



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.

Air Notes

Ian Prattis

The element Air brings, to the external world, a dynamic of thought that can be reflected as ideology.

The ideological underpinnings of capitalism lie shattered all around us. Yet can we glean the meaning of it all? Do we realize that new models and paradigms for social and economic forms are essential for our well-being and very survival? Or are we mere road kill 'midst the imploding global economic train wreck, or worse - a failed genetic experiment? Or is it the case that we are actually an ideological crisis opening the door for change whereby economic laws become consistent with ecological laws? Before that possibility can emerge we must allow our-out-of-control civilization to fail. Only then can it change. If we continue to prop up the old forms with bailout after bailout, we will never discover the genesis that could have been. In other words, out of date, greed-driven automakers and financial brokers have to be allowed to die or learn to build energy-efficient cars and deal with a new form of market integrity. I understand capital as an amoral instrument with a strict and punishing logic – maximum profits at minimum cost – that has no regard for damage to the ecosystems or populations it affects. It is not

designed to have ethics and responsibility built into it as essential features. We must rely on human intention to provide the ethics and moral restraints to curb the blatant excesses of turbo capitalism.

The same old? - no longer. That seems to be the “promise” of President Obama. From his searing address to America about race to his convincing election win on November 4, 2008 - Barack Obama has liberated the consciousness of not only Americans, but worldwide, so people no longer feel that they have to stay with the “same old.” The meltdown of financial institutions and the threat of Global Warming are indeed oppressive burdens – but they are not the problem. The problem is the underlying mindset that establishes the conditions for both of these crises to manifest. If we continue to focus only on Global Warming and financial meltdown, we remain caught by symptoms. They are the end result of a life-threatening malady – our individualistic, turbo-capitalist, consumerist, unsustainable and mindless patterns of living. The planet cannot sustain these patterns and its ecology is paramount; economic systems are simply subsystems of a much bigger entity – the environment. We have replaced the ecosphere with our own mental formations – making of it an *egosphere*. That which was Reverential and Sacred has been turned into Referential and Mundane. The mind that drives the pathology is the problem and it is clear that we need new social and economic forms. The move towards eco-communities does not give a total solution but does provide optimism for displaying a different mindset. As such, it represents movement to a changed value set that serves as a forerunner for making world views consistent with ecological ones.

Such optimism rests on our moving swiftly from a culture of greed to a culture of sustainability. Our greed is pathological, feeding a culture of entitlement that takes us all over the cliff. Our desires are not for items – just for more “desire.” The greed virus wrecks families, relationships and society. The notion that greed is good for the economy – inherent in many political and economic

philosophies - is a gross fallacy, as greed demolishes equity and erodes freedom. Unfettered greed undermines all considerations of ethics, morality and social responsibility. The monster created – the culture of greed and entitlement – has to be stopped in its tracks so we can reverse our direction. We need to rely on wise teachings about ecology and the mind. From the Buddha, we have a science of mind and how to change it. From the Wisdom of the Elders, we have clear guidelines for ecosystem balance that is hard wired into our brains due to the fact that 98% of our evolution was based on ecosystem balance as foragers. We have to learn how to re-access what we already know. It is a matter of organic gardening in the mind – to create a new consciousness by taming the mindset that propels us into mindless greed and its knock-on consequences.

We must change our mindsets, so that we have astute awareness about the consequences of our actions. Such awareness will ripple through to future generations enabling a sustainable earth culture to emerge. There is internal work to do. We come to a stop with the tools of meditation from different traditions, look deeply into our maladaptive patterns and have the courage to throw them away. Being totally present, heart wide open is all that is required. I encourage the reader to take that leap into the realm of a Spiritual Warrior, as that is what our world now requires. No more small pictures of ourselves, no more egomaniacs posing as political and spiritual leaders – just spiritual warriors crossing racial, political and class boundaries, choosing to walk hand in hand through the early part of this century: to serve the planet; to be of benefit to all sentient beings.

A farmer came across a wild horse in the mountains and captured it. Once the horse was tethered to a tree he placed a bridle round the noble creature's nose and climbed up onto its powerful, broad back. The horse took off like a thunderbolt and exploded with speed, racing through villages and over the plains. One villager shouted out to the rider –

“Where are you going so fast?” The farmer shouted back “I don’t know – better ask the horse!”

We are that farmer and the horse galloping away to unknown places is our wild, greed-driven mind. We have to restrain that wild mind, by putting ropes round the horse first to calm, then to tame the wild creature. That is what our practice of mindfulness does to the wild mind, whatever the tradition. We use instruments of breath, of ceremony, of being aware of our actions, speech and thought. Our life experiences are the laboratory where we can consciously choose to cultivate compassion and wholesomeness within our heart and mind. Then the wildness diminishes, and the dark afflictions in our mind dissolve. The wild horse is transformed into a trusted companion.

This is my meditation for Gaia; a good reason for being on the planet at this time. I remain confident and optimistic about making the world a better place environmentally and socially. Take the steps to change your mind. Be bold and confident. Take care of the environment you inhabit and the environment you build with your mind. Create new forms based on love, caring and sustainability. This is the new dynamic of thought, reflected in a new ideology of being and caring for the earth and one another.

Otherwise the crocodile will eat us all up!

This is taken from Ian’s new book on eco-communities “Earth My Body, Water My Blood” to be published later in 2009.



Project Kaisei Launches Mission to the Plastic Vortex

Environmental organization prepares to address the problem of floating plastic waste in the ocean.

(Hong Kong, April 9, 2009) Project Kaisei, an environmental organization that has been established to address the problem of floating plastic waste in the Pacific Ocean, has announced it plans to embark on a 70 day expedition, between June and August 2009, to examine the Plastic Vortex, an area of the Pacific Ocean containing an estimated 4,000,000 tons of floating plastic waste in a mass that is twice the size of Texas, over 1,000 times bigger than Hong Kong, or nearly four times as large as Japan.

Sometimes referred to as the ‘Eighth Continent’, this plastic waste in the oceans is killing marine life, entering our food chain and growing daily. In the main seafood consuming nations of the world, which includes Hong Kong, China and Japan, the issue of plastics in our oceans, and the toxins they carry with them, is cause for growing health concerns.

The objectives of the return voyage from San Francisco to Hawaii are to study and document the plastic mass in the ocean and test catch methods for removing the plastic particles.

“The water in our oceans is like blood for our planet,” said Doug Woodring, ocean and conservation expert from the Project Kaisei Hong Kong Team. “If we continue to fill it with toxins, such as plastic, it will be to the detriment of all life

on earth. We feel strongly that the presence of the floating mass of plastic in the oceans needs to be brought to everyone's attention."

The Mission also hopes to understand what is needed to undertake an eventual large scale clean-up of the waste material and test the technology for conversion into fuel, an economically viable by-product. If the Mission proves successful, and large volumes of plastic can be captured and processed, then a full clean-up operational plan will be initiated within 18 months.

Sylvia Earle 'Explorer-in-Residence' National Geographic, Mission Programs, commented, "Solving a problem starts with knowing that you have one. Project Kaisei vividly shows how discarded plastics are clogging the ocean, causing a major problem for the planet's vital 'blue heart,' entangling marine life and insidiously killing as it accumulates in the food chain, from tiny plankton to great whales. Best of all, the mission highlights hope with ideas for positive action."

The Mission is being organized under the Ocean Voyages Institute, which is a non-profit organization devoted to the preservation of the Maritime Arts and Arts and Sciences and the Ocean Environment. Ocean Voyages Institute is a "501C3" California Registered Non-Profit Organization.

Project Kaisei is currently looking to raise US\$2,000,000 for the Mission from individual donations, family foundations and corporations.

The Mission will be supported by a comprehensive marketing campaign including a professionally produced documentary for National Geographic's international distribution, educational outreach, and Pacific Rim community support in order to raise global awareness of the Plastic Vortex's existence.

About Project Kaisei

Project Kaisei consists of a team of innovators, ocean lovers, sailors, scientists, sports enthusiasts and environmentalists who have come together with a common purpose. To study how to capture plastic waste in the ocean and how to capture, detoxify and recycle it into diesel fuel. This first research Mission, scheduled for the summer of 2009, will be critical to understanding the logistics that will be needed to make a successful clean-up operation possible as some of the technology required for such a feat has never been utilised under oceanic conditions.

Project Kaisei will examine the largest area of the Plastic Vortex, an ocean vortex, situated to the North East of Hawaii, and approximately five days by boat from the State or from San Francisco. The Mission will consist of two "swathes" through the Plastic Vortex, with the aim to remove approximately 40 tons of plastic from the ocean for experimental recycling.

For more information please visit:

<http://www.projectkaisei.org/>

Marvin's editorial note: Please also check out the TED website for a talk given by Capt. Charles Moore of the Algalita Marine Research Foundation who first discovered the Great Pacific Garbage Patch -- an endless floating waste of plastic trash. [TED Talks: Captain Moore on Oceans of Plastic](#)

Real Stuff: The Sangha in Action Bob Allen

Bob Allen (True Peace) is a member of the Order of Interbeing and leads the Fish Lake Sangha in Orlando Florida.

Over ten years ago my wife Pam was hosting weekly sessions in our home with a number of her friends. They were studying A Course In Miracles

and I teasingly asked if a man might be allowed to join them. Not only did they graciously permit that, but I was invited to offer a talk. That was the beginning of Fish Lake Sangha, although at the time we didn't know it as we hadn't even heard Thay teach yet. Today we're like many Sanghas - working with a core of a few people who are dedicated to practicing together and willing to spend their time to build the mindfulness of our community. But why do we do this? Why in a culture that is dominated by a pervasive sense of time-poverty do we carve out two hours, three hours or more every week to sit, walk, breathe and study the dharma together? After all, it doesn't make the value of your 401-K increase or refinance the mortgage. It won't guarantee you won't be laid off. It can even be quite unsettling to see the unwholesome seeds in our store consciousness once we are quiet! As is almost always the case, the Sangha itself has answered the question beautifully and deeply.

As we embarked on a course of study and practice around the essential teachings - the Four Noble Truths, The Noble Eightfold Path and The Five Mindfulness Trainings, one thing became more and more pronounced - *this stuff actually works!* Practice brings stability and happiness to our lives. Not just on the cushion or during walking practice in the woods but in crowded traffic on Interstate 4 and during confrontational meetings with bankers, upset customers and anxious children. One of our practice brothers made a point of saying "I don't know when it happened but I know I am more like my real self more of the time."

Our next examination began to look deeply at the Five Aggregates and the Eight kinds of consciousness. This is slippery territory - fraught with the danger of being caught by the jargon and intellectual form of the teachings themselves. It took weeks, sometimes repeating material we had already looked at many times. It took a commitment to deep listening, as sangha members expressed their frustration. During this period, we held our winter day-of-mindfulness and hosted dharma

teacher Ian Prattis and his wife Carolyn Hill from Ottawa. Over two weeks of working with the teachings on consciousness, enveloped in the energy created by 50 people all practicing together on that one day, another answer became clear: *it not only works, its catching!* We had begun to experience the energy of mindfulness spreading and it required no "formal" training, just our own true presence. Sangha members were noticing that everyday encounters were richer and that extremely difficult issues, including the tragic media exploitation of the death of a child in our community, could be met with clear eyes and a steady heart.

Now, as we continue our practice together and have begun to look deeply at the paramitas, we are seeing yet another bounty of fruit: *we are not alone!* Ian's time in Orlando not only included dharma talks but open public discussions at universities of how our mindfulness can heal the planet. Four other Sanghas in Korean Zen, Theravada and Tibetan traditions have now met every week with us in planning a new Change Your Mind Day for April 18th on the theme of Changing Times - Changing Minds. It won't only be Buddhist meditation either. Many friends from other traditions have embraced the effort. This is really only the beginning as the Sangha leaders have all agreed to give talks to each other's groups and share retreats and social action responsibilities over the next year. It will be a powerful year at a time when our country and our world need the power of our mindfulness.

Thay often has said that the Buddha is embodied today in the Sangha. At Fish Lake, it's very clear. Our answers about why we practice emerged from the practice itself. They are simple and forthright. Practice works and it makes us happier. Our happiness and steadiness spreads easily to others and that has helped create a transformational force in our community. This is certainly worth every moment we give to it.

Gratitude**Anne Fleming****The Muse:***Some are kissing mothers and some are scolding Mothers, but it is love just the same...*

Pearl S. Buck – seen in 'O' Magazine

I am grateful to my mother:

For the gift of space that my mother made within herself for me to become the presence I am.

For this body – all its cells, organs and systems – the gift of countless generations through my mother, that allows me to present myself as a unique self from the world of her creation to the world of my creating:

- For these eyes and what my first environment under her direction guided me to see.
- For these hands, and the skills she encouraged me to develop that allow me to nurture and extend myself to the world.
- For these feet, from their first tentative and eagerly attended steps, to the many independent directions they have taken me on my journey in life.
- For this voice, which I can choose to use to create peace and harmony or discord and frustration, whose language and vocabulary I first learned at her knee.
- For this mind, nourished, protected and guided by the power of her responsible care while it was developing, so that as an adult I may offer the same gift to those I cherish.

For the gift of daily routine whose early form was begun within my mother's home.

For the moral grounding learned from her that governs much of my decision-making.

For the benefits and risks of reaching out to others in times of pleasure and distress I witnessed by her example, that allow me to grow stronger in myself and more supportive of others.

For the necessary friction the growth of my life created between us that offered us both new possibilities of being.

For the conversation of criticism and praise I live within, an acknowledgement of my mother's voice tirelessly working to mold me into her vision of perfection.

For steadfastness and loyalty, for the strength I know I have to overcome adversity, and for the determination I express daily to be true to myself; values that I witnessed her living every day of her life.

For the memories that are the foundation of my life, initially spun by my mother and intricately woven over the years with those who have shared my experiences of joy and pain.

What Is A Nice Sufi Girl Doing At Pine Gate?**Rabia Wilox**

The short story is we are all one, so let's enjoy the journey together. ☺ The long story is something else. My husband Hasan and I had heard through a friend that the group at Pine Gate Sangha was studying *A New Earth* by Eckhart Tolle, and that strongly appealed to both of us. I'd read *A New Earth* and followed Eckhart on the Oprah's World-Wide Web broadcast. Fascinating stuff!

The two greatest gifts I'd received from that ten week event were:

- 1) The deep yet simple thought: "Be still and know that I am God."
- 2) The question: "Am I Breathing?"

That's it – for me, anyway. I was guided to be aware of the sensations in my nostrils as I breathe in and out and to be still enough to open and receive all my inner wisdom and knowledge. These are the greatest tools that I joyfully carry. And they don't cost a cent! I could be stranded anywhere with nothing but this body/mind/heart of mine, and these wonderful offerings of Eckhart Tolle's ancient wisdom would take care of me until help or death of my physical body arrived.

Pine Gate Sangha offers a time, a place and a stillness to go within, in my own way, with my own path. I feel fully supported, accepted and loved by Ian and Carolyn from the moment I walk into their home to the moment I choose to leave. I appreciate their openness to embracing all the folks who come – all walks of life, all religious backgrounds – igniting the development of a spiritual practice and mindfulness.

When I was writing my first book *Under the Titanic* – a powerful and heart-touching story of history and self-discovery – there came a time to connect with some of the souls whose bodies had been recovered from the sinking of *Titanic* by my 24 year young grandfather over ninety six years ago. With the kind assistance of my dear sister Dini, a renowned psychic in the Muskoka Lakes Region north of Toronto, who offers exceptional perceptions into all matters, we decided it was time to contact the *Unknown Child* and millionaire John Jacob Astor – two of the many bodies that my grandfather pulled out of the icy North Atlantic waters.

John Jacob Astor communicated these words of wisdom to Dini when I asked the psychic realms this question: "John, are there any insights or suggestions you wish to offer to the ones who are reading this book?" He indicated the following:

"In this time of tragedy, people came together, but only for fleeting moments, as the scramble heightened. I watched in awe of the powers that be, and how one short space in time can strip away the core of security we thought we had. I had more security financially than anyone on the ship, and it meant nothing." He paused in reflection and then continued, "If I were to say any words from reflecting on this disturbing event, it would be this:

**Rethink how you look at your life.
Make sure you have a secure core.**

Pine Gate Sangha reminds us of building that "secure core" by offering techniques to continue to develop a daily spiritual practice, becoming awake, conscious, and mindful. When the moments of joyousness are present we breathe in and out knowing we have a secure, balanced centre to be in harmony with; and, when moments of disruption and discomfort appear, we breath in and out, being with that same still, centered space – the space of love.

Awake. Yet still. Breathe in. And out. Ah-h-h-h-h.

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Environmental Activist at Full Sail University, Orlando

Christine Baker



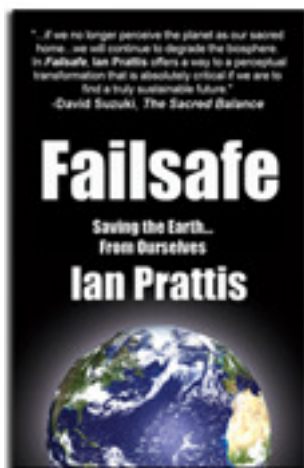
Ian Prattis

"I like to appeal to the younger generation because my generation has not left a healthy planet for them. They're inheriting a mess."

Canadian environmental activist, anthropologist and Zen teacher Ian Prattis will [speak on campus](#) about his new book, [Failsafe](#), in the FS3B Auditorium. The talk is a great opportunity. Failsafe analyzes and then offers a philosophical solution to two crises facing the planet: the world economic recession and global warming. According to Prattis, these issues are two sides of the same coin and are really not the problem.

"The problem is the underlying mindset that's allowed both of these to emerge," said Prattis. "What the book investigates is the nature of that mindset, how to change it. How do we move from a culture of greed to a culture of sustainability?" According to Prattis, the question to ask is not, 'Can we fix the planet?' It's, 'Can we fix ourselves?'

Failsafe describes how human ignorance will rule until the global situation deteriorates to a breaking point. This breaking point will then act as a catalyst, activating consciousness so



it is propelled into expansion, deliberation and change. Along with metaphysical solutions, Prattis argues for concrete steps to be taken to speed environmental conservation efforts.

"We need a Global Marshall Plan," said Prattis, "a totally different way of raising the finances necessary to produce a miracle in world economic structures." Prattis supports the Tobin Tax, which would tax trade on currency across borders. The tax could be used for economic development and environmental research and development projects. Furthermore a Global Marshall Plan would put ethics, morality and responsibility back into the control of capital. It would be environmentally and socially responsible.

"I talk to corporate leaders, and some of them are doing incredible things, but I also argue that some things have to die. The bailout of the auto makers – big mistake," said Prattis. "If that money had been used to foster an eco-tech industrial sector, the building of solar panels, turbines, and retraining auto workers so they're on an assembly line making solar panels – that is an investment in the future, rather than the past. The day of the internal combustion engine is over, for if we use available carbon fuels temperature rise will be a consequence."

Prattis argues in favor of individuals taking practical steps to lower their energy consumption as well, "to recycle, to eco-retrofit their homes, all these sorts of things." He added that he believes that if only two percent of people were to significantly change their consumption habits as well as their mindsets (through meditation), this would create a tipping point toward positive change. "The two percent are the shakers and movers and they'll be the catalysts for widespread change. We have ten years"

"If you think back to the space race, the U.S. went from zero to putting a man on the moon in ten years," said Prattis. "It is possible to do incredible things, but it needs a real determination and a

collective will. The importance of shifting the mindset is absolutely critical.” Prattis said he likes to talk to and inspire young people in particular, since “a lot of people in my generation are really kind of comfortable and stuck.”

Postscript: Prattis spoke to a capacity crowd, mostly students, and the Q & A could have gone on until mid-night. The students at Full Sail were given more than a treat – they got an eye opener plus the practical tools to deal with it.

Walking Meditation

Ian Prattis

We know from our experience of hikes in nature, or neighbourhood walks after dinner, that sudden flashes of insight often arise in concert with our footsteps. We then see clearly how to handle a predicament or solve a problem. Imagine what can happen when we add conscious awareness to our footsteps. When we concentrate on our breath and focus on slow walking, we actually have a brilliant piece of engineering to quiet the mind and body. When we add a third concentration – aware of how our feet touch the earth – we have a meditative practice designed for our times. We focus our mind on the mechanism of each foot touching the earth – heel, then ball of foot, then toe. We slow down even further and with our body – not our intellect or ego – we make a contract with Mother Earth to walk more lightly and leave a smaller footprint. We examine our consumption patterns and energy use and commit to decreasing the size of our ecological footprint. All from walking with awareness, our breath, our legs and noticing how our feet touch the earth.

With this concentrated focus of walking meditation there is very little opportunity for the mind to worry about past events or future anticipations. The meditation keeps us present, here in the moment of being fully alive. It slows us down step by step so that our mind enters silence. We slow down internally with the focus on breath, steps and contact with the earth. This is aided by another

component we can add to walking meditation – a gentle half smile kept on your lips to nurture the peace and silence within. With the deepening of this internal silence, insight naturally occurs.

Walking meditation is a powerful methodology for healing both ourselves and the earth. We start by breathing in and out with full attention to the in-breath and to the out-breath. Coordinating our breath with our steps we breathe in, saying silently to ourselves – “Breathing in” – as we take two or three slow steps. Then as we breathe out, we say – “Breathing out” – as we simultaneously take two or three slow steps. Practice this for several minutes just to get used to the concentration and the co-ordination of breath and steps and be fully aware of breathing in and out, and of walking slowly step by step. Sometimes you will take two steps, sometimes three or four steps, sometimes there will be more steps on the out-breath than on the in-breath. Allow the breath and lungs to find a natural rhythm with your steps. It is the concentration and awareness that matters, not whether you take two or three steps, but do remember to wear a half smile on your lips! If you take two steps with the in-breath, say to yourself –

“Breathing in” (on step 1), “In” (on step 2). If you take three steps on the out-breath, say to yourself –

“Breathing out” (on step 1), “Out” (on step 2), “Out” (on step 3). As you take each step, you can add a concentration that brings you solidly into contact with the earth. Concentrate on your foot touching the ground in this sequence – heel, ball of foot, toe. This particular concentration assists you to be fully with your stepping on the earth, keeping you alert to earth rhythms.

At the university where I used to teach, I would walk from the bus stop and take a detour around the greenhouses of the Botany department and come to the Rideau River that runs along one side of the campus. From there I had a kilometer of riverbank to practice walking meditation before arriving at my office building. It is quite secluded in parts and the river has sets of rapids that greatly enrich my walk.

One section of the path takes my steps through a cedar grove, and I always feel a sacred blessing from these beautiful trees. I slow my walking right down to a three – three rhythm when I enter the cedar grove. The path is never the same, as the seasons change its character. Autumn leaves give way to snowfall as winter leaves her embrace. My clothes and footwear change, yet my steps, breathing and feet touching the earth remain constant. The rustle of autumn leaves is replaced by the crunch of snow and ice, which gives way to the mud and rain of spring before the heat of summer allows me to walk in sandals or barefoot. The birds and foliage change with the seasons, as does the river – iced over in winter, turbulent in the spring and calm in summer and fall. Students with their books and friends congregate by the river when the weather is sunny.

I notice the changes in the seasonal round of nature, yet remain with my breathing, footsteps and the earth – so that I am not drawn into unnecessary thought. It takes me approximately twenty minutes to arrive at my office. I am in a clear, calm state and better able to be of assistance to students and colleagues and bring my own sense of calm and clarity to the university. On leaving the university I retrace my steps of walking meditation along the river before going home, or to appointments in the city. The experience engenders the same calm and clarity. This walk is Paradise, and a constant reminder to me for those occasions when I am not in touch with the earth mother. We do not need to walk on water, or over hot coals.

We simply need to walk on the earth and touch her deeply with our full awareness. That is all that walking meditation is.

Two Poems

Trish Johnson

Watching Water

Watch where the water flows
With simplicity

Only there
Will you come to rest

Acceptance of what is meant to be
Embrace yourself

Love, joy, compassion, equanimity
Freedom breeds clarity

A Prayer for my Daughters

Plant in them seeds
of beauty's internal buds

Help their willowy stems grow strong
like trunks of trees

With branches that knowingly sway
in the storm or the breeze

Weathering seasons, accepting what is

Shedding tears like leaves,
trusting to bloom again

Bursting forth with flower and scent,
attracting birds & bees

To participate in and precipitate the
meaning of life

To know Peace

Mud and Gems

Jo-Anne Staciuk

Daily I witness all that is
the muddiness as well as the
gems of clarity that lie
beneath the surface

This practice of being with whatever is
pen on paper
experiencing the fullness of one breath
watching a bird's use of wind
under it's wings

Attention in the moment creates
a doorway into the
inner spiral of self
to hear what the soul speaks.

Om Shanti,

Algonquin Peak

Leigh Widdowson

Setting out, our packs felt light –
the summit hardly in view
as the clouds above embraced the
highest peaks in their blanket of grey.

Smooth and rounded rocks saved our feet
as stepping stones across the creeks and up the falls
the constant rushing of water
enveloping our thoughts with its sound.

The evergreens stood strong and tall
against the new green of leaves
filled with fresh sunlight of the summer
though none shone down on us this day.

I followed you along- across this beautiful land
as you stone hopped the pools,
splashed in the rushing waterfalls
and climbed the slippery rock faces
with confidence.

As the trees grew smaller and smaller
and the dense forest slowly changed
into tundra and delicate arctic grass
we were suddenly there-

Dancing in the clouds at the summit
allowing the strong winds to race
wildly around us- teasing, playing, pushing-
sharing in the magic of the moment.



Algonquin Peak
Photo by Leigh Widdowson

Prayer for Peace

William Commanda

*Grandfather William Commanda, 94 year old
Algonquin Elder, Carrier of the Sacred Seven
Fires Prophecy Wampum Belt, Founder of A
Circle of All Nations*

Inherent in the prayer of the Indigenous Nations of
Turtle Island is the deep knowledge that we are all
connected – my people in the east say
GINAWAYDAGANUC. The prayer is a celebration
of the profound knowledge that we are connected
with the each other, as well as with the chief
elements, *Mother Earth, Water, Air and Fire*, the

animate and inanimate, the plants and animals and the larger universe, connected energetically. Spirit embraces and unifies us all. Inherent in the prayer is a deep respect for both *Mother Earth*, the penultimate provider and nurturer, and all her children. The prayer is a constant reminder to honour this connectedness, and walk gently in the places of our differences, for those are the places of co-creation.

But across the globe, our relationship with *Mother Earth* and each other has been disrupted, and storms and blood despoil our world. When the new peoples arrived in this continent, they were too often motivated by greed, the realities of the day were war and genocide, and the ramifications were environmental exploitation and destruction; my ancestors were nearly all destroyed. Today, three documentaries of the present day – *Corporation*, *Fahrenheit 911* and *An Inconvenient Truth* – show that we are embroiled in the same struggles at a global level.

We are now all feeling the impact of the environmental crisis that has resulted from the reckless exploitation of land, water and air, in escalating climate change; lands and peoples across the world are embroiled in desperate wars; and in catastrophic market failures. Health is a primary concern across the world, no matter how privileged we might seem to be, for life itself is under attack.. Today, the *Law of Nature* is revealing herself as the great equalizer on all planes, with ominous implications for us all and for future generations. But still too often, we see the issues as separate. We need to realize how deeply interconnected they are in order to develop a new blueprint for our collective future.

Our ancestors always knew that all things were connected, and our ancient prophecies told them that one day, all the world would one day come to us to learn this. I have been the Carrier of the ancient sacred *Seven Fires Prophecy* Wampum Belt

for almost forty years. This prophecy, known to many peoples across the world, told of the important choices we would have to make at the time of the Seventh Fire, choices regarding our relationship with Mother Earth and each other, and that time is upon us. We have to choose wisely to ensure a meaningful heritage for all humanity and life forms.

A global shift in our value base is essential. We need to move from greed and corporate domination to generosity and sharing; from fear and war to racial harmony and peace building; and from relentless environmental exploitation to the three indigenous Rs – respect, responsibility and reverence for Mother Earth. We need to inspire people across the world to embrace these values urgently. This is the great challenge of our times – this is what the *Seven Fires Prophecy* warned about. It is the task for which we have to strengthen ourselves collectively. The transformation comes from within first; then, recognizing that we are all connected, we reach out to transform our brothers and sisters and leaders. We strive to humanize institutions. I hold a vision for an Indigenous Centre where we can all come together to animate this future. (www.asinabka.com)

When we come together with one heart, one love, one mind and one determination, and breath our prayers and energy into the *International Day of Peace*, we will be creating the pathway to a *Circle of All Nations, a Culture of Peace*.

I continue to pray for its realization.

Megwetch.

<http://web.mac.com/circleofallnations>
<http://www.circleofallnations.ca>
<http://www.cercledetouteslesnations.org>
<http://www.asinabka.com>

Old Master Sleeping**Joseph Emet**

Here is a Zen story I would like to share:

Once, a young Buddhist teacher was getting ready to give a Dharma talk, and noticed that an elderly and respected Zen Master had come in to listen, and had taken a seat at the back of the room. With due respect, the young teacher invited the old master to come and sit next to him. The master complied. The young teacher began his talk in his usual manner, with lots of learned quotations from the Sutras and commentaries. The old master was nodding with sleep. Soon he had obviously fallen asleep. The young teacher could not ignore this situation any longer, so he turned to the sleeping master and asked, "Is my talk so boring that you keep falling asleep?" The master reached out, grabbed his arm and gave him a powerful pinch. "Ouch!" yelled the young teacher. "That's the Dharma I came to hear" said the old master.

Like many stories, this one has two sides. The obvious one is a lesson to speak from experience, and not get lost in theories and explanations. Yet, we often speak from experience, but do not derive much benefit from it. The obvious example is all the complaining we hear from friends and family members, and perhaps reciprocate.

Personally, I have suffered two ways during my journey through this tradition. Like the old master, I have suffered from sitting thorough long and boring talks without any "juice" in them, but I have also suffered from my own ignorance of the Buddhist tradition and wisdom. Notice that both the young teacher and the old master knew the sutras and the commentaries well. That was not my situation when I started. It has not been my situation for quite a while afterwards: I can attest that it is quite possible to read Buddhist texts without gaining much understanding! They go against the grain of our conditioning and conventional wisdom, and we try to understand them through this baggage.

Insight is what we gain when we look at our experience through the eye of the Buddha, through the eye of wisdom. Both the freshness of experience, and wisdom are necessary. Without the experience, there is no "juice," and without the wisdom, there is just "kvetching." This balance is what we seek as some of us embark on Buddhism 101, and all of us embark on another year of practice and discovery. Let us embrace this path with open hearts and minds, and with dedication and persistence.

Watering Seeds**Ian Prattis**

This is an extract from a forthcoming book titled "Living Dharma."

Part of my daily bread is the practice of the Four Brahmaviharas meditation, based on the Buddha's teachings on love. This daily practice is an instrument to transform the "lover" (*manas*) by bringing to life in store consciousness the attributes of Love, Compassion, Joy and Equanimity, a daily reminder of how to truly love. It works for me as a major instrument to foil the distorting effects of *manas* by transforming the seeds that drive this particular level or function of consciousness. It all depends on what seeds are watered, what floppy discs are nourished in my consciousness. When the seeds nurtured are beautiful and wholesome – the effect is often very surprising. I retell a story that I first read on an internet post and later found a version of it in Jack Kornfield's wonderful book "The Wise Heart" published in 2008 by Bantam Books. The story is poignant, yet it brings home how the watering of beautiful seeds in our consciousness plays out with magnificent and moving results. It is a story about a high school history teacher.

"On one particular fidgety and distracted afternoon she told her class to stop all their academic

work. She let her students rest while she wrote on the blackboard a list of names of every one in the class. Then she asked them to copy the list. She instructed them to use the rest of the period to write beside each name one thing they liked or admired about that student. At the end of class she collected the papers. Weeks later, on another difficult day just before winter break, the teacher again stopped the class. She handed each student a sheet with his or her name on the top. On it she had pasted all twenty-six good things the other students had written about that person. They smiled and gasped with pleasure that their classmates had noticed so many beautiful qualities about them.

Three years later this teacher received a phone call from the mother of one of her former students. Robert had been a cut-up, but also one of her favorites. His mother sadly passed on the terrible news that Robert had been killed in the Gulf War. The teacher attended the funeral, where many of Robert's former friends and high school classmates spoke. Just as the service was ending, Robert's mother approached her. She took out a worn piece of paper, obviously folded and refolded many times, and said, "This was one of the few things in Robert's pocket when the military retrieved his body." It was the paper on which the teacher had so carefully pasted the twenty-six things his classmates had admired.

Seeing this, Robert's teacher's eyes filled with tears. As she dried her wet cheeks, another former student standing nearby opened her purse, pulled out her own carefully folded page, and confessed that she always

kept it with her. A third ex-student said that his page was framed and hanging in his kitchen; another told how the page had become part of her wedding vows. The perception of goodness invited by the teacher had transformed the hearts of her students in ways she might only have dreamed about.

Sword Thrusts into Store Consciousness

The truth remains that without mindfulness practice we do terrible things to our consciousness. We can be the story about the history teacher but remember that mindfulness is the basis of everything that transforms store consciousness. The Buddha has a story that emphasizes this. He tells of the capture of a dangerous bandit who one morning is brought before the king. The king orders his soldiers to take the bandit outside and to thrust thirty sharp swords through his body. At noon the king asks: "How is he?" and is told that the bandit is still alive. The king then orders an additional thirty sword thrusts to be driven through the bandit's body and so it continues throughout the day and night. The Buddha then told his monks:

This is what we do to our consciousness every day..... In this way we should regard the food of consciousness.

We thrust hundreds of sharp swords into our consciousness with the nutriments we consume and ingest. The drastic imagery of this story is to bring home the fact that when we consume violence, hatred, cravings, ignorance and greed, we drive sword thrusts deep into our store consciousness, making it impossible to transform at the core of our consciousness. We are often not aware of this, totally in the dark about what we are doing to ourselves, to our loved ones and to the planet.

Somehow we must find a way to choose not to consume sword thrusts. The Buddha pointed out that mindfulness was the way to stop the sword thrusts, to stop the suffering and destruction of ourselves, of others, and of the environment. Deep reflection and rigorous investigation on the nature of the nutriments we consume, of the floppy discs we activate in consciousness, is crucial for our ongoing spiritual pilgrimage. Being aware and mindful of all that we consume transforms the unwholesome seeds from our ancestors and conditioning, and provides the fertile soil for beauty and wholesomeness in our store consciousness to flourish.

Lazy Days Of Summer 2009

The summer program at Pine Gate from June to August, 2009 provides an opportunity for the special interests of sangha members to find a forum for appreciation. Topics and practices are brought forward from different expressions of healing and meditation, broadening our knowledge and appreciation of different forms and traditions. If you have a topic or speaker and are also interested in facilitating and being a bell master please get in touch with Carolyn Hill at chill.carolyn@gmail.com 613 726 0881. There will be gentle guidance and much support for the new leaders stepping forward.

All sessions are on a Thursday evening at Pine Gate Meditation Hall from 7.00pm – 9.00pm. Each practice opportunity begins with sitting and walking meditation, with a further period of silent sitting meditation, then the presentation and dharma discussion about it. At 9.00pm the main event is tea and goodies upstairs or in the garden, which should be in full abundance. Please don't be shy – it would be so nice for everyone if you step forward and bring your special interests to the fore.

Directions to Pine Gate Sangha: Take Queensway to Woodroffe S. exit; Go to Baseline Rd; RT on Baseline; RT on Highgate (next lights); RT on Westbury; LT on Rideout to 1252, home of the Pine Gate sangha. No reindeer grazing the lawn in summer, but new flowerbeds to greet you.

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