradition will lead participants in a multi-traditional dance. Brief talks on Buddhist mindfulness, 3HO mantric meditations as well as environmental issues will be given. Lots for the ears, lots for the body; for the eyes, there will be: a Hindu dancer in full costume, artists painting their impressions of the day at hand. (Paintings will be sold by silent auction at end of day) and a wishing-well children's project for wishing wellness. Grandfather William Commanda, widely respected elder from Maniwaki, will speak. Peace awards will be given. There will be info tables for peace and environmental activists. (if interested, contact Carolyn Hill at Chill@TierneyStauffer.com; 726 0881).

This is a full family day of fun, celebration, communing, and learning about many great projects such as the multi-ethnic housing project and the

Ottawa interfaith group "Women for Peace". Our mission statement is:

The Peace Prayer Day offers the space for individuals coming together to share the experience of oneness. It is our intention to touch that place in each of us that recognizes that we are a universal community.

Worldwide, we join together for inspiration, communication, creative collaboration and divine expression through prayer, music and dance. Our goal is to reach as many people as possible as a global event and leader in the world peace movement. We honor every person and group in their unique offering in pursuit of peace in ourselves, peace in our environment, peace in our world, peace in our homes, and peace in our communities.

Pine Gate Sangha and Friends for Peace is a coalition of environmental, meditation and peace groups which formed in Ottawa December 2002. They organized silent peace vigils across the National Capital Region before the Iraq war and the Peace Song Circle on Parliament Hill, March 22, 2003, after war had broken out. The intent is to create a different form of peaceful expression, non-dualistic in tone in order to appeal to a broad cross section of Canadian citizens who do support a major role for Canada as a peacekeeping nation.

Peace Prayer Day finishes at 4:00 pm after a silent walk along the Rideau River as a private yet collective prayer for peace. We will be met by runners carrying a flame of peace, starting from the eternal flame on Parliament Hill, symbolizing that we are all eternal flames for peace.

Offered by donation. Location: Alumni Park Carleton University; Pack a picnic lunch or enjoy on-site cafeteria at the Loeb building and student union. For info: swelchner@rogers.com 821-5599 or iprattis@cyberus.ca 613 726 0881. Peace Song Circle one-hour documentaries are available on video or DVD from KBurton@cyberus.ca. (featuring 7 choirs and massed choir; these are being sold to help fund-raise for the PPD event. The

words come with it and it makes a great Peace song sing-along).

Bridging The Gap

Sean Walden

As I sit back and reflect upon the current turbulent time that we are experiencing in this world, I find solace in the roots in which we live. I spend my life work as a registered Massage Therapist. I have the privilege of working with my wife Dr. Pauline Walden who is a chiropractor. On the surface it seems as simple as that to describe our lives on a physical plane, however, that is simply just the modality by which we continue to spread a greater message that is rooted in a much deeper philosophy.

When I introspect into the concept of oneness or total consciousness, a harmonious blend between mental, physical and spiritual well being, I see where our real mission lies. We believe that the root of many of today's problems, if not all of them lies within the concept of interference. Most specifically interference within the physical body and even more particularly the nervous system. This master system is vitally important in achieving true spiritual, mental and physical health. It is the system in which all is communicated and needs to be nurtured. This interference within us can come in many ways, it may be physical, chemical or even emotional. All of which are under the direct influence of the nervous system. Unfortunately many of us have been misled in health, believing that we can heal the body from the outside.

Like spiritual enlightenment we need to look to the inside of the body to find the answers, which is where we always do. Everything that our bodies need already lies within us. "The power that made the body heals the body". On a physical level that is exactly what we do. We simply help to remove particularly physical interference so that the body may heal itself the way it was meant to. However, like everything else it all comes down to intent. Our intent lies within the concept that we are helping to remove this physical interference so as to help re-establish the gap between the physical, mental and

spiritual planes that is bridged through our nervous system. No matter how much we try we will never truly heal ourselves from outside in, but rather inside out.

In this turbulent time we have to wonder how much this nervous interference plays a negative role in our society today. Can we truly achieve oneness without nurturing our nervous system and why then do all not seek this form of health care? This is why our lasting purpose is to serve the true health care needs of all people. We acknowledge the devastating effects of nervous system interference on human health and therefore go to extraordinary measures in educating our community about the cause and prevention of disease.

Dr. Pauline and Sean Walden own Arc of Life, a family based private practice on Merivale Road. They have an ongoing community outreach program in which they donate their personal time into dynamically educating our community on better health naturally while raising money and awareness for a better, more healthy and peaceful world tomorrow. You may learn more about or contact Sean and Pauline at their website at www.arcoflife.org.

Meditation on the Body

Sit comfortably with your spine erect and breath in and out with awareness for approximately ten breaths. Concentrate on the whole length of the in breath and the whole length of the out breath. Notice the different qualities and properties of breath without manipulating your breath in any way. The in breath may be longer, the out breath may be smoother – just notice and be natural. With awareness and concentration on breathing in and out you find yourself settling into a calm. In this meditation we will shine the light of awareness on different parts of the body with the in breath. On the out breath we smile with love to the body part we are concentrating on. The half smile as we breathe out relaxes and heals the body. This love meditation to the body is deeply nurturing – leaving us rejuvenated as we experience a deep, calm rest. Our body, heart and lungs work so hard for us day and night but we neglect and harm them with our consumption, mental attitudes and stress.

This does not support our body. With this meditation we use our conscious breath to touch the different parts of our body with tender loving care and begin to understand how to bring peace and joy to our body and mind. Take ten breaths or one minute of conscious breathing with each concentration.

[Three Bells]

Breathing in I know I am breathing in IN
Breathing out I know I am breathing out OUT
[Bell]

Aware of the hair on my head I breathe in HAIR
Smiling with love to the hair on my head
I breathe out SMILING
[Bell]

Aware of my eyes I breathe in EYES
Smiling with love to my eyes
I breathe out SMILING
[Bell]

Aware of my ears I breathe in EARS
Smiling with love to my ears
I breathe out SMILING
[Bell]

Aware of my nose I breathe in NOSE
Smiling with love to my nose
I breathe out SMILING
[Bell]

Aware of my mouth I breathe in MOUTH
Smiling with love to my mouth
I breathe out SMILING
[Bell]

Aware of my lungs I breathe in LUNGS
Smiling with love to my lungs
I breathe out SMILING
[Bell]

Aware of my heart I breathe in HEART
Smiling with love to my heart
I breathe out SMILING
[Bell]

Aware of my liver I breathe in LIVER
Smiling with love to my liver
I breathe out SMILING
[Bell]

Aware of my internal organs I breathe in ORGANS
Smiling with love to my internal organs
I breathe out SMILING
[Bell]

Aware of the muscles in my body
– top to toe- I breathe in MUSCLES
Smiling with love to my muscles
I breathe out SMILING
[Bell]

Aware of the bones of my skeleton
I breathe in SKELETON
Smiling with love to the bones
in my skeleton I breathe out SMILING
[Bell]

Aware of my brain I breathe in BRAIN
Smiling with love to my brain
I breathe out SMILING
[Bell]

Aware of my central nervous system
I breathe in NERVOUS SYSTEM
Smiling with love to my nervous system
I breathe out SMILING
[Bell]

Aware of my feet and toes
I breathe in FEET & TOES
Smiling with love to my feet and toes
I breathe out SMILING
[Bell]

Aware of my entire being
I breathe in ENTIRE BEING
Smiling with love to my entire being
I breathe out SMILING
[Bell]

Breathing in I know I am breathing in IN
Breathing out I know I am breathing out OUT
[Two Bells]

The Invitation

© Oriah Mountain Dreamer

(from the book *The Invitation*)

It doesn't interest me what you do for a living.
I want to know what you ache for
and if you dare to dream of meeting your heart's
longing.

It doesn't interest me how old you are.
I want to know if you will risk looking like a fool
for love
for your dream
for the adventure of being alive.

It doesn't interest me what planets are squaring
your moon...
I want to know if you have touched the centre of
your own sorrow
if you have been opened by life's betrayals
or have become shrivelled and closed
from fear of further pain.

I want to know if you can sit with pain
mine or your own
without moving to hide it
or fade it
or fix it.

I want to know if you can be with joy
mine or your own
if you can dance with wildness
and let the ecstasy fill you to the tips of your fingers
and toes
without cautioning us to
be careful
be realistic
remember the limitations of being human.

It doesn't interest me if the story you are telling me
is true.
I want to know if you can
disappoint another
to be true to yourself.

If you can bear the accusation of betrayal
and not betray your own soul.
If you can be faithless
and therefore trustworthy.

I want to know if you can see Beauty
even when it is not pretty
every day.
And if you can source your own life
from its presence.

I want to know if you can live with failure
yours and mine
and still stand at the edge of the lake
and shout to the silver of the full moon,
"Yes."

It doesn't interest me
to know where you live or how much money you
have.
I want to know if you can get up
after the night of grief and despair
weary and bruised to the bone
and do what needs to be done
to feed the children.

It doesn't interest me who you know
or how you came to be here.
I want to know if you will stand
in the centre of the fire
with me
and not shrink back.

It doesn't interest me where or what or with whom
you have studied.
I want to know what sustains you
from the inside
when all else falls away.

I want to know if you can be alone
with yourself
and if you truly like the company you keep
in the empty moments.

Gandhiji's Talisman

I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you/ apply the following test.

Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to *swaraj* for the hungry and spiritually starving millions?

Then you will find your doubt and your self melting away.

Circle of Life!

Author Unknown

You know, he almost didn't see the old lady, stranded on the side of the road. But even in the dim light of day, he could see she needed help. So he pulled up in front of her Mercedes and got out. His Pontiac was still sputtering when he approached her. Even with the smile on his face, she was worried. No one had stopped to help for the last hour or so. Was he going to hurt her? He didn't look safe, he looked poor and hungry. He could see that she was frightened, standing there in the cold. He knew how she felt. It was a chill which only fear can put in you. He said, "I'm here to help you ma'am. Why don't you wait in the car where it's warm? By the way my name is Bryan."

Well, all she had was a flat tire, but for an old lady, that was bad enough. Bryan crawled under the car looking for a place to put the jack, skinning his knuckles a time or two. Soon he was able to change the tire. But he had to get dirty and his hands hurt. As he was tightening up the lug nuts, she rolled down the window and began to talk to him. She told him that she was from St. Louis and was only just passing through. She couldn't thank him enough for coming to her aid.

Bryan just smiled as he closed her trunk. She asked him how much she owed him. Any amount would have been all right with her. She had already

imagined all the awful things that could have happened to her if he hadn't stopped.

Bryan never thought twice about money. This was not a job to him. This was helping someone in need, and God knows there were plenty who had given him a hand in the past. He had lived his whole life that way, and it never occurred to him to act any other way. He told her that if she really wanted to pay him back, the next time she saw someone who needed help, she would give that person the assistance that they needed, and Bryan added "...and think of me".

He waited until she started her car and drove off. It had been a cold and depressing day, but he felt good as he headed home, disappearing into the twilight. A few miles down the road the lady saw a small cafe. She went in to grab a bite to eat, and take the chill off before she made the last leg of the trip home. It was a dingy looking restaurant. Outside were two old gas pumps. The whole scene was unfamiliar to her. The cash register was like the telephone of an out of work actor. It didn't ring much.

Her waitress came over and brought a clean towel to wipe her hair. She had a sweet smile, one that even being on her feet for the whole day couldn't erase. The lady noticed that the waitress was nearly eight months pregnant, but she never let the strain and aches change her attitude. The old lady wondered how someone who had so little could be so giving to a stranger.

Then she remembered Bryan.

After the lady finished her meal, and the waitress went to get change for her hundred-dollar bill, the lady slipped right out the door. She was gone by the time the waitress came back. She wondered where the lady could be, then she noticed something written on the napkin under which was 4 \$100 bills.

There were tears in her eyes when she read what the lady wrote. It said, "You don't owe me anything, I've been there too. Somebody once helped me out, the way I'm helping you. If you really want to pay

me back, here's what to do...Don't let the chain of love end with you."

Well there were tables to clear, sugar bowls to fill, and people to serve, but the waitress made it through another day.

That night when she got home from work and climbed into bed, she was thinking about the money and what the lady had written. How could the lady have known how much she and her husband needed it?

With the baby due next month, it was going to be hard. She knew how worried her husband was, and as he lay sleeping next to her, she gave him a soft kiss and whispered soft and low, "Everything's gonna be alright; I love you, Bryan."

On Silence

Nicholas Tschense

Silence is what I find in my sometimes vacuous body. Silence in me is for some the only way they can communicate with me. I mean to say that silence in me is a result of my oneness with the universe. I am one with the universe at all times except when I am in dissonance with my body. Dissonance comes when my body is not in union with my mind. It comes when my mind betrays my body. I have experienced silence as the central part of my universe! I believe that all need to experience silence in the way I have.

There are many lessons in being silent. The first lesson is the most important. It is about discerning the omni-power of God! This lesson and preaching becomes the guiding light for all to follow as their main axiom. Lastly, silence is my way of connecting with trees and nature. In nature I experience my most complete harmony. I simply love to be in nature. Nature is my last and most perfect communion with God.

What is the meaning of silence? How do we begin to know God?

It is to find the answer within. When you go inside you will find either vacancy or celebration of self. I feel that sadness can bring a celebration of true meaning where one knows the full expression of self through God.

Vacancy comes from not being fully present with the Divine.

Vacancy comes not from birth, but later in life from being absent from God.

Through silence, personal enlightenment will come.

Nicholas is a brilliant child who touches people's hearts. Born with a brain disorder, he can neither speak nor walk and depends on others for physical help, yet he is a constant source of inspiration in matters of the mind and heart. He can read at a high level and his capacity to think and feel is constantly amazing to others. His veil of silence was broken at three years of age when he began using his alphabet board to communicate a poem about a tree. He often writes of nature, love, knowledge and God. He is seven years old.

In The Footsteps of the Buddha

Carolyn Hill

My pilgrimage in India was an experience of mindfulness – constant concentration, compassion and love, during which my perceptions were continually shattered. I immediately became aware of three things in particular - smells, the level of constant noise, and the vast number of people, all of which I quickly became accustomed to. The streets of Delhi were filled with cars, rickshaws, bicycles careening in and out and swerving around potholes, people walking, beggars, hawkers, merchants, cows, dogs, pigs, all with the use of horns as vehicles yielded way to one another. Amidst this chaos, order arose. One had only to be mindful to see it!

Eleven of us, including our leader Shantum, met at the Oberoi Hotel in Delhi on February 1st to begin our 21 day pilgrimage to sacred sites of the Buddha. At each site we recited the sutras delivered by the Buddha at that location. Shantum

told stories of the Buddha's life and teachings. Prior to embarking on the pilgrimage we visited the Gandhi museum to awaken the Gandhi seeds (and thus the Buddha seeds) within each of us. Travelling from one state to another by plane or train, we otherwise travelled by bus and by foot. I watched life as we travelled through rural villages. All of life was there, on the roadside. People cooking, eating, washing pots in dirty water, children playing, barbers cutting hair. Men and women carrying bundles of wood, large pots or bags of seed on their heads. Often the front of their huts a shop, the back their living quarters. The countryside is agriculture - parcels of land divided into subplots by rows of raised soil. Each plot planted with a different crop was orderly and well

on the street, doing what they can to sustain life – without electricity, without clean water, without sufficient food, without education. They don't know how poor they are. I was very conscious of my presence and wondered if I was intruding, but the men, women and children all smiled and waved, welcoming us to their land. There is a graciousness about the people of India. Despite the poverty and begging there is generosity. A land of little resources, but very rich in spirit. Contentment shines in their faces. I am amazed at seeing Mother India just as is it. I have no judgments, no aversions. Instead I reflect upon my ancestral roots and their way of life. How different was it?

Beginning each day with meditation we came



cared for, which seemed in contrast to their way of life on the street. Girls fetch water in buckets from wells. Crops are watered by hand. Women in beautifully coloured saris work the land. Children work alongside their parents. In pretty dresses, girls scoop up cow dung for fuel. Farmers wash their water buffalo in the river. Water buffalo carcasses on the side of the road are pecked clean by vultures.

Despite the poverty, the dirt and debris, what I felt was love, theirs and mine. Families together, caring for one another, caring for their animals. Tears filled my eyes the first day. They live day to day,

together as a sangha and created an energy which kept everyone focused and calm. We nurtured one another as we took turns being ill, looked out for one another, shared experiences, yet also provided one another with silence. I encountered my first beggars as we walked up to Vulture Peak. We meditated in a cave filled with incense and lit with candles. A cave the Buddha meditated in. We recited the Heart of the Prajnaparamita on top of Vulture Peak. As with all sutras and stories told along the pilgrimage, it took on a deeper meaning, penetrating as if it were the first time to hear it. On Vulture Peak, I felt a real sense of emptiness – I

could have been alone or with a thousand other beings – I simply was there, chanting the Heart of the Prajnaparamita – there in the moment, a moment the Buddha would have enjoyed.

The MahaBodhi Temple in Bodh Gaya with thousands of Tibetan monks chanting during initiation ceremonies was stunning. Meditating under the Bodhi Tree, where the Buddha attained enlightenment, the energy penetrated my feet and rose up through my legs, filling my whole body. A special day for me was when we walked through fields and rivers to the cave where the Buddha practiced asceticism. I noticed that I was not caught in my fear of snakes. Many times someone mentioned the possibility of snakes in the water, in the crops, the kusa grass, but I was not concerned. I was fully present, enjoying each step, knowing that I was walking on the same land that the Buddha and his disciples walked over 2600 years ago, feeling the earth of Mother India below my bare feet, feeling her energy. As we left the cave, I saw the seeds of awakening and Buddha nature within the beggars, and I pray that they will have the opportunity to water those seeds.

In Varanasi by the Ganges, we walk down narrow alleyways filled with merchants selling cloth, toys, food, jewellery, flowers, sweets, spices and so on, all beautifully arranged. Hordes of people are walking shoulder to shoulder. Around one corner stands a cow in the garbage, eating. A monkey runs overhead. A motorcycle drives through. On occasion we have to step aside for a herd of cows, or for young men carrying a body. We come out at the crematorium where bodies are being cremated, in the open, for all to witness. Ashes fall upon us. There are no tears or weeping. Simply another transition in life. After a Hindu ceremony celebrating Mother Ganges, we take a boat ride down the river as we offer a puja – candle and flowers. Such belief and devotion by everyone gathered there – residents and pilgrims.

At Deer Park in Sarnath where the Buddha gave his first teaching, Shantum sits at the base of a tree. As we gather to meditate a group of school children pass by and stop to listen. Just as the Buddha

would have done in his time, Shantum gives a spontaneous dharma talk in Hindi to the children. In Kushinagar where the Buddha died, we meditate at the place of his last teaching, awakening the Buddha seeds within. Walking around the stupa where he was cremated there seemed to be no beginning and no end. Hundreds of candles glow in the dark. We attended the pilgrimage school project where over 2000 children from grades 1 to 8 attend - all in uniform. The girls in crisp blue or red uniforms with white scarfs, dark eyes, dark hair – so beautiful. During an exchange of questions and answers they asked why were we so rich and they so poor? We answered honestly – exploitation, colonialism, industrialism, but they in India are much richer spiritually and we come to expand our own spirituality. They sang songs for us, and we in return sang songs for them. Asked what we could do for them, sewing machines were requested, which we gladly met.

I will always remember a young girl by the roadside carrying a heavy load on her head. She was so tiny, the load so big. We played a game of raising eyebrows back and forth. She smiled and laughed out loud. She was lovely. My heart opened wide. All the children playing, all the children working. Mother India, alive, working her magic. Returning home, I am much more aware of our excesses – excessive use of hydro and water let alone our amassing of materialistic goods. I reflect daily on my experiences in India. My reflections continue to shatter my perceptions.

Shattered Perceptions – Pilgrimage Steps

Shattered perceptions. Who am I?
 Perceptions of self being washed away
 Like the impermanent nature of my foot print on the
 river's bed.
 Washed away by the icy cold waters of the morn.
 Waters now warmed by the afternoon sun.
 Each step unraveling another layer.
 Each step taking me closer to my ancestral roots.
 Each step taking me one step closer to God.

Plum Village - through Scenes and Songs

Vivian Dickie

Plum Village, the monastic community founded by Thich Nhat Hanh is situated not far from Bordeaux, France and consists of several hamlets scattered throughout the countryside amid vineyards and plum trees. As picturesque as this part of the world is with its Mediterranean architecture, 'Plum Village' is the experience rather than the place. For me, the experience started at Manchester airport, UK, as I was waiting in line to check my baggage for the flight to Bordeaux. A lady also waiting noticed the tag on my bag, which said Plum Village. She told me that she was Italian and had been on a retreat with Thay in Italy; so we had an interesting talk while we waited for our respective flights as we had much in common.

Arriving in Bordeaux, I took a bus to the train station to board a train for St. Foy la Grande where (hopefully) I would be met by Plum Village transport. The train consisted of only two carriages that filled up at Bordeaux, so when it stopped at another station and many more people got on, the train was packed like a cattle car. The driver refused to proceed unless people got off, which they refused to do, so in a temperature of 40 C with high humidity we sat for an hour while the driver and passengers argued. Amid this confusion, another Plum Village experience occurred. As I sat quietly, breathing mindfully, I looked around and noticed a number of other people behaving similarly. I felt sure that they too must be going to Plum Village and indeed they were. So I met up with ten other retreatants on the train, much to my relief. We arrived at Plum Village late and weary, but the nuns and staff were most welcoming and it felt good to be there.

Thay gives two dharma talks on three or four mornings each week. Everyone from each of the hamlets gathers where Thay is speaking. On the first morning this was at Upper Hamlet. So after breakfast we walked from Lower Hamlet where I was staying, which takes about 50 minutes. While we were waiting in the meditation hall for Thay to

arrive, the monastics taught us a song called 'The Mind Can Go In a Thousand Directions.' This simple little song helped to bring the six hundred-or-so retreatants together as a community and was a favourite for the whole retreat. Before one of his dharma talks Thay asked us all to sing a song 'Cookie of Childhood.' He joined in the singing too. His talk that day was based on his memory of eating a cookie when he was a child and seeing the interconnectedness of all things in it. I found this song evoked some deep childhood memories for me also.

On Sunday evening of the first week, there was a full moon festival in Upper Hamlet. We gathered on a field looking over a valley towards a hillside. The atmosphere was party-like. We had formed some good friendships by then, especially in our family groups, and after the quiet orderliness of the daily routine we were ready for a little revelry. We sat on the grass with our snacks and tea while the children put on entertainment for us – mindful songs and skits. The most enjoyable part was when a man from Belgium played a tune on the Flemish bagpipes, which have a gentle haunting sound, and the children sang a wonderful song that he had written called 'Let's Walk Together Mindfully.' This was a big hit right away. Everyone wanted to learn it, so we all sang it a number of times.

As darkness fell, the moon, as if on cue, rose large and red above the hillside illuminating the chateaux atop the hill, a truly memorable sight. On leaving Upper Hamlet for the walk back, it was time for Noble Silence, which is from 10pm until after breakfast. But as we walked in the moonlight that catchy song was still with us and it would burst forth every so often (even from monastics) then we would all remind each other to shhhh!

There is magic at Plum Village ... good things happen. On Lazy Day, I went to meet the bagpipe player, who wanted his song written out in musical notation. I said I would do it, but having no manuscript paper with me, I suggested that we go to

The mind can go in a 1,000 directions

The mind can go in a Thou-sand di-rec-tions But on this low-ly path I walk in peace
with each step a gen-tle wind blows with each step a flow-er blooms

COOKIE OF CHILDHOOD (Tune is Fairest Lord Jesus)

① coo-kie of child-hood sweeter than song, bird's song, tast-ing of wheat and sky and sun
each piece a plea-sure each taste a trea-sure cookie of child-hood has just be-gun

② Walking in the woodlands
Working with my good hands
Touching the wheat and earth and dew.
Now is my childhood
Here is my cookie,
This is the whole
that I share with you.

③ cookie of childhood
sweeter than a songbird's song
Tasting of wheat and sky and sun
Each piece a pleasure
Each taste a treasure
cookie of childhood and I
are one.

Let's Walk together mindfully

I am a cloud I am the blue sky I am a bird spreading out his wings
I am a flower I am the sunshine I am the earth receiving her seeds.
And I am free when my heart is open yes I am free when my mind is clear
Dear Sis-ters Dear Bro-thers let's walk to-gether mind-ful-ly.

the room where the piano is just in case we would find some. There we came across a guy writing music on a whole pad of manuscript paper. He was a composer and he quickly and professionally wrote out the tune and it was given to Thay. The magic happened again when a friend remarked that she wished for some yogurt... a couple of minutes later someone gave her some. One of the good things that happened for me was that the song I wrote - "International Anthem" - gave me the opportunity to talk to many interesting people. I asked friends of different nationalities if they would translate it into their language; and now copies of it have gone far and wide.

Plum Village doesn't end when you leave there; it has an ongoing effect. It made me realize that I would like to live in a mindfulness practice community. I would love to explore the possibility of creating such a place for lay practitioners in the Ottawa area. So if you would be interested in discussing this I would love to hear from you.

The Five Mindfulness Trainings Transmission

Christina Eggarhos

"Abundant Essence of the Source". This is the Dharma name that is written on my Mindfulness Trainings Certificate. When I read this, I think of how far I have come in the last two years. I am Abundant Essence of the Source! This name and the certificate are some of the visible effects the 5 Mindfulness Trainings have had on my life. When Ian approached me about going through the 5 Mindfulness Trainings and Ceremony I hesitated. Am I ready? Am I worthy? Am I really serious about the Three Jewels:

I take refuge in the Buddha

The one who shows me the way in this life

I take refuge in the Dharma

The way of understanding and love

I take refuge in the Sangha

The community that lives in harmony and awareness

Happily, I realized I was very serious about The Three Jewels and living by the principals of The 5 Mindfulness Trainings. In fact, it has saved me from falling back into a life of illusion and suffering. A certificate only confirms my dedication to the Sangha and more importantly, to myself.



The ceremony was an affair of both solemn and joyous qualities. I was encouraged by the number of others who joined me. At first, I felt nervous because I was unfamiliar with the ritual. However, Ian and Carolyn led the way with their usual kindness and assurance. After the 5 Mindfulness Training Transmission, I was given my certificate by a senior member of the Sangha. My friend Vivian Dickie presented me with the certificate and I felt very.....honored. The evening solidified my resolve to continue this path of Buddhism; but more importantly to continue my practice of living Mindfully and always in the Present.

Non-violent Communication

A Methodology for Following the Fourth Mindfulness Training

Marvin Schwartz and Roberta Wall

The fourth mindfulness training is one that we have worked with as a couple, over and over. How do we say only things of which we are sure, words that won't cause the relationship or community to break, only words that inspire and build confidence, and yet, speak truthfully about strong feelings, hurts, and needs that we have?

The method called Non-violent Communication (NVC) is a concrete vocabulary and methodology for doing just that. As an example, we recently had a rather difficult conversation involving money, trust, and where we will live. Big issues! We were both left in very difficult states of mind. Both of us went through a number of emotions, anger, frustration, disconnection, despondency and sadness among others. This continued on for two days. Our mindfulness helped us to be mindful of the emotions even as the emotions thrashed about inside and our commitment to practicing the mindfulness trainings left us both hungry to communicate lovingly and positively.

Marvin: Gradually, by sitting with these emotions they released some of their hold. But I went to the practice of non-violent communication to both change how I related to my feelings and how I would talk to Roberta about my feelings.

Non-violent communication (www.cnvc.org), a process that has empathy at its root, was and continues to be developed by Marshall Rosenberg. Empathy forms the basis for the non-violent model of relating that requires deep listening and deep speaking. On the face of it, this model is very simple. In practice, it requires great skill and much practice. The model has four stages: 1. non-judgemental observation, 2. feelings that arise, 3. universal needs, and 4. requested doable action. The fourth stage comes from a place of nonattachment; one must be prepared not to get what is requested.

While learning the model, one spends time learning about the range of emotions and needs which give great depth to our lives.

Marvin: Returning to my conversation with Roberta, I was able to see that my reactions were the result of unmet needs. The triggering of these unmet needs could be understood as the watering of seeds. Once I saw that I had unmet needs, I was able to let go of watering my unwholesome seeds and to reflect on my needs. I could also appreciate that my reactions had watered unwholesome seeds in Roberta. More importantly, I could recognize that she also had unmet needs. When our needs are not getting met, then both of us are employing unsuccessful strategies for getting our needs met.

A basic principle of non-violent communication is that needs, because they are universal, cannot be in conflict. With this level of understanding, we were able to focus on what our needs are in relationship and then move on to strategies. Strategies can be in conflict. As we continue to work with non-violent communication, our communication continues to improve. Our ability to listen deeply and to speak from a place of compassion improves. We are also quicker to recognize our unskillful speech and have an increased clarity about how to listen.

Roberta: To communicate with my loved ones, I integrate beginning anew practices taught by Thay with NVC. For example, my reply to Marvin in our discussion is:

My dear Marvin,

I so appreciate your generosity in time and energy in coming to visit me (flower watering); it really meets my need for a reliable, committed partner (NVC asks that we explain to the other how our praise meets our own need, so that it isn't a motivational tool such as guilt.)

When I hear you say how difficult it is to encounter the border officials every time you come to see me in New York, and how hard life is in the States for Canadians because of financial inequity (observation), I feel fearful and apprehensive

(feelings) because I want us to have a steady and easy life together in New York, which allows you to keep close ties to your family, friends and roots in Canada (needs). I am concerned that the difficulties you talk to me about the border and money will lead you to choose to not commit to this.

My specific, doable, request is: are you willing to commit to a time deadline by which you will tell me whether you will settle in New York with me in our own place?

The Essential Point in the teaching of the Buddha is, on the one hand, equating an undisciplined state of mind with suffering and unenlightened existence, and, on the other hand, a disciplined state of mind with happiness, enlightenment or spiritual freedom. This is the essential point

From a commentary by his Holiness the Dalai Lama on the *Eight Verses of Mind Training*, given in Washington, D.C. in 1998

The Pine Gate Sangha

...practices Engaged Buddhism in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh, with a commitment to peace and environmental activism, quality of life issues and mindfulness practice in schools. The sangha is part of two citizen coalitions to protect the environment and to promote peace. With their Friends for Peace they helped organize the Peace Song Circle and Peace Prayer Day in Ottawa – annual events each spring and fall. Check this out at:

www.ianprattis.com/friends/friendsforpeace.htm

Program:

Tuesdays 7.00pm – 8.30pm: Qi-Gong Class & Intro to Meditation. Class fee

Thursdays 7.00pm – 9.00pm: Meditation and Study, tea afterwards. By donation

First Saturdays 5.00pm – 7.00pm: Dharma Talk and Pot Luck Supper By donation

Peace Prayer Day: Saturday October 4, 2003, Alumni Park at Carleton U. By donation

Other Activities: Hikes, Sweat Lodges, Pilgrimages, Days of Mindfulness, Picnics, Talks.

Annual Retreat: (see page 17)

Location of Pine Gate Meditation Hall: 1252 Rideout Crescent, Ottawa K2C 2X7

Directions: In Ottawa take Queensway to Woodroffe South exit; Go to Baseline Rd; RT on Baseline; RT on Highgate (next lights); RT on Westbury; LT on Rideout and follow the Crescent round to 1252, which is always lit up with Christmas lights in winter and is full of flowers in summer.

The resident teacher is Dharmacharya Ian Prattis - True Body of Wisdom. Ian is a poet, scholar, peace and environmental activist. As a professor at Carleton University he teaches courses on Ecology, Symbols, Globalization and Consciousness. As an ordained meditation teacher he encourages people to find their true nature so that humanity and the world may be renewed. He has trained with masters in Buddhist, Vedic and Shamanic traditions. The meditation teacher is not separate from the professor or the global citizen.

Contacts: 613 726 0881, iprattis@cyberus.ca for current program. For further information please go to: www.ianprattis.com/pinegate All welcome.

Lotus Flowers Sing in Lower Hamlet

Ian Prattis

During the Summer Retreat of 2001 I found a way to put the Three Refuges to good use in a totally unexpected manner. I was staying in Lower Hamlet with my friend Carolyn, and we had asked Sr. Jina to perform a wedding ceremony for us on July 21, 2001 – the same day as the Ancestor's Festival. I was a family head with the Magic Sponges – a wonderful pot washing team drawn from eighteen different nationalities during the four weeks of the Summer Retreat. Carolyn was a family head with the Fresh Eyes cleaning up team, and we both had a

wonderful time working with our respective families.

However, it was not always smooth sailing. One evening after the last sitting meditation in the Dharma Nectar Temple, I noticed that the work of another family was not done, so I decided to do it. Only I had a totally wrong attitude. That particular day I was very tired and became a little irritated with the incomplete work, as it made the work of the Magic Sponges a little bit difficult. So I began to do the unfinished work, but with tiredness and irritation as the source of my working. I was not drawing on a happy, mindful heart at that time.

The tiredness and irritation came out in unmindful speech to one member of the team who was turning up late to complete the work. As soon as these tired words came out, I knew they were unmindful and I apologized and received generous forgiveness. My thoughts, however, did not clear or become peaceful. I knew I was on a roll, and knew that someone else would soon receive my irritation and tiredness through unmindful speech. I knew I had to come to a Stop and take care of the irritation and tiredness that was at the root of my unmindful speech. I took off my apron, and did slow walking meditation to the lotus pond, attaching my awareness to each in-breath and each out-breath. The slow walk from the kitchen to the lotus pond took about thirty minutes. Once there I sat on a bench and had a talk with myself. During this conversation in my mind, I asked a question.

Why am I here in Lower Hamlet?

There was a long silence. Then the answer came from deep within:

To Take Deeper Refuge in the Three Gems – Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

As I took notice of this voice within, all the irritation and heaviness lifted and I felt suddenly so free. Then, I heard the lotus flowers sing in Lower Hamlet for the second time that day.

Early in the morning Carolyn and I had spent some time by the lotus pond. Carolyn loved to take photographs and had a wonderful series of lotus flowers in her camera. We were also completing our Beginning Anew prior to the wedding ceremony in a week's time. As we sat by the lotus pond, rain clouds formed and heavy rain started to fall. I put up my big red umbrella and we stayed sitting there while the rain grew stronger. It was quite beautiful. We were dry and safe beneath the big red umbrella, totally silent. We felt one with the rain, the ground and the lotus pond. There was nothing else. As the rainstorm softened and became a gentle shower, we heard the raindrops falling slowly on the lotus flowers. That was when we heard the lotus flowers sing.

In the evening, after hearing the lotus flowers sing again, I returned to the unfinished work and went about it with a happy heart. My friend in the other work team and I smiled to one another.

Before sleeping that night, two lines floated into my mind:

***“In the Dharma Rain
I see Lotus Flowers sing in Lower Hamlet.”***

Pine Gate Sangha Annual Fall Retreat, 2003

**with
Dharmacharya Ian Prattis**

“Going Forward in the Twenty First Century”

FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 26 – SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 28, 2003

**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 9.00pm. A light supper will be served during registration on Friday, between 6.00pm and 8.00pm. The retreat finishes mid afternoon on Sunday, after lunch, with a sharing circle and a closing ceremony. In between are dharma talks, sutra readings, exercises, walking meditation, and 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 deep compassion. From that energy we can go forward together in the twenty-first century to reconstruct the world.

COST: \$150.00 – 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 25 participants is required for the Retreat to break even. A 50% deposit secures your place at the retreat.

BRING: Meditation cushion; sheets, pillowcase & towel; walking shoes; notebook

TENTING: This is an option if you prefer it.

BUGS: Very few bugs at the end of September!!!

FOOD: Catered by our friend Tanya Wodicka, the food is delicious vegetarian – a gourmet treat.

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 Schedule Sept – Dec 2003 | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Thursday Sept 4 7.00pm – 9.00pm | Touching the Earth Ceremony |
| SATURDAY Sept 6 10.00am – 1.00pm | Fall Hike and Picnic Gather at Parking Lot #7, Kingsmere, Gatineau Park |
| Tuesday Sept 9 7.00pm – 8.30pm | Qi-Gong 8 week class Contact Carolyn at 726 0881 |
| Thursday Sept 11 7.00pm – 9.00pm | Lamp Transmission Dharma Talk, January 2003 “Waves into Water” |
| Thursday Sept 18 7.00pm – 9.00pm | Practising as an Ambassador Thich Nhat Hanh, Summer Retreat, July 18, 2003 |
| Thursday Sept 25 7.00pm – 9.00pm | Walking Meditation on Pinecrest Creek trails |
| FRIDAY Sept 26 – 28 | Annual Retreat “The Barn” Retreat Centre, near Wakefield |
| Thursday Oct 2 7.00pm – 9.00pm | Deep Relaxation Practice |
| SATURDAY Oct 4 10.00am – 4.00pm | PEACE PRAYER DAY Alumni Park, Carleton University |
| Thursday Oct 9 7.00pm – 9.00pm | Five Mindfulness Trainings Recitation |
| Thursday Oct 16 7.00pm – 9.00pm | Pot Luck Thanksgiving Dinner Pine Gate Meditation Hall |
| Thursday Oct 23 7.00pm – 9.00pm | Questions and Answers with Thich Nhat Hanh St Andrews, Scotland Retreat, June 2003 |
| Thursday Oct 30 7.00pm – 9.00pm | Noble Eightfold Path 1 Thich Nhat Hanh: Eye of the Buddha Retreat, June 2000 |
| SATURDAY Nov 1 10.00am – 1.00pm | Hike in Gatineau Park. Mindful Picnic by waterfalls |
| Thursday Nov 6 7.00pm – 9.00pm | Noble Eightfold Path 2 Thich Nhat Hanh: Eye of the Buddha Retreat, June 2000 |
| Thursday Nov 13 7.00pm – 9.00pm | Guest Presentation |
| Thursday Nov 20 7.00pm – 9.00pm | The Four Modes of Expression Thich Nhat Hanh: Eye of the Buddha Retreat, June 2000 |
| Thursday Nov 27 7.00pm – 9.00pm | Questions and Answers with Thich Nhat Hanh St Andrews, Scotland Retreat, June 2003 |
| Thursday Dec 4 7.00pm – 9.00pm | Four Right Efforts 1 Thich Nhat Hanh: Summer Retreat 2001 |
| SATURDAY Dec 6 5.00pm – 7.30pm | Dharma Talk: The Buddha’s Teachings on Love Pot Luck vegetarian supper; Christmas carols by the fire |
| Thursday Dec 11 7.00pm – 9.00pm | Four Right Efforts 2 Thich Nhat Hanh: Summer Retreat 2001 |
| Thursday Dec 18 7.00pm – 9.00pm | Beginning Anew Ceremony |
| Wednesday Dec 31 9.00pm – midnight | NEW YEAR’S Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings Recitation Pine Gate Meditation Hall – Whoosh!! |