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Pine Gate is the voice of Ottawa's Pine Gate Mindfulness Community, who practice Engaged Buddhism inspired by Thich Nhat Hanh, the Dalai Lama and Sulak Sivaraksa. Friends of the community also contribute to the newsletter. Submissions are invited, articles of approximately 700 words, poems and insights that reflect engaged practice and personal experience. The community has many leaders and the newsletter is an organic outcome of collective insight. Effortlessly it appears. It is a Quarterly Newsletter, appearing three times a year. Quirky! The Pine Gate Mindfulness Community welcomes old and new members to its regular and special activities.



Are We Stupid?

by Ian Prattis

Oscar nominee Pete Postlethwaite plays the best role of his acting career in the film "The Age of Stupid". The movie fast forwards us to the year 2055. Pete plays the only fictional character in this riveting film. He stars as an old man living alone in a world totally decimated by global warming. His location is the High Arctic. How prophetic this makes James Lovelock's conclusion from his 2006 book *Revenge of Gaia*. In an interview about this book, Lovelock provides a dire prediction for humanity: "Before this century is over, billions of us will die, and the few breeding pairs of people that survive will be in the Arctic where the climate remains tolerable".

The process that brought this about is one where we allowed the environment to become an extension of human egocentric needs and values—an ego-sphere rather than an eco-sphere. In this ego-sphere we consumed mindlessly in the global economy without regard for ecosystem balance or concern about creating inequality, poverty and violence. Planetary care is not on this agenda, as the film graphically shows. We see the old man in the High Arctic watching archival video footage, carefully preserved from 2008. His stark question to the viewer is: “Why didn’t we stop climate change in 2008 when there was a chance?”

The character played by Postlethwaite is the curator of The Global Archive—digital storage laboratory located in the Arctic—the last habitable place for humans on planet Earth. The footage he views shows how global warming reached tipping points and runaway effects while at the same time humanity’s achievements are also saved for posterity. How could the human mind capable of such monumental achievements neglect to take care of the destruction happening to their lived in ecosystem? The old man shakes his head in disbelief looking for an answer. The film gives us an answer—OIL! Our dependence and addiction to it; our refusal to move away from a carbon fueled lifestyle—this is what propelled the downward spiral of devastation.

The director of the film—Fanny Armstrong—creates a montage from live news and documentaries saved from 1950 to 2008. The video record charts the steps taken by humanity into global collapse—devastating for human habitation and for all other species. In an artfully created mosaic, six real life characters play out the dramas of their personal stories. Their humanity and their stupidity are extant in this brilliant tapestry of human folly. What is so gripping is that we who view it are made to feel distinctly uncomfortable. Because their shadows and myopia reflect our own shadows and

myopia, especially those of our political and corporate leaders. After watching this film we can no longer hide from these shadows. We are forcibly held to account. If we do not act now—this film becomes our story,

In Part Two of Failsafe: Saving The Earth From Ourselves (2008) <http://www.failsafebook.ca/> I write about A Failed Genetic Experiment, though I do put a question mark after Experiment. Yet if we continue to turn our beautiful rivers into sewers because of our endless greed and neglectful ignorance, there is no place on Mother Earth to sustain our present civilization. It will join the trash heap collectively created by mindless generations of humanity. If consciousness is too slow to change and make the quantum leap to a culture of sustainability then there are drastic consequences to contemplate, which are starkly portrayed in the film. The ancient ecologist on Mars studying a million years of earth history would surely note a parasitic infestation of Planet Earth that was not very intelligent. An intelligent parasite would ensure the good health of the host that supports it. And so the Martian ecologist would factor in an inevitable elimination date for our species in her star date log and may well view our civilization as a failed genetic experiment.

“The Age of Stupid” is a watershed film. You will not be the same after you have seen it. It is impossible not to be moved, and in a constructive direction of immediate action. For the latter, I refer the reader to Appendix I of Failsafe: Simple Steps To Empowerment, which provides guidelines and an action plan for the global ecological emergency. If only we can get it right—and get it right now! The best case scenario is that we get on with the task of reining in our ego and greed driven mind. This permits a Failsafe in Consciousness to kick in because the conditions and opening have been created by our choice to cultivate different patterns within our minds. Thus consciousness expansion can no longer be held back as the radical internal

Climate Change has taken place. Our innate knowledge is manifest. We interconnect with a vast counter culture that is no longer a minority, no longer asleep or disempowered. We become another light shining in the quiet revolution that has over two million organizations world-wide pursuing constructive change.

Our diligent mindfulness has changed our brain structures in the direction that permits new paradigms of behavior to come into form. As cells in the ecosystem of Gaia it is as though humanity has aligned their neuronal networks with principles of ecosystem balance, ethics and responsibility. The critical mass has arrived and it amounts to a collective tipping point for our species. Once the wild, ego driven, greed driven mind is reined in then clarity and compassion are suddenly there to provide the basis for how we can be with the planet and with one another in a totally new way. This is what

happens if we “Begin It Now”—the concluding words to Failsafe: Saving The Earth From Ourselves. <http://www.failsafebook.ca/>



I finish with Dave Hampton's passionate thoughts about this film (Resurgence May/June 2009: 66). “The Age of Stupid” is not just a film that could change the course of humanity. I hope it will be the catalyst that gives us a second chance to create a sustainable future. I

hope it will promote a mass collective awakening globally such that we are not stupid and that we choose life and reclaim our children's birthright—the right to expect a future.” I have fourteen grandchildren. In the same vein as this film, I wrote Failsafe: Saving The Earth from Ourselves. Consider this book as archival footage from 2008 that provides hope and an action plan so that my grandchildren can enjoy a habitable planet. ☺

Developing **Concentration**, Embracing **Anger** by Mitchell Ratner

Mitchell is the dharma teacher at Still Water Mindfulness Community and he beautifully serves the sanghas in the Washington DC region.

Most of the time, we are lost in the past or carried away by the future. When we are mindful, deeply in touch with the present moment, our understanding of what is going on deepens, and we begin to be filled with acceptance, joy, peace and love.

—Thich Nhat Hanh, from The Long Road Turns to Joy

I often think of mindfulness practice as having two steps. In the first step we become more aware of what is happening in us and around us. We become more present to ourselves and to the world. This is usually a beneficial step, but if the practice goes no further, it may not address the suffering we are creating for ourselves and others. Pick-pockets and con artists, for example,

are often very aware of what is occurring in the present moment.

In the second step we are not just aware of what is happening, we add discernment and deep-looking. We notice how things come to be. We notice consequences. We are aware of and encourage mind-states that nourish our peace and joy. We are aware of and discourage mind-states that hinder peace and joy.

During Questions and Answer sessions with Thich Nhat Hanh, practitioners will often seek advice on how to work with particular mind-states. Questions and Answers from a June, 2012, session with Thich Nhat Hanh. The first question is about developing concentration, especially, Is it helpful to go on long silent retreats? Thich Nhat Hanh responds:

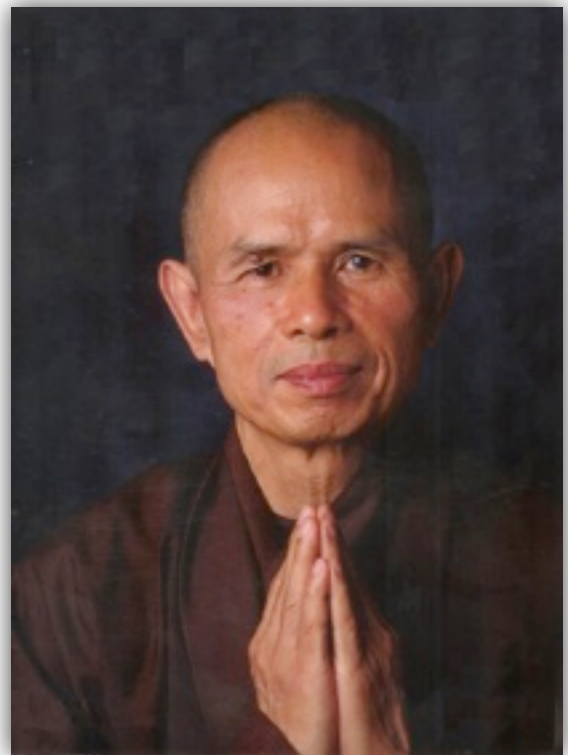
It is very easy to concentrate, if the object of your concentration is interesting. Like a Dharma talk, if the Dharma talk is interesting, you don't need to make any effort and you are very concentrated. So one of the ways is to make the object of your concentration attractive. That could be done in normal daily life. You don't need to lock yourself into a retreat to do that. You don't need to sit down in sitting meditation to do that. You could do that at any time. Anything is interesting. For a scientist, a piece of dust is also very interesting. (...) For a biologist, a flower, a leaf is very intriguing. That is why they can concentrate their minds for hours and hours on a very small thing.

If you are having a hard time practicing concentration, it is because you don't make the object of your concentration interesting enough, and you are looking for something more attractive in the future. They are really there. Please try.

The second question concerns ways of working with anger: Is it possible to feel and act with anger in a healthy and compassionate manner? Thich Nhat Hanh's answer begins this way:

When you are angry, you are not very lucid. Acting while anger is in you can lead to destruction. So, be careful. That does not mean we have to suppress our anger and fight our anger. When anger is there, we should know how to handle it with tenderness. Because anger is us. We should not do violence to our anger. Doing violence to our anger is to do violence to us. So mindfulness should be there in order to recognize anger. Mindfulness does not want to suppress or to fight against anger. Mindfulness is there to recognize anger and embrace anger. One energy embracing another energy—that is the practice.

In order to continue to have the energy of mindfulness, in order to embrace fruitfully the anger, we should continue our practice of mindful breathing and mindful walking. It is like cooking potatoes. In order to cook the potatoes, you need to maintain the fire under the potatoes, at least for 15 or 20 minutes. The same thing is true with the practice of mindfulness. ☯



Vesak Day Celebration May 4 in City Hall

by the Pine Gate Mindfulness Community

The roaring beat of Sri Lankan temple drums opened the day with a bang. They were followed in procession by the monastic Sangha walking mindfully, led by Dharmacharya Ian to their places next to the podium. The two beautiful MC's, Liz and Queenie, from Pine Gate and the Vietnam Temple, guided the overflowing audience through a day of utter astonishment. From the monastic chanting all the way through to the finale—the day unfolded in a majestic way. City Hall was decorated with beautiful artwork, food tables and booths for Asian embassies and other community groups for this first-time joint celebration of Vesak Day. It was a stunning day.



Advisors of Vesak Day. From left: Venerable Master Bon Dat, Dharmacharya Ian Prattis, Bhante Sam Rath Viriyad

Pine Gate Mindfulness Community and Asian Buddhist communities in Ottawa—from Cambodia, Vietnam, Korea, Indonesia, Laos, Sri Lanka, Taiwan and Thailand—created this Vesak Celebration. The 2014 Vesak Festival received guidance from three spiritual advisors—Master Bon Dat, Bhante Rath Sam and Dharmacharya Ian Prattis. They each come from different Buddhist traditions in Ottawa and three different countries—Vietnam, Cambodia, Canada. They established a common cause to spread the seeds of Buddha Mind across Ottawa by creating an atmosphere of generosity, humility and kindness. Organization meetings were held during the winter months in the various temples in the city and at Pine Gate.

Our beautiful MC's, announced the Vesak and Asian Heritage nature of the event before introducing messages from the Governor-General, Prime Minister of Canada, Premier of Ontario and the Mayor of Ottawa. This was wonderful support for multi-culturalism and interbeing from all levels of government in Canada. They fully endorsed this Vesak Day initiative, which was new to Ottawa and indeed new to Canada. Donations taken in on Vesak Day (approximately \$900) supported the education of young boys and girls in Cambodian orphanages. Education was seen as a vital antidote to the trafficking of children in that country. The Thai ambassador, Pisan Manawapat, gave a speech about the importance of Buddhism in his country and in Canada. Dharmacharya Ian gave the inspirational speech on Cyberbullying and Buddhist practice. The program continued with cultural performances from the Thai Dance Troupe, the Vietnamese hat dance performed by four delightful girls, and the graceful Happy Dance from Chinese seniors. Then it was time for a vigorous Lion Dance from the Vietnamese Youth

Group to close the day. Folk remained to take food, visit and mingle. Connections were made, bridges were crossed and the organizers and audience went home very happy.

Here is some background about Vesak and the Buddha:

Buddhism is a religion based on the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha, who lived and taught in India ca. 2,600 years ago. 550 million people in the world identify Buddhism as their religion or way of life.

Vesākha Day is the day Buddhists remember the birth, the enlightenment, and the passing away of the Buddha. The United Nations marks Vesākha Day as an official holiday, worldwide. As Buddhism spread from India, it was adapted to many cultures, and consequently Vesākha Day is celebrated in many different ways in various countries, such as China, Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Burma, Tibet, Bhutan, Thailand, and Nepal, the birthplace of Siddhartha Gautama.

Some will visit their local temple before dawn, to raise the official Buddhist flag, which represents a rainbow. Some may bring simple offerings of flowers, candles and incense, which serve as a reminder that just as the beautiful flowers will wither, and the candles burn out, so too is life subject to impermanence. In some countries, birds and animals are released in a symbolic act of liberation. Vesākha Day is therefore a time when we reach out across the various Buddhist traditions to celebrate, and to non-Buddhists to enjoy dialogue and harmony.

And that is what happened in Ottawa City Hall on May 4, 2014!

www.VesakinOttawa.com 🌐



Mindful Consumption

by Ian Prattis

In order to shift our patterns of consumption from a non-mindful state to a mindful state, we need a great deal of support. Part of that support can be engendered by an awareness of the consequences of our consumption, yet we also need the support of friends, family and sangha, so that a shift from meat eating to vegetarianism, from cooked food to raw food can be effected. It is helpful if pot luck vegetarian meals are organized on a regular basis with friends, that certain mealtimes with family are conducted in silence, while everyone contemplates the nature of the food consumed. For instance, when I am fully present with my food and look deeply into how it came to be on my plate, there are often wonderful surprises, especially in the summertime when I eat a bowl of raspberries. I slow down, breathing consciously in and out, and before eating these plump red berries I look deeply into how they came to be there. I see raspberry canes, the elements of sunshine, rain and good soil. I see the gardener looking after the raspberries with weeding and composting, people picking them and placing them in baskets, truck drivers taking them to market, people buying them. Above all else I see my grandmother.

As a little boy I believed that my grandmother had the biggest raspberry patch in the world! I would pick raspberries with her, some for bottling and jam, but mostly to sit down with my grandmother and enjoy eating them with her. My grandmother was very special. I would be sent to her house once a week by my parents to do gardening and chores for my grandmother, but she had other ideas. She wanted to spend time with me, her first grandson, and so she hired another little boy in the neighborhood to do the

chores and paid him a shilling a week. This clever strategy was one I fully enjoyed. We would talk, have tea, and pick raspberries together. She used to make exquisite lace with a crochet needle, and one of my favorite memories is still that of curling up in her big armchair with a bowl of raspberries, while she sat in front of me making lace. I ate the raspberries very slowly, as I was so happy. She was my first teacher in mindfulness, though it was never called that, but that was its true name. She passed away many years ago, yet eating raspberries with deep looking reminds me that she is with me still, as I touch the elements and web of life that brings raspberries to my bowl. This kind of support is essential to bring about the shift in consciousness that enables us to consume mindfully with compassion.

To assist deep looking at mealtimes, or whenever we eat food, there is a simple exercise to do—the Five Contemplations. If we have a bell at home we can invite it twice before reciting it. If there is not a bell, a half filled glass of water and a spoon to tap it with will do just as well. Once the bell has been invited twice we recite the Five Contemplations:

THE FIVE CONTEMPLATIONS

THIS FOOD THIS DAY, AND THIS FAMILY ARE GIFTS OF THE WHOLE UNIVERSE—EARTH, THE SKY, THE STARS, NUMEROUS LIVING BEINGS AND MUCH HARD WORK.

MAY WE RECEIVE THEM WITH STABILITY, JOY, AND FREEDOM, AND SO BE WORTHY OF THEM

MAY WE TRANSFORM OUR UNSKILLFUL STATES OF MIND, ESPECIALLY OUR GREED, AND LEARN TO EAT IN MODERATION, AND LOVE IN ABUNDANCE.

MAY WE KEEP OUR COMPASSION ALIVE BY EATING IN SUCH A WAY THAT WE REDUCE THE SUFFERING OF LIVING BEINGS, STOP CONTRIBUTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE, AND HEAL AND PRESERVE OUR PRECIOUS PLANET.

WE ACCEPT THIS FOOD, THIS DAY, THESE FRIENDS, SO WE MAY NOURISH OUR SISTERHOOD AND BROTHERHOOD, STRENGTHEN OUR FAMILY AND NOURISH OUR IDEAL OF SERVING ALL BEINGS.

Then another sound of the bell is invited and we eat in silence for 10-12 minutes, looking deeply into our food, the consequences of its production and consumption, and connect to the web of life of the entire cosmos. Part of that connection is to be very aware of the millions around the world who are starving, and as we eat mindfully we may resolve to help alleviate the suffering of world hunger. After the period of silence, the bell is invited once again so that people can speak.

This is a wonderful exercise for families. Place the children in charge of the bell and the reading of the Five Contemplations. When the final bell is invited for speaking—adults talk about what is going right on this day, enquiring about their children's good experiences. It is not the time to collar their offspring for misdemeanors. No wonder kids often absent themselves from family meals. Rather than intimidation, the children

enjoy becoming empowered, as they are on the bell, reading and timing and enjoy exploring deeply what the food meant to them at this meal time. This nurtures family dynamics in a beautiful way.

At home when I am on my own, I make a special effort to prepare and consume meals mindfully. It is such a joy as I have two assistants—my dog Nikki and my cat Lady. As I set the table I tell

them that this is a mindful meal and after the first two bells I cannot talk to them. I set a bowl of treats for each of them on the table and after I recite the Five Contemplations, I put their bowls down on the floor and I begin my meal. My two dharma pets always sit quietly after their treats until the bell is invited once again to bring the silence to an end. Then Nikki will want her ears scratched and Lady climbs up on to my lap. They bring such fun and joy to my mindful meals with them.

At Pine Gate Mindfulness Community we occasionally practice eating a formal meal together in the meditation hall. There are two rows facing one another and we sit in silence for a while before

standing and slowly going upstairs to where the pot-luck supper is laid out. We file out with Carolyn leading followed by myself and then alternating between men and women. We prefer this form to the monastic style of men going first followed by the women. Quietly we place food on our plates and return to our sitting places in the meditation hall. The Five Contemplations are read out in English and in French by Sangha

*I see raspberry canes, the
elements of sunshine, rain and
good soil. I see the gardener
looking after the raspberries
with weeding and composting,
people picking them and placing
them in baskets, truck drivers
taking them to market, people
buying them. Above all else I
see my grandmother.*

members. I then state: "The Buddha invites us to enjoy eating our meal in mindfulness," at which point we begin to eat our food with the attention described above. Slowly, contemplatively, tasting the food and its source, we connect to all the beings that played a part in bringing such food to land on our plates.

When everybody is finished eating, the bell master invites the bell for us to stand. Another bell has Carolyn leading us upstairs as before. We now have dessert to look forward to and tea.

We sit in small groups upstairs, or out on the deck and in the garden and talk to one another. Without fail everyone enjoyed the exquisite nature of the taste of food and silence. As much of the ingredients of the formal meal came from our organic garden, there is the natural investigation of the plants thriving in the garden. It is a wonderful way to eat together as a community. Mindful consumption nourishes our minds as well as our bodies. 🍵

Cyberbullying in Schools and Teenage Suicide

by Ian Prattis

A young friend was seriously contemplating suicide after suffering from cyberbullying at school. His father had phoned me in alarm. I suggested that his son come and stay with my wife and I for a while to take the heat out of the situation. Over the phone with my young friend I taught him a simple meditation about being a tall tree. The analogy I used was that of a storm of strong winds coming up shaking tree tops and breaking branches, while the bottom of the tree trunk stays solid. So when something arose like a strong wind to hurt him, to think of these forces as damaging the tall branches. But if he placed his hands on his tummy and breathed deeply in and out to the steady trunk for ten breaths, then his distress would slowly calm down.

I consulted with savvy school councillors across the country. I learned that cyberbullying was now an everyday reality for teenagers in schools and that a whole generation of school children had grown up with it. Most adults and teachers were as ignorant as I about the intensity of hate and cruelty crashing through the virtual world of cell phones, twitter, chat rooms and email. Cyberbullying had become an everyday mosaic in the life of teens.

This prompted me to think deeply about what Buddhist practices would be useful to calm the troubled minds of teens so they could resist cyberbullying and prevent being pulled into self-hurt. I talked to my young friend about foundation practices I used every day and how they might help to calm his mind when he was troubled. He really got the Two Arrows Teaching from the Buddha. In a nutshell this teaching is about a person suddenly hit by an arrow fired by a hidden and unknown attacker. The pain was terrible. Then a second arrow was fired into the same spot and the pain and suffering became unbearable. I asked him if he knew who fired the second arrow. He slowly nodded his head and said: "That would be me. All my fears and insecurities would come up to inflame the hurt of the first arrow." The point of the teaching was to assist him and me to come to a STOP, to calm the mind and body. Then find a way to NOT fire the second arrow into a trigger that had hurt us. Buddhism was not such a drag after all.

On occasions he would join me in the meditation hall in the basement of our home. He was curious, so I taught him how to make good friends with his breath, concentrating on the

whole length of the in-breath and the whole length of the out-breath. That if he would do that ten times without distraction he would feel calm. He also joined in when I did walking meditation. Here the breath was co-ordinated with each footstep and a simple mantra to follow each breath.

IN-OUT, with left foot and right foot.
NOW-WOW! With left foot and right foot.

I added the final concentration of being aware of how our feet touch the floor-Heel: Ball of Foot: Toe-so he could bring the strong earth energy

recess. I also telephoned his parents and reminded them about deep listening, which they promised to put into practice with their troubled son. This boy had listened to the phone calls and was amazed at the support for him that was being galvanized right before his eyes.

I managed to convince him that his feelings and emotions were not fixed. They are self-created in his mind by triggers. The trick, I told him, is to notice when we are getting stuck on one or two heavy emotions. Then we ask: "Do I want to go there, knowing what it will lead to?" He totally understood that he was letting one or two strong



already inside his mind to come to the surface. He got it that this energy was stronger than his troubled feelings and emotions.

He told me about three boys who bullied him at school. He also felt that they were behind the cyberbullying, though he had no proof. Also, that neither of his parents really listened to him. I listened quietly until he finished talking. Then I picked up the telephone and found the number of his school and talked to his vice-principal for a while. She was very open and supportive and had already taken steps to separate the three bullies, keeping two in detention during every

emotions get him down, when he had so many others to choose from. I repeatedly emphasized that with this kind of awareness we can begin to stop the process of causing harm to ourselves. His understanding was that triggers such as cyberbullying were a spark. He could either stamp it out or create a raging forest fire. He had turned the Two Arrows teaching into a personal tool and clearly understood the difference between responding rather than reacting. He was a smart teen.

I introduced him to parts of the Buddha's teachings about the mindful use of the breath.

The focus was on calming his feelings, emotions and mind. I asked him to write down the main feelings and emotions that drove him to think about suicide. There were three. Then I asked him to write down all the other feelings inside him. He took his time and wrote down thirty. Then I showed him the two figures, three versus thirty. He nodded his head and remarked "I get it. It's an absurd decision." He understood that the particular emotion that is overwhelming him is just one emotion in his vast ocean of consciousness. This insight undermines the predisposition to be totally crushed by one or two emotions, as there are so many positive emotions we can play with.

Nothing survives in our mind without our allowing the flow of nutriments to feed whatever occupies our mind. So he learned to investigate the nutriments that fed harmful notions in his mind, seeing them as an energy that requires serious surgery. We can immediately reduce their potency for harm. We first of all recognize the triggers that kept the affliction in our mind alive. Then we choose to cease feeding the harmful mental formations by cutting off the nutriments that fuels them with energy. We stop feeding our demons. These practices to calm troubled teenage minds are derived from the teachings of the Buddha. They are tried, tested and true, totally relevant to 21st century realities of cyberbullying. In modern day Canada it is intelligent to refer to them as Mindfulness Practices, which complement the efforts of all levels of government, from City Hall to the Federal Government. There are many school boards with apps for anti-cyberbullying, dedicated educators and concerned parents offering their skills to deal with the specter of cyberbullying.

From the experience with my young friend I highlight key factors, though do not claim they are a recipe for all situations of potential suicide by teenagers in schools. The causes are complex and each situation has to be dealt with uniquely. Nor do I think it is always possible for the components of the adventure with my young friend to be replicated. This young man had a prior exposure to Buddhist practice that helped him to be open to methods of breathing and walking that a street kid may find somewhat alien. Cyberbullying is a new phenomenon for our times, scarcely twenty years old. It coincided with the ramification of cell phones, chat rooms, iPads and the internet. This created an ecosystem of interruption technologies that many teens have become addicted to. In less than a generation the world has been fundamentally changed and we have yet to catch up with its

consequences. Governments, school boards, parents and councillors are scrambling to deal with it. Parenting skills and legal restraints have to adapt radically in

order to protect our young children.

Having this youngster leave a troubled environment was a great start. Consulting with his parents about his home situation was crucial. Surrounding him with love, attention and deep listening was a vital key. Teaching him how to be calm, in control of his feelings, and taking back his power through the teachings was an effective strategy. It worked well, as he has grown into a mature, thoughtful and caring young man. He was prepared to notice the behavior of cruel distractions that devastated him and then take steps to try something different. I pray that other teens suffering from cyberbullying will be so open. 🌱

Turning the Mind Into an Ally

by Sakyong

"What the Buddha saw is that life is marked by four qualities; impermanence, suffering, selflessness and peace. We suffer because we want life to be different from what it is. We suffer because we try to make pleasurable what is painful, to make solid what is fluid, to make permanent what is always changing. The Buddha saw that we try to make ourselves into something real and unchanging when our fundamental state of being is unconditionally open and ungraspable - selfless. Accepting the impermanence and selflessness of our existence, we will stop suffering and realize peace. We keep searching around the next corner and never getting what we want. In Buddhist language, that is known as Samsara (a circle of suffering)."

"Suffering is a state of mind that regards itself as real. We can spend our whole life trying to create a solid, lasting self. We can spend our whole life looking outside ourselves for something to reflect this delusion of solidity, to be as real and lasting as we ourselves seem to be. It is impossible to find what doesn't exist, and the perpetual search causes suffering. We're bewildered and suffering because we take ourselves so seriously. We haven't seen the open radiance of basic goodness, our natural state."



"When we start to investigate a separate self, we can't find anything solid or substantial. There's a sense of self - a shadow.. We have eyes and visual consciousness - that is a sense of "me." We have touch and feeling - that is a sense of "me. We have memories, thoughts actions, and speech, all adding up to a sense of "me." We have a body and a sense of pleasure and pain that come with that, and those things are "me," too. This sense of self is mentally fabricated, defined by outer conditions. We say, I don't feel like myself today. But, when we look for this self that we want to feel like - where is it? The same is true for the world around us. We feel that everything is just as it appears. Ye if we look beneath the surface, we find that our universe is not quite as stable as it seems. We can spend our entire life trying to create a solid self, but we won't be able to make it stick. Once we relax into this simple truth, we can go beyond bewilderment and suffering." 🍷

Two Poems

by Angie Kehler

Journeys

I am a slave
to the words
in my heart
scrapbooking memories
and vulnerabilities
cleaning between the lines

I lay them
bare for you
durable and beautiful
I am opening windows and
kicking up the dusty trails
this romantic Soul has travelled ☯

flow

can a breeze have
both form and emptiness?
beyond lips and mouth
these gates of desire
reveal no distinction
between self and other
each sigh
each gently held breath:
unbounded.

even the gentlest wind
seeks to fill the whole Universe ☯

Ignorance and the Ghost of Christmas Present

by James Ebaugh

Jim is the excellent facilitator of the Water in the Wave Sangha in York, PA.

We use the word "ignorance" a lot. I hear that word and think of Syria and the 100,000 dead, of an American gun culture with 300 million guns and the access to the most diseased minds, who then unleash the horror in our universities and elementary schools weekly. I reflect on a lifetime of our endless militaristic interventions, of the increasing spread of unfettered capitalism to more and more countries with its penchant for vast concentrations of wealth and environmental degradation, (a "tyranny" according to Pope Francis).

If I am not practicing diligently, how easily the enormity of the suffering can lead to despair. Then, I think of Ian's great reflection after the Connecticut slaughter of the innocent—that our primary responsibility in the 21st century is to enter the world stage as a Bodhisattva. Every week when I make that commitment to Sangha, it is a quiet admission that I cannot shoulder the weight of the world, or even the weight of my own suffering alone. Sangha as Thay taught is perhaps the next Buddha. Taming the beast that can be "mind" is my first responsibility and we share that collectively, every Sunday.

I stand in wonder sometimes as I witness the rise of bodhichitta which so quickly emerges in each member of the sangha with the practice—"Bodhichitta is the mind of enlightenment, beginner's mind. When we're inspired by the desire to practice and transform our suffering so we can

help the many people around us who suffer, the mind of that moment is very beautiful. It's the mind of a bodhisattva, one who attains his or her own liberation in order to help all beings. Sometimes we call it the mind of love." Thay).

The frustrating challenge, a good one, is how best to maximize that beautiful energy with all of your wonderful ideas and aspirations. So, I can heed the wisdom of Dickens, and still marvel at the transformation of myself, and of friends, which is most evident. I love this ghost.



"Spirit. Are they yours." Scrooge could say no more.

"They are Man's," said the Spirit, looking down upon them. "And they cling to me, appealing from their fathers. This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware them both, and all of their degree, but most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see that written which is Doom, unless the writing be erased. Deny it," cried the Spirit, stretching out its hand towards the city. "Slander those who tell it

ye. Admit it for your factious purposes, and make it worse. And abide the end."

"Have they no refuge or resource." cried Scrooge.

"Are there no prisons." said the Spirit, turning on him for the last time with his own words. "Are there no workhouses."

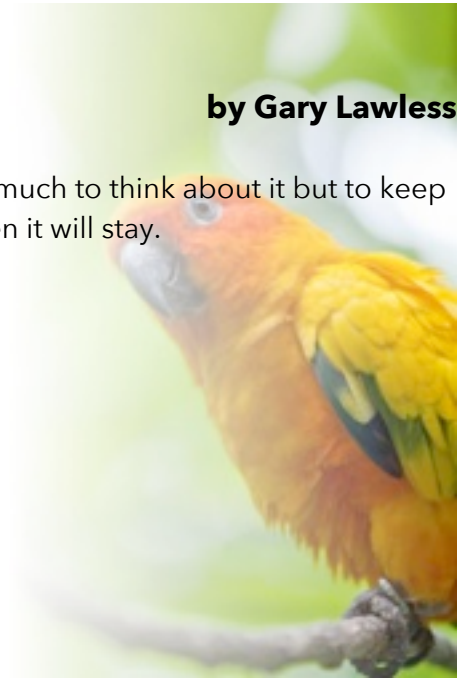
AWAKENING is the Bodhisattva and the Sanghas that energize them. ☯

When the Animals Come to Us

by Gary Lawless

This beautiful poem is presented as a meditation—a Zen Koan. Not so much to think about it but to keep the poem at the edge of consciousness as you breathe in and out. Then it will stay.

When the Animals come to us,
asking for help,
will we know what they are saying?
When the plants speak to us
in their delicate, beautiful language,
will we be able to answer them?
When the planet herself
sings to us in our dreams,
will we be able to wake ourselves
and act? 🌱



Potluck Recipes

by the Pine Gate Mindfulness Community

The monthly mindfulness gatherings on First Saturdays have become legendary for the yummy fare offered by the Sangha chefs. Here is a sample.

Avocado Chocolate Pudding Recipe from Leonard

Ingredients:

2 medium-sized ripe avocados
1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1/2 cup pure maple syrup
1/4 cup almond milk (any type of milk will work)
1 tsp vanilla extract

Cacao nibs or fresh strawberries/raspberries to garnish (optional)
Place all of the ingredients in a food processor and blend until smooth
Cover and refrigerate for about 1 hour



Mustard Glazed Roasted Vegetables from Andrea

Cut in chunks:

1 lb of carrots	1/2 lb of turnip
1 lb of parsnips	2 large potatoes
2 large sweet potatoes	



Combine ingredients below and toss onto the vegetables.

¼ c. of olive oil

2 tbs of curry powder

1 tbs of hot paprika (or regular paprika with a dash of cayenne/chili powder)

¼ c of maple syrup

3 tbs of Dijon mustard

1 tsp of thyme

1 tsp of black pepper

Cook for 1 hour at 375F.

Moroccan roasted vegetables from Andrea

-Serves 4 -

1 med onion cut into ¼

1 med eggplant cut ¼ " thick

1 large red pepper cut into big chunks

1 ½ c cooked chick peas

1 tbs of cumin

1 ½ tsp of turmeric, cinnamon, paprika

2 tsp salt

1 large sweet potato

2 med tomatoes chopped

3 garlic cloves minced

¼ tsp of cayenne



In a large bowl, mix all ingredients. Spread onto 11 X 17 baking tray. Bake 20 minutes at 375 F. Remove and stir well, then bake for another 20 min until veggies are tender. ☯

Master Linji

by Thay

Excerpt from "Zen Battles" published by Parallax Press, December 2013.

Master Linji invented new terms and new ways of saying things that would respond to the issues of his time. He invented the term "businessless person," the person who has nothing to do and nowhere to go. This was his ideal example of what a person could be. According to Master Linji, the businessless person is someone who does not run after enlightenment or grasp at anything, even if that thing is the Buddha. This person has simply stopped. She is no longer caught by anything, even theories or teachings. The businessless person is the true



Painting of Master Linji

person inside each one of us. This is the essential teaching of Master Linji.

When we learn to stop and be truly alive in the present moment, we are in touch with what's going on within and around us. We are not carried away by the past, the future, our thinking, ideas, emotions and projects. Often we think that our ideas about a thing are the reality of that thing. Our notion of the Buddha may just be an idea, far from reality. The Buddha outside ourselves was a human being who was born, lived and died. For us to seek such a Buddha would be to seek a shadow, a ghost Buddha, and at some point, our idea of Buddha would become an obstacle for us.

Master Linji said that when we meet the ghost Buddha, we should cut off his head. Whether we are looking inside or outside ourselves, we need to cut off the head of

whatever we meet and abandon the views and ideas we have about things, including our ideas about Buddhism and Buddhist teachings. Buddhist teachings are not exalted words and scriptures existing outside of us, sitting on a high shelf in the temple, but are medicine for our ills. Buddhist teachings are skillful means to cure our ignorance, craving, and anger, as well as our habits of seeking things outside and not having confidence in ourselves.

Insight cannot be found in sutras, commentaries, or dharma talks. Liberation and awakened understanding cannot be found in devoting ourselves to the study of Buddhist scriptures. This is like trying to find fresh water in dry bones. Returning to the present moment, using our clear mind that exists right here and now, we can be in touch with liberation and enlightenment, as well as with the Buddha and all his disciples as living realities, right in this moment. ☪

Quotes

This world - absolutely pure
As is. Behind the fear,
Vulnerability. Behind that,
Sadness, then compassion
And behind that the vast sky

—Rick Fields

rely on. I also rely on the heart and the community of practice for the support to turn my life again and again toward suffering. We have harmed so many beings. May we not turn away in hopelessness but turn towards the truth of suffering, greed, hatred and delusion. We fall into errors and faults, so be it. But like we say in Zen, fall down 53 times, pull yourselves up 54.

—Joan Halifax

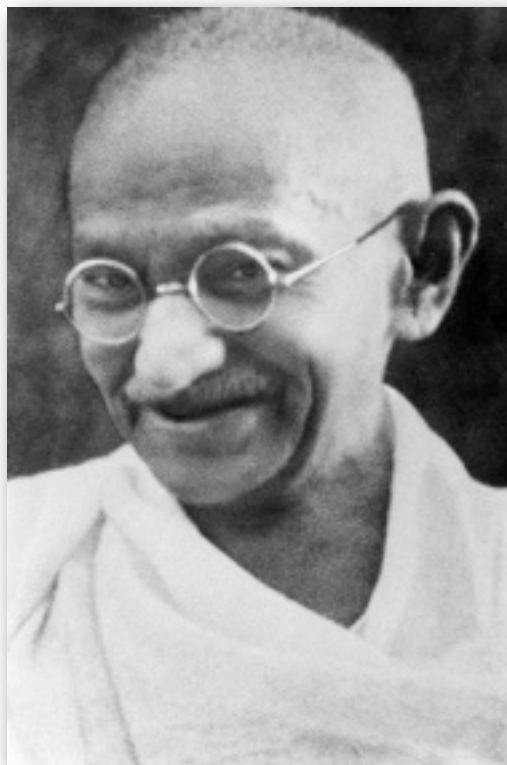
We are now in a fast flowing river,
Many will be afraid and try to cling to the shore
And suffer greatly.
Let go of the shore and push
off into the middle of the river.
See who is there with you—and
celebrate.
The time of the lone wolf is
over.

—Hopi Elders Prophecy 2010

You must not lose faith in
humanity. Humanity is an
ocean. If a few drops of the
ocean are dirty, the ocean
does not become
dirty.

—Mahatma Gandhi

I do not allow futility to enter
my life at this point. It is the life
of bodhisattvas, the compa-
ssionate and courageous life
that many lead, that is what I



Global citizens are staring into the abyss—yet instead of being eaten up by it all, I say to them:

“Awaken Spiritually,” for that transforms everything. We have made our world an unpredictable beast because we fail to work with it intelligently. Rumi’s wise words are cogent: “Sit down and be quiet. You are drunk and this is the edge of the roof.” We have to take back control of ourselves and this is a spiritual matter. Turning on the switch of awakening seems to be a good idea right now. We just need to touch the sacred in ordinary experiences of life to find the courage and determination to transform.

—Ian Prattis

The dumbing down of America
is most evident in the slow decay of substantive

content in the enormously influential media, the 30 second sound-bytes (now 10 seconds), lowest common denominator programming, credulous presentations of pseudoscience and superstition, but especially a kind of celebration of ignorance.
–Carl Sagan

A preacher was trying to sell his horse. A potential buyer came for a test ride. "Before you start," the preacher said, "You should know that this horse only responds to church talk – GO is

Praise the Lord and STOP is Amen." So the man gets on the horse and says, "Praise the Lord" and the horse starts to trot. The man again says, "Praise the Lord" and the horse starts to gallop. Suddenly there is a cliff right in front of the horse and the man yelled "Amen." The horse stops just at the edge of the cliff.
The man wipes the sweat from his brow and says, "Praise the Lord."

–Anonymous 🍷

The Earth as Witness

by the International Dharma Teachers' Association

International Dharma Teachers Statement on Climate Change:
<http://www.oneearthsangha.org/articles/dharma-teachers-statement-on-climate-change/>

426 Dharma teachers from around the world have signed the statement. The 30 plus members of the International Dharma Teachers Collaborative on Climate Change that wrote the statement together offer a deep bow to each of you for adding your signature.

By explaining how the Dharma offers a pathway to reducing the climate crisis to manageable levels, the members of the Collaborative on Climate Change hope that sangha members worldwide would sign the statement as well as teachers. Through this we hope that the Buddhist community can become a powerful voice in the inter-faith movement to address the climate crisis. Only 985 sangha members have signed the statement. With 426 teachers signing the statement, it seems there could be 10,000 or more signatures from sangha members. The members of the Teachers Collaborative therefore

ask you to consider letting your sangha members and network know about the statement and encouraging them to sign it.

In addition, the members of the Teachers Collaborative ask that you and your sangha members and network consider engaging in solutions to the climate crisis. Action is needed in these areas and more:



1. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions in:

- Transportation
- Energy production (extraction, pipelines, power plants)
- Residential energy use
- Commercial and industrial energy use
- Product energy use
- Waste generation and management
- Agriculture
- Material and resource consumption in general

2. Increase ecological sequester of carbon in:

- Forests
- Wetlands
- Agriculture

3. Increase preparedness for and resilience to acute and chronic climate impacts in:

- Built systems—infrastructure, buildings, roads, water systems etc.
- Ecological systems—forests, waterways, wetlands, marine environments
- Economic systems—including agricultural systems and others
- Human systems—prepare for acute traumas (extreme weather events)
- Secondary trauma (including moral distress, compassion fatigue)

Numerous websites have information on how to implement changes in the areas listed above.

4. Assert political pressure on elected officials and government agencies at all levels in all countries.

Dharma teachers and their sanghas and networks can also play these key roles in climate solutions:

- Provide spiritual leadership by continually voicing the principles of the Dharma in

discussions and issues related to climate change (using the statement as basis)

- Walk the talk of support for change through your physical presence at social and political events urging solutions to climate change.
- Inspire change through written statements, letters, media pieces, talks etc with the media, other groups, your sangha etc. describing how the Dharma offers a pathway to solutions to the climate crisis.
- Join with other spiritual organizations to promote change at all levels.
- Work in your neighborhoods and communities.
- Awaken and inspire your sanghas, students and colleagues.

For more information about the Dharma Teachers International Collaborative on Climate Change go to: dharmateachersclimatecollaborative.org Please let us know if you would be interested in becoming involved. 🌱

Milarepa: A Movie Review

by Ian Prattis

I had the honour of opening the Ottawa Tibet Film Festival on March 21 with a talk about the Milarepa film. Shot in the stunning Lahaul-Spiti region of Northern India next to the Tibet border, it evokes the stark beauty of the Himalayas.

Milarepa was the first Tibetan to attain liberation in a single lifetime. His life offers a provocative parallel to the cycle of violence and retribution consuming today's modern world. We can all identify with Milarepa as a human being with flaws. The same flaws as us—and then some!

This is not a story of high lamas or reincarnation of the Buddha—it portrays dharma about ordinary life, encountering the human weaknesses and

adversity that provide the engine to drive us to awaken. It is a story about ordinary people who become extraordinary through their ordeals and transformation. The name Milarepa ties this together very nicely. Mila means great man, Repa means “cotton clad one”. So his dharma name—Milarepa—contains the ordinary with the great.

H.H. the Dalai Lama was reduced to tears at seeing this film about a 11th century saint, revered in Tibet as a National Hero. But one with a very dark and flawed past. Named Thopaga at birth, we see how his life is turned upside down on the death of his wealthy father. His uncle and aunt squander his inheritance and force his mother and himself into a life of poverty and destitution. In despair, anger and revenge his mother sends him to train with a master sorcerer. He excels in the dark arts, so much so that he is able to rain down a terrible storm and rock landslide on his village when his uncle and aunt are holding a marriage ceremony for their son. He kills 35 people, children, women and men.

His aunt and uncle escape the carnage and send a party after him. Milarepa declares that he can kill them all and sends another rock slide their way to scatter his pursuers.

Yet he is harrowed to the bone by his deeds, the direct consequence of his anger and vengeance. The story of greed, sorcery, vengeance and murder also has redemption and awakening woven into it, the reason for the Dalai Lama to be deeply moved by the film. Milarepa from 11th century Tibet provides a vivid reflection of the tumult and agony of present times. Violence, revenge, murder, all these ingredients can be found around the world—the Middle East, Syria, Egypt, Ukraine, Venezuela, Thailand and North Korea to mention only a few. What Milarepa provides is proof that we can transform adversity through deep redemption and awakening. No matter how dark and demonic our mind—we can transform it. The film comes to an end at the point where Milarepa sets out to seek his teacher of a different way—Marpa the Translator who was the spiritual heir of Naropa. He endures terrible ordeals and this is the staple of the sequel film that is not yet released. Part II as it were.

In the 1990's H.H. the Dalai Lama and Francisco Varela collaborated to bring the Mind and Life Conferences into existence. They still continue to this day. They brought advanced meditators and neuroscientists together to study the mind and consciousness. Their joint experience and research turned science on its head, as they were able to share the finding that the mind was malleable, capable of change and transformation

with the application of meditation, solitude, dharma practice and deep introspection.

Marpa the Translator on meeting Milarepa demanded to see a display of his sorcery. This was done, at which point Marpa refused to teach him until he went through a series of brutal ordeals. He had Milarepa build a stone tower and then forced him to take it down—three times in succession. The fourth multi story tower he had Milarepa build still stands at Lhodrag in Tibet. All the while Marpa taunted Milarepa, referring to him as the Great Magician to constantly remind

him of his past sins and the harm he had done. He pushed Milarepa to the limits of his body and mind in the intent of purifying him of his past evil deeds.

Marpa knew what he was doing, completely in accord with the much later findings of the Mind and Life conferences. He also knew that Milarepa was his spiritual heir. Milarepa tried to leave several times and then became aware that he was the author of his own misery. Marpa was unwavering in his seeming cruelty. Relentless and ruthless until he saw

changes take place in Milarepa's mind. It took twelve years, with protracted time alone in utter solitude in the Tibetan wilderness. Milarepa lived in caves and survived on eating nettles and drinking snow melt. His mind settled and at the age of 45 he entered into full awakening. He attracted followers from far and wide and taught first of all from Drakar Taso cave—the White Rock Horse Tooth cave—and then from other caves before becoming a much sought out wandering teacher.



He left an unusual legacy—the Songs of Milarepa. When asked a question from a disciple he would go very still and the answer would emerge from deep in his mind in the form of song. He would put aside their questions about devas, gods and hungry ghosts and return the listeners to a clear understanding of the dharma, and present them with the task at hand, which was their awakening—and here were the tools to do it. His songs were beautiful dharma talks laying out a clear path of emancipation for his followers. The bottom line from Milarepa was always that the path of

enlightenment is open to all, no matter how dark and dreadful the past.

A disciple once asked him if he was an emanation from a past Buddha. Milarepa provided an immediate “No”—that such a notion would deprecate the monumental ordeals and suffering he had transformed to enter full awakening. Frank Sinatra has a song for Milarepa —“He Did It His Way, In His Lifetime!” 🌙

Rainbow Meditation

by the Pine Gate Mindfulness Community

Metaphor is a means for awareness to connect to symbol, so that the spiritual guidance inherent in all that symbolizes the transcendental can be grasped. The metaphor, be it a concept of the Almighty or a symbol for Truth, is an external mental form that corresponds to an internal symbolic structure that is not usually known as personal experience. Meditation places you in a particular energy, or consciousness, that brings forth from the metaphor a personal experience that you integrate with physically.

Knowledge is then owned by the body, it does not remain a mere intellectual artifice. In meditation, the focus on a particular metaphor is to bring to the surface specific qualities that are felt as a physical circulation throughout and around your body. Be in this energy in a detached manner so that the qualities of the metaphor become physically encompassed as experience, without any accompanying projections. In this manner the qualities inherent in particular metaphors can eventually be brought into form. These changes create shifts in cognitive/perceptual mind states and permit you to see a larger picture of interconnectedness that was formerly not possible. The Rainbow Meditation may illustrate the experience of metaphor as vibration through the changing focus of colour on the major chakras of the body. Colour addresses all levels of our being, as you will discover when breathing in the rainbow.

Remember that you breathe with your entire body. Accompanying the seven main chakras in this meditation, is attention to particular colours that correspond precisely to each chakra. Each colour represents a tonal chord, or sound current that activate the tonal frequencies of its corresponding chakra. The colour Red is associated with the root chakra at the bottom of the spine; Orange with the chakra located in the sacral region; Yellow with the solar plexus or navel chakra; Green with the heart chakra; Blue with the throat chakra; Indigo with the brow chakra; and Violet and White with the crown chakra. These are experienced in sequence during the Rainbow Meditation.

Sit comfortably with the spine erect, with your feet firmly connected to the floor. Place your hands either in your lap or upon your knees. Breathe softly into the heart chakra, up to the crown chakra on the in-breath, and on the out-breath take it down to the toes and relax into the quiet calm of meditative silence. Take at least five breaths, and when you feel ready to do so, breathe in through the soles of your feet and bring the colour Red up through your legs and fill your entire body. Breathe gently in and out as you note the physical sensation of vibrant and alive Red, where it circulates through the body

and, most important, where it is blocked and does not flow. Now settle in to the experience of Red for five breaths. Then visualize this colour being pushed out of your body, starting from the head and going downwards, so that the colour Red goes out through the soles of the feet into the earth. Once this is done take time to register with the emptiness in the body. Take five breaths and connect to the emptiness and the vastness beyond. Just be with it.

Then breathe the colour Orange in through the soles of your feet and fill the entire body. Breathe gently in and out. As before, note the changes in energy circulation throughout the body. Breathe regularly within the experience of the vibrational frequency of Orange for five breaths. After a time, visualize this colour being pushed out of the body, like a coffee plunger, from the head down through the soles of the feet and into the Earth. Once more register with emptiness in the body for five breaths. Take the time and moment to register with the emptiness and the vastness beyond. Just be with it.

Then breathe the colour Yellow in through the soles of your feet and fill the body with this fresh spring colour. Note the physical changes in bodily sensations associated with Yellow and the navel chakra as you take five breaths. Then, as before, visualize the colour being pushed out of the body through the feet, and once again register with emptiness for five breaths. Take the time and moment to connect to the emptiness and the vastness beyond. Just be with it.

On the next in-breath bring the colour Green directly into the heart chakra, behind the sternum, and from this location flood the body with a lush verdant Green colour. Breathe into this changed frequency for five breaths and take note of your bodily feedback. After a while, visualize Green being pushed out of the body from the head downwards and out through the soles of the feet into the earth. Register with emptiness in the body for five breaths. Take the time and moment to connect to the emptiness and the vastness beyond. Just be with it.

Then breathe the colour Blue into the throat chakra, and flood the entire body with this tonal chord of energy frequencies and stay with it for five breaths. Circulation may be blocked as expression is frequently denied, so focus Blue through a clear crystal, which you visualize in the center of your throat. This may enhance circulation. Note where the colour moves throughout the body, and the corresponding bodily sensations. Breathe regularly into this energy state, and learn about the properties of Blue and of expression. Then push the colour out through the feet and breathe in to the emptiness within the body for another five breaths. Register with emptiness in the body. Take the time and moment to connect to the emptiness and the vastness beyond. Just be with it.

Then bring the colour Indigo directly through the third eye chakra and fill the body with this frequency. Spiritual Insight is frequently subject to blockage, therefore circulation through this chakra may be facilitated by visualizing an Indigo octagon in the middle of the forehead through which the frequency of this colour is drawn in to the body. Register with changing body sensations, and become familiar with the tonal properties of Indigo for five breaths, then push it out of the body through the feet and take note of emptiness within the body. Register with emptiness in the body for five breaths. Take the time and moment to connect to the emptiness and the vastness beyond. Just be with it.

Bring the colour Violet into the body through the crown chakra on the top of your head with the next breath. This circulation can be enhanced by visualizing the crown chakra as a fully opened lotus flower with a thousand petals, through which you draw in the colour Violet. Feel the special quality of Violet extending within the body and wear it lightly as an internal cloak. Breathe regularly five times into this

changed energy state and note everything in the body as before. Then push the colour Violet out of the body through the feet into the earth. Feel an intense emptiness within the body. Register with emptiness in the body for five breaths. Take the time and moment to connect to the emptiness and the vastness beyond. Just be with it.

Then breathing with the entire body, fill yourself with brilliant, crystalline White light and breathe regularly in to this new frequency. Do not direct your breath, simply be aware of in-breath and out-breath and the circulation of energy in the body. Remain in this breathing state for ten minutes. When thoughts arise, observe them, but do not participate in them or fuel them with energy. In this way your energy will remain with the experience of the Rainbow Meditation.

At the end of the meditation reflect on the differences felt during the distinct phases of meditation, and contrast the present feeling within the body to your physical state prior to meditation. Reflect on, and discern, the discrete effects and circulation of each colour, and its association with particular chakras and write down your experience or share with a partner. With continued emphasis on this delightful meditation you will feel new and changing connections between chakras. A sense of unification and harmony within all aspects of your being is now possible, as the chakras connect with one another as a single unified energy. 🌿

Trailing Sky Six Feathers

by Ian Prattis

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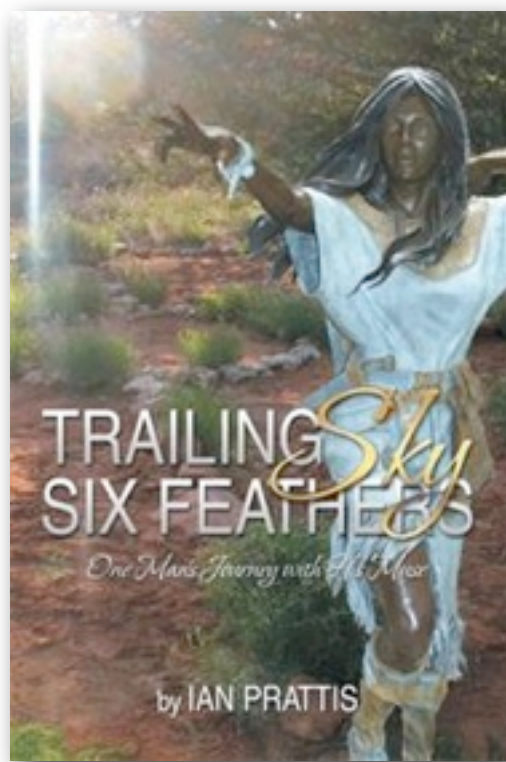
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The author is a Zen teacher, Poet, Professor Emeritus, Founder of Friends for Peace, Spiritual Warrior for Planetary Care and Social Justice. In this book he navigates past and

present life experiences from brutal raids on Indian settlements in 18th century Arizona, insane sea voyages off the Scottish Hebrides in the 20th century to surrender to The Muse in the 21st century. These screenplay epics weave together to create inspiration for a wide range of spiritual seekers, environmentalists, educators, Generation X and Y, feminists, younger generation, students and academics alike.



An exciting Hero's Journey... like Indiana Jones meets the Buddha with a dash of Celestine Prophecy, as we follow his journey to accept The Muse capable of transforming his karma. She shines light on the darkest elements of the human condition, including his. The story has the author stumbling through the first part of life, then standing strong in his own sovereignty in the latter part. In India, Arizona, France and Canada's wilderness, he

goes to extraordinary lengths to transform four centuries of karma.

The book illuminates issues that will affect our world for generations to come. We are staring into the abyss: climate change, ecosystem and financial collapse, nuclear breakdown, terrorism

Pine Gate Mindfulness Community

Pine Gate is a Zen Buddhist community practicing Engaged Buddhism inspired by Thich Nhat Hanh, the Dalai Lama and Sulak Sivaraksa. It has created an engaged expression for peace, social justice and planetary care as the community is the nucleus of Friends for Peace. The coalition, with Pine Gate at the core, has since created annual events to celebrate peace, social justice and planetary care.

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 taught courses on Ecology, Symbols, Globalization and Consciousness—reflected in his 2008 book: *Failsafe: Saving The Earth From Ourselves*. 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.

Pine Gate, located in the west end of Ottawa, had very modest beginnings. Inaugurated in 1997 following Ian's return from teaching meditation in India, early gatherings featured Ian, his wife Carolyn, and their pets—Nikki the dog and Lady the cat. Since then it has blossomed into a very vibrant community. In the summer of 2001 major renovations took place to the lower level of Ian and Carolyn's home. A new

and anarchy. Instead of being eaten up by the abyss "Awaken Spiritually" for that transforms everything. Our world has become an unpredictable beast. We fail to work with it intelligently. We must take back control of ourselves and this is a spiritual matter. 🌱

meditation hall emerged from the dust and knocked down walls—the Pine Gate Meditation Hall—named after Thich Nhat Hanh's story in the book: *The Stone Boy and Other Stories*. Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh provided a gift of calligraphy, naming The Pine Gate Meditation Hall. This now hangs on the wall for all to see. The new meditation hall has become a source of sanctuary for many friends. There are three seasons at Pine Gate—the Winter Study Session from September to December, the Winter Study Session from January to May, and the Lazy Days of Summer program from July to August. June is recess and quiet time.

There are regular meetings for meditation and study every Thursday evening from 7.00–9.00 p.m. Duong Sinh-Bamboo Stick Qi-gong classes, known as the Life Sustaining Way of the Heart, are offered in addition to regular qi-gong classes throughout the year. Potluck vegetarian suppers, Hikes, Sweat Lodges, Pilgrimages, Days of Mindfulness, and Meditation Retreats are organized on a regular basis. The voice of the sangha can be heard through its newsletter—Pine Gate.

"Our engagement with society and the environment rests on our quality of being. When that quality is rooted in stillness there is a different ground for subsequent actions and so events take a different course. We simply go home to our true nature. We are very active in this way and bring harmony to those we interact with. The most significant interaction is with our true nature. To connect to its boundless quality in daily life, and then to connect to others and the world in the same way is surely the ticket to ride!"

DIRECTIONS TO THE PINE GATE MEDITATION HALL:

In Ottawa, take Queensway to Woodroffe South exit; go to Baseline Rd; RT on Baseline; RT on Highgate (2nd lights) RT on Westbury; LT on Rideout and follow the Crescent round to 1252, which is always lit up with Christmas lights in the winter and full of flowers in the summer.

Tel.: 613 726 0881

Contacts: iprattis@cyberus.ca
chill.Carolyn@gmail.ca

<https://www.facebook.com/pinegatesangha>

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