



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.

Beginning Anew: An Expanded Perspective

Dr. Frank Musten

Frank Musten is co-founder of the Ottawa Mindfulness Clinic and Sangha Arana. He was ordained into the Tiep Hien by Thay in August 2005 at the Quebec retreat and given the dharma name of True Precious Seed – aptly named as this article demonstrates.

A few years ago I began to practice Engaged Buddhism in the tradition of Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh. I encountered early in the practice a most provocative idea. Buddhism directly addresses destructive emotions. In Buddhism all destructive emotions emanate from the Three Poisons—Hatred, Craving and Delusion. They are seen as normal parts of human existence. And, much of the practice of Mindfulness is focused on freeing one's life from the control of these poisons. This approach is opposed to the belief held by many professionals in the field of conflict resolution who explicitly or

implicitly argue that emotion has to be removed and logic has to prevail before conflicts can be resolved. Buddhist psychology invites us instead to look deeply into the origins of our emotional states—a practice that resonates with the reality of people's lives.

Thich Nhat Hanh has been able to transform ancient Buddhist practices into simple everyday practices that meld easily into 21st Century life. In his Beginning Anew Ceremony he has transformed the ancient Buddhist ritual of the Pavarana Full Moon Ceremony—a time when the ancient monastic community was invited to meet together so that individuals could share their shortcomings and improve their practice—into our modern ritual when members of a practice community convene to work through any discord that may have arisen among the members. Each member of the community uses mindful breathing as a refuge from the destructive emotions that always arise when dealing with conflict and discord. When I first learned of the Beginning Anew Ceremony I wondered if it might provide a structure for managing the intense emotions that were so destructive in the conflicts I encountered every day. I felt hopeful. For instance, the foundational requirements of the Ceremony are

- that each person when he or she speaks be allowed to share without interruption,
- that each person will speak from his or her own experience and not speak to another's experience
- that each person will speak skillfully with the intent to preserve and benefit the relationship

Failure to meet one of these three foundational requirements almost always occurred in conflict resolution processes when destructive emotions hijacked the agenda. Further, the structure of the actual ceremony is an intuitively attractive way to bring up a difficult issue. It is helpful that the structure is virtually identical to a well-used psychological intervention in marital conflict. There are three components to the ceremony:

- Appreciating- which is a time to acknowledge the good qualities of the person with whom you may have some discord.
- Expressing regret- which is a time to acknowledge your actions that have caused another pain and distress.
- And, expressing hurt- which is a time to express the hurt you have felt from unmindful acts of other members in the community.

Ideally these three steps taken in turn express first, the reality that the person and the relationship is valued, second that no one is without fault and third, that each person in the community is vulnerable to being injured by thoughtless words and acts. They stress the practice of returning to the breath and pausing in its refuge when there is a danger that emotion may lead to unskillful speech. Throughout the Ceremony the practice is to remain present; listening deeply in equanimity; unperturbed by strong emotions. It must be remembered that the Beginning Anew Ceremony is intended to be used in communities of Buddhist monastic and strong lay practitioners. In the world of you and me the three poisons are always present in our minds, hearts and actions. So was it possible to bring the Beginning Anew Ceremony into that secular world where the Three Poisons are constantly being nurtured? The answer is yes, no—and Oh Yeah! But you have to do a bit of retrofitting to get it to fly.

The Beginning Anew Ceremony invites the parties to the conflict to use speech and to follow practices that encourage each party to see that they both have a role in creating the conflict and equally they both have a role in ending it. Couples and others who are willing to accept that both partners may be unskillful but neither is malicious usually benefit most from the Beginning Anew Ceremony in its original form. Couples and others who are in conflict who are not able to trust each other's intentions usually do not benefit from Beginning Anew. In fact, when the parties in conflict do not trust each other Beginning Anew can escalate the

conflict to the point of explosion. An example will help. Consider John and Mary, a couple who have had a long history of conflict (John and Mary are fictional characters created to make the point.).

John starts with his appreciation of Mary and says, "I appreciate it when you are not so controlling."

Mary who really doesn't trust John's intentions and is waiting for him to put her down hears in John's words "You are controlling most of the time" and reacts with bottled-up anger. When it is her time to speak the anger that has been building explodes. There is not even an attempt at appreciation and her first words are, "If you could do even one thing right I wouldn't have to take so much control."

Science tells us that in close relationships destructive emotions are easily triggered by a thoughtless word or act. We also know that once triggered it takes a long time before they cool. Sometimes it is hours. Sometimes it is days. It is never minutes. We also know that they are part of the natural alarm reaction and when they are activated they restrict him or her from taking in any information that is not directly related to the fight or flight response. When, as is often the case, one party in an argument accuses the other of not listening the accuser is most likely right. But it is not because the other person doesn't want to listen. The alarm reaction has been activated and the other person literally is not able to listen. So far, there does not seem to be much "Oh Yeah" in this story. To get to the "Oh Yeah" we have to introduce the "retrofit". And, that is Thay's understanding of the Interbeing Nature of all relationships.

For couples and others who have become distant in their anger, it is important to remind them of this Interbeing Nature. It is present both in their anger and, deeply buried, also in positive feelings. In Thay's terms they have spent time watering seeds of anger so that anger is the first emotion that is touched when they are in conflict. But there are also other seeds of positive emotions, thoughts, beliefs and ways of being that have been created in each

person during their life together. I have found that Beginning Anew works best when I ask each member of the couple to reflect on a positive in him or herself that is there because of the connection to the other. With couples, I start by simply making this request —

- *I would like to understand a bit more about your relationship?*
- *As a beginning, it would help me if you could share with me some positive things about you that you value;*
- *And let it be something that is only a part of you now because you have spent some part of your life in this relationship with your spouse.*

As we begin to work with this question we also begin watering seeds other than anger. And we begin to move to mindful reflection of all that is present and is possible in the relationship. This becomes the first step to the Beginning Anew. It is with that intention that we begin the next steps:

- Appreciating the Other now becomes a reflection on what I see in the other that has contributed to this me I now am.
- Regretting my Actions now becomes an awareness of the seeds of distress that my words and actions intentionally or unintentionally have watered in the other.
- Expressing Hurt now becomes an awareness of how important the other is in my life since he or she is especially able to water the seeds of distress in me. It is from this perspective of the other's place in my life that I ask for his or her compassionate understanding.

The emphasis on the Interbeing Nature of relationship does not mean that there will never be the possibility of an inadvertent unskillful word or gesture. But emphasizing Interbeing seems to bring the protagonists to an awareness of all of the relationship not just the part where they are in conflict.

Re-Entry

Thich Nhat Hanh

When I was in Vietnam, so many of our villages were being bombed. Along with my monastic brothers and sisters, I had to decide what to do. Should we continue to practice in our monasteries, or should we leave the meditation halls in order to help the people who were suffering under the bombs? After careful reflection, we decided to do both – to go out and help people and to do so in mindfulness. We called it Engaged Buddhism. Mindfulness must be engaged. Once there is seeing, there must be acting, otherwise what is the use of seeing. Meditation is not to get out of society, to escape from society, but to prepare for a re-entry to society...How can we bring meditation out of the meditation hall and into the kitchen and office? One smile, one breath should be for the benefit of the whole day...We must practice in a way that removes the barrier between practice and non practice.

The Peace of Wild Things

Wendell Berry

When despair for the world grows in me
And I wake in the night at the least sound
In fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake rests in his beauty on the water,
And the great heron feeds.
I come into a place of wild things
Who do not tax their lives with forethought of grief.
I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars waiting for their light.
For a time I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

Openings, 1968

November Day of Mindfulness: A Homecoming

Tricia Diduch

Being away from home is never easy. You're removed from your friends, your daily routine and all of the things that you know and like best. There's a sense of not knowing exactly who you are. Yet conversely, distance inevitably provides a more objective perspective on events and can create a sense of where and what home is at its very essence. Making a true homecoming, I traveled from Midland to Ottawa for the Day of Mindfulness held at Pinegate Sangha on November 5. I had left Ottawa, which I now consider home, about a month earlier, after struggling through a break-up with my fiancé and after having learned my father was battling serious health problems. Having been through a rather tumultuous year rife with change, including my engagement, a new job, two moves and a return to school, these latest two events made me feel as though my world at that moment was a sandcastle swept away with the tide. The bottom seemed to be falling out. After careful consideration, I packed my bags to be with my parents in Midland, a scenic little town on Georgian Bay, five hours west of Ottawa.

While I was content spending time with my parents in Midland, I was also excited at the prospect of returning to Ottawa to reunite with friends and the Sangha, and to participate in the Day of Mindfulness. I also knew that in returning I'd have to confront some of the reasons for the upheaval that had occurred during the breakup of my relationship with my fiancé, Tony. Having gained a little distance and perspective, and having taken the time to meditate and reflect upon some of the events that had transpired a few months earlier, I knew it was time to return and to face the pain and loss that had occurred as a result of the end of the engagement. I arrived in Ottawa the Friday before the Day of Mindfulness, with Carolyn and Ian graciously welcoming me into their home, where I stayed for the duration of my visit. The warm hugs

and quiet conversation, not to mention the vibrant greeting from Nikki and Moksha, made me feel right at home. After the five- hour-long drive, I was filled with a sense of relief at having arrived safely at Pinegate, a place with which I have become very familiar and comfortable over the past four years.

The Day of Mindfulness proceeded pretty much as any other I had attended over the past few years. The group that had assembled, along with Ian and Carolyn, observed the customary routine of meditation, Dharma talk, Qi Gong, a mindful meal in silence, walking meditation, deep relaxation and an informal tea ceremony. The atmosphere was even more relaxed than usual, since the group was small. As the day progressed, I felt my anxieties drift away and by the end of the celebration, I was as relaxed as a Raggedy Ann doll, a little glassy eyed, but fully receptive to the day's gifts and messages. What struck me most during the day was Ian's dharma talk. It wasn't the first time I had heard him speak about consciousness, but this time it carried new significance. It focused on the levels of consciousness: mind consciousness, including our sense perceptions, store consciousness and manas. Having perceived myself as having been in the grip of Manas for some time, I greatly appreciated this opportunity to understand it a little better. For the next two days, the message of the dharma talk continued to percolate inside of me while the Day of Mindfulness had refueled me with positive energy. Feeling strong and confident, I called Tony up and asked if he would be able to join me for coffee. Fortunately, he agreed, so we planned to meet each other that evening. While we basically just small-talked over coffee, at least we could still be in each other's presence and acknowledge our caring for each other, despite the pain that we had both suffered and are still working through. There would be no fairy tale reunion for us both, but I felt more at peace than I had in a long time. I still had a sense of disappointment that things didn't turn out the way we had planned, but I was able to let myself feel the hurt and loss and simply accept it. I left knowing that there was still love between us, just not the conventional romantic

view of it that most people tend to associate with intimate relationships.



That night, as I lay awake in bed just before nodding off, I acknowledged everything that Tony had given me in the relationship. Through the relationship, I had come face-to-face with the parts of myself that I had completely disowned and didn't want to see. I had tried to crush all of these emotions and traits for so long that it had been difficult to contain them. It culminated in a fainting spell, followed by a month of a lot of fear and personal upheaval. This awakening made me take a long hard look at myself and ultimately strengthened my will to change. Throughout our relationship, I had struggled to be what I thought I **should** be – what I thought was **expected** of me. A person once made the observation that I am very much a chameleon, easily able to adapt to whatever circumstance I find myself in, but I realized I had used this potential gift to seek cover from my true colours. I was now exposed, vulnerable. I cried in relief as I recognized that, despite our differences, Tony had never stopped loving me, and I had never

stopped loving Tony. In fact, he had given me one of the greatest gifts possible. Suddenly, everything started to connect. The mystery of manas was revealing itself to me. On previous occasions, I had always considered manas to be a rather negative and unpleasant concept. Originally, “The Lover” (manas) evoked in me the image of a clinging and scornful entity set on bringing its victim to full and merciless submission, yet now I was able to see manas transformed, as the generous, all-accepting lover, offering unconditional love and compassion. For me, the revelation had been a long, painful process, which led finally to a realization of ultimate benevolence. I was being called to my true home – to truly love ALL of myself.

Manas, as described in Ian’s dharma talks, is associated with all of the destructive emotions, such as greed, envy, hate, anger and fear. In my experience with manas, inwardly I was striving to be my very best and to live up to a certain ideal I had set for myself. I was trying to incarnate all of the positive seeds that we sow in meditation. Yet, the more I did so, the more I would become mired in manas. I felt as though I somehow wasn’t practicing well – and, in fact, I wasn’t. When we practice, we are called to remember our inner beauty, which is beyond even our own comprehension. We don’t have to “try” to be any one way, because when we’re truly present, we are all in all. I noticed that I had been judging myself every time any “negative” emotion came to my awareness. As soon as that happened, I’d run in the other direction to avoid it. Little did I realize that in doing so, I was trying to escape an integral part of myself. Although we consider the emotions evoked by manas to be destructive, it’s important to acknowledge, understand, accept and feel them. While we are encouraged to plant positive seeds, it’s not intended that we deny the “negative” ones in doing so. Through meditation, we bring them to consciousness, where they will no longer control us. The practice of Mindfulness will then assist us in the transformation of this potentially vital energy, bringing darkness to light.

It seems the more you resist the Lover, the more desperate His pursuit. Inevitably, He holds up a looking glass, and all you can see is distorted reality. Yet Manas as the transformed Lover demands only that we understand, forgive and love unconditionally even (and perhaps especially) those parts of ourselves we perceive as less than perfect, or just downright nasty. When we can do that, we’ve come full circle. With Mindfulness, manas is brought to our consciousness and transformed. We retrieve a lost part of ourselves and are gently reminded that our true home is always accessible here and now.

Ouch!

Anne Fleming

Muse: ‘For happiness is only a bye-product of function, as light is a bye-product of the electric current running through the wires. If the current cannot run efficiently, the light does not come. That is why nobody finds happiness, who seeks for it on its own account.’
 (‘The Book of Merlyn’ by T.H. White)

In the dharma discussion following the CD on the Ultimate Dimension by Thay, I felt that the answer to my frustration in not understanding the talk presented must lie somewhere in the Buddha’s discourse on knowing the better way to catch a snake. As I carried Ian’s book out to the car, I realized I had once again been bitten. *I was grasping after an answer. I was caught in the struggle to understand.*

Struggling to understand the teaching in order to remove confusion, frustration, upset and anger is not required. Liberation lies in the willingness to recognize that no struggle is needed. It resides in a ‘letting go of the math.’ The Dharma teachings are quite clear. When all impediments to compassion are removed, there is only compassion. When all impediments to peace are removed, there is only peace. When all impediments to joy are removed, there is only joy. When all impediments to equanimity are removed, there is only equanimity.

I am reminded of this excerpt from ‘The Book of Merlyn’ by T.H. White.

‘Imagine a rusty bolt on the garden door, which has been set wrong, or the door has sagged on its hinges since it was put on, and for years that bolt has never been shot efficiently: except by hammering it, or by lifting the door a little, and wriggling it home with effort. Imagine then that the old bolt is unscrewed, rubbed with emery paper, bathed in paraffin, polished with fine sand, generously oiled, and reset by a skilled workman with such nicety that it bolts and unbolts - with the pressure of a feather – almost so that you could blow it open or shut. *Can you imagine the feelings of the bolt?* They are the feelings of glory, which convalescent people have, after a fever. It would look forward to being bolted, yearning for the rapture of the sweet, successful motion.

For *happiness is only a bye-product of function*, as light is a bye-product of the electric current running through the wires. If the current cannot run efficiently, the light does not come. That is *why nobody finds happiness, who seeks for it on its own account*. But a man must seek to be like the working bolt; like the unimpeded run of electricity; like the convalescent whose eyes, long thwarted in their sockets by headache and fever, so that it was grievous to move them, now flash from side to side with the ease of fishes in clear water. The eyes are working, the current is working, the bolt is working. So the light shines. That is happiness: working well.’

Liberation requires the decision to *not* struggle. It lies in the committed practice of simple awareness of the present moment and a willingness to welcome all aspects of that moment into my life. It begins with being aware of my breath. Another interpretation of the lesson is not what I need: it’s the practice of being fully present. I need only be aware of what is there each moment. I need only allow myself to be present to all elements that emerge so that I can recognize the impediments to my own peace, joy, compassion and equanimity. Liberation is that simple.

Kleshas

Pema Chodron

In her new book “No Time To Lose” (Shambhala 2005), Pema Chodron offers an insightful commentary on Shantideva’s “Bodhicaryavatara” – The Way Of The Bodhisattva. Below is an extract from her discussion of Shantideva’s fourth chapter, taken from her article in Shambhala Sun, January 2006.

Like us, Shantideva had to work with a wild mind, overpowering emotions and entrenched habitual patterns. Like us he was able to use his life, just as it was, to work intelligently with his reactivity... Shantideva addresses in Chapter 4 (of his classic) two topics essential to keeping one’s compassion (for awakening) alive. The first is attentiveness – paying attention with intelligent awareness of what’s happening. The second is working skilfully with emotions. Attentiveness is a significant part of self-reflection. By paying attention when we feel the tug of *shenpa*, we get smarter about not getting hooked. *Shenpa* is the Tibetan word for attachment...the feeling of getting hooked, a non-verbal tightening or shutting down.

The Sanskrit word *klesha* refers to a strong emotion that reliably leads to suffering. In essence, kleshas are dynamic, ineffable energy, yet it’s energy that easily enslaves us and causes us to act and speak in unintelligent ways. Kleshas arise with the subtle tension inherent in dualistic perception. If we don’t catch this tension, it sets off a chain reaction of “for” or “against.” These reactions quickly escalate, resulting in full-blown aggression, craving, ignorance, envy and pride – in other words full-blown misery for ourselves and for others. Kleshas survive on ignorance – ignorance of their insubstantial nature and the way we reinforce them – and they are fuelled by thoughts... A good analogy for the kleshas is a drug pusher. When we want drugs, the pusher is our friend. We welcome him because our addiction is so strong. But when we want to get clean, we associate the drug pusher with misery, and he becomes someone to avoid.

Shantideva's advice is to treat our crippling emotions like drug pushers. If we don't want to stay addicted for life, we have to see that our negative emotions weaken us and cause us harm. It is just as difficult to detox from emotions, as it is to recover from heavy drugs or alcohol. However, when we see that this addiction is clearly ruining our life, we become highly motivated...But I'll tell you this about klesha addiction: without the intelligence to see that it harms us and the clear intention to turn it around, that familiar urge will be very hard to interrupt before it's going strong. Do not, however, underestimate the healing power of self-reflection.

How can this powerful but completely ineffable energy do us so much harm? Shantideva presents five faults of the kleshas, the problematic aspects of our confused emotions:

1. The first fault is that we become enslaved by the kleshas. This insight alone would undercut their power, if we are attentive to it...To the degree that we are attentive, we can nip the addictive urge while it is still manageable.
2. The second fault is that we welcome the kleshas – (the strong emotions that lead to suffering). They give us something to hold on to and they set off a chain reaction that we find irresistible. This insight can be especially helpful. When we realize that we like our kleshas we begin to understand why they have such power over us. Each of us has our own personal way of welcoming and encouraging the kleshas. Being attentive to this is the first and crucial step.
3. The third fault of the kleshas, if we are not attentive, is that they will continue harming us for a very long time...Long after those we despise have moved away or died, the hatred habit remains with us. The more we run our habitual patterns, the stronger they become – and of course the stronger they become the more we run them. As this chain reaction becomes harder to interrupt, our experience of imprisonment becomes more intense until we feel hopelessly trapped with

a monstrous companion. No outer foe plagues us as much as our own kleshas.

4. The fourth fault of the kleshas is – give them an inch and they will take a mile. Shantideva warns us not to be naïve about the drug pusher: we have to know his strategies and seductive ways. Likewise we simply cannot afford to be ignorant about the power of emotions. We can neither welcome nor indulge them in hopes they'll bring us happiness and security...The only way to dissolve their power is with our wholehearted intelligent attention. We can't be stupid about this process. There's no way to abide with our dynamic, ungraspable emotions if we keep fuelling them with thoughts. It's like trying to put out a fire with kerosene.
5. The fifth and final problematic aspect of the kleshas is that as long as we are enslaved by them, there will never be world peace. We will have no peace of mind personally, and the suffering of beings everywhere will continue unabated. War will continue; and violence, neglect, addiction, and greed, will continue endlessly. By steadying ourselves before we're taken over by our emotions, we create the causes of peace and joy for us all.

Shantideva says we create our own infernal realms: our personal levels (of hell) are interdependent with our klesha-ridden minds. In his view, we must take responsibility for what happens to us. If we give safe lodging to neurosis, then how can we expect it to result in joy? Just before the Buddha attained enlightenment, his kleshas arose in full force. He was tempted by anger, desire, and all the rest; but unlike most of us, he didn't take the bait. He is always pictured as wide awake, fully present (attentive) – on the dot – relaxed and not distracted by the powerful energy of the kleshas. The slightest willingness to interrupt our old habits predisposes us to greater bravery, greater strength and greater empathy for others. No matter how trapped we feel, we can always be of benefit. How? By interrupting

our defeatist storylines and working intelligently and wisely with our kleshas. The choice is mine. I can spend my whole life strengthening my kleshas or I can weaken them. I can continue to be their slave; or realizing they're not solid, I can simply accept them as my own powerful yet ineffable energy.

Shantideva then presents the bright side – happiness comes with knowing that once they are uprooted by the eye of wisdom, the kleshas can never return. Their power evaporates once we see their (hollow) ephemeral nature. Just as a sick person won't get well without following her doctor's advice, we won't be helped by these teachings unless we put them to practice... These teachings are a way of life. To awaken *bodhicitta*, nurture it and have it flourish, take Shantideva's words very personally and use them whenever you find yourself getting hooked or carried away.

It's Up To You

Dzigar Kongtrul Rinpoche

Dzigar Kongtrul writes about self-importance and brainwashing in this excerpt from his book "It's Up To You – The Practice of Self-Reflection on the Buddhist Path" published by Shambhala. The entire excerpt can be found in Shambhala Sun, January 2006.

Any feedback that assaults our ego is a blessing in disguise. If we're willing to see the world as our teacher, we appreciate the honesty. We are not afraid to be blamed, cut down, shredded or destroyed or to have feelings hurt. Decent people do not subject themselves to this kind of abuse, but in this case we appreciate it – not because we're masochistic, but because of the greater vision we hold inside. Of course, most of us prefer to rely on the honesty of our friends and those we trust. But great practitioners like Shantideva, Patrul Rinpoche and the great mahasiddhas of the past didn't care where it came from. They were only concerned

with seeing through their own faults and self-importance.

The ability to take feedback from the world depends on our strength and focus as a practitioner. The more we welcome feedback regardless of its source, the deeper we will go in our practice. No matter how it comes to us, the phenomenal world is our teacher. And the teacher will help us do our real work, even if it hurts. From this point of view, we want to open our can of worms and look at them more closely. We want to free ourselves from all of ego's attachments, not just some. No matter how deep the pain, challenge or panic, we welcome it. No matter how shaken our solid world becomes, we appreciate it – and we deepen the appreciation until it becomes indestructible. We realize that the only threat to our well-being is self-importance. Without great faith in something other than ego, it's frightening to face the unknown... We may not want to admit it, but we (often) prefer to stay stuck.

This is the ultimate form of brainwashing. Many people are afraid of being brainwashed by religion. But there is no fear of brainwashing in Buddhism, we know we are already brainwashed by ego. Because ego does nothing but create pain and suffering, Buddhism is about getting un-brainwashed. It's about waking up from this hypnotic state of subservience to ego. Through meditation and self-reflection, our own awareness bears witness to ego's "indoctrination." We begin to see the significance of the Buddha's journey and teachings, and we see the significance of the sangha, the lineage and their blessings.

It all comes down to this: By renouncing ego's sense of special-ness, we renounce all the ways the ego lays claim to us. If we don't renounce special-ness, all of our life decisions will be made by ego. Ego will be the guide on our path – in which case our path won't go anywhere. Humility is essential to this process. With humility, you will never become full of yourself. You will always have the openness to look and through (deep) looking, to

renounce self-importance and assure your well-being.

Book Review

Janice Rubin

“HOOKED! Buddhist Writings on Greed, Desire, and the Urge to Consume” edited by Stephanie Kaza, Shambhala Publications 2005, is timely after the madness of the Festive Season. This review appeared in the Mindfulness Bell, Issue 40, Autumn 2005.

One need not look far to conclude that more, bigger, and better have become the institutionalized measures of self-worth today. The three-bedroom house that was adequate to raise two or four children a generation ago is no longer large enough for many young families today. Some of the homes springing up to meet their perceived needs – “McMansions” or “starter castles” they call them in my neck of the woods – look large enough to decently house an entire monastic order. Stephanie Kaza, who teaches religion and ecology, ecofeminism, and unlearning consumerism as Associate Professor of Environmental Studies at the University of Vermont, has assembled seventeen essays on greed, desire, and the urge to consume, written by Buddhist teachers and scholars in *Hooked!*, a 271 page paperback volume with an eye catching red cover sporting a huge fishhook.

The essays are organized under three headings: Getting hooked: desire and attachment; Practicing with desire: using Buddhist tools; and Buddhist ethics of consumption. The writers, who run the alphabetic gamut from Ajahn Amaro to Diana Winston, draw links between consumption, environmental degradation, and alienation. A growing world population and an aspiring consumer class bode ill for ecosystems and human health, they say, spelling out the paths Buddhism offers for unlearning consumerism.

Joseph Goldstein calls “wanting to want” a disease our culture keeps nourishing. We may attain

freedom from the addiction to excessive consuming, he adds, through meditative retreats that bring awareness of the nature of desire and through the practices of generosity. Suffering can be the driving force in consumerism as well as its end result. According to Pema Chodron, “we turn for relief to what we enjoy – food, alcohol, drugs, sex, work, shopping – because of the underlying insecurity of living in a world that is always changing. We get hooked when we empower (any of these anodynes) with the idea that it will bring us comfort.”

“You are what you download,” Diana Winston opines. “If we feed our minds with greed-inducing information, we are certain to get more greedy...If I practice greed, I will be more greedy. If I practice generosity, I will become more generous. Buddhism 101.” Although we might agree that it takes a little more than three robes and a begging bowl to live comfortably in our society, and also that we might be content with less than most of us possess, it takes determination and commitment to get unhooked from the addiction to a lifestyle of acquisition. If craving is the root of all suffering, we have a solution to the problem of craving in the Eightfold Path of practice presented by the Buddha, according to Pracha Hutuanuwatr and Jane Rasbash. They describe initiatives in Southeast Asia to awaken public debate on the difference between Buddhist values and the modern developments taking place. In countries like Thailand, where consumerism has become the new religion, they write, alienation has increased due to a sense of inferiority because “No matter who you are, you are never good enough.”

The essay on green power in contemporary Japan by Duncan Ryuken Williams offers some hope for the planet. If institutional Buddhism, which has traditionally allied itself with the powers-that-be in that country, can develop “greening initiatives through engaged Buddhist alternative energy models” in opposition to the power industry, all things seem possible.

And you keep quiet and I will go.

Keeping Quiet

Pablo Neruda

Extravagaria, translated by Alastair Reid, Farrar, Straus & Giroux 2001.

Now we will count to twelve
And we will all be still.
For once on the face of the Earth
Let's not speak in any language,
Let's stop for one second,
And not move our arms so much.
It would be an exotic moment
Without rush, without engines,
We would all be together
in a sudden strangeness.

Fishermen in the cold sea
Would not harm whales
And the man gathering salt
Would look at his hurt hands.
Those who prepare green wars,
Wars with gas, wars with fire,
Victory with no survivors,
Would put on their clean clothes
And walk about with their brothers
In the shade, doing nothing.

What I want should not be confused
With total inactivity.
Life is what it is about:
I want no truck with death.
If we were not so single minded
About keeping our lives moving,
And for once could do nothing.
Perhaps a huge silence
Might interrupt this sadness
Of never understanding ourselves
And of threatening ourselves with death.
Perhaps the earth can teach us
As when everything seems dead
And later proves to be alive.

Now I will count up to twelve

Inner Child Meditations

Ian Prattis

These two meditations are taken from "Healing the Inner Child" in Ian's forthcoming book "The Buddha at the Gate," Parallax Press, August 2006

In Plum Village, Thich Nhat Hanh's practice center in France, Thay has provided a much loved practice *gatha* for the meditation community, which begins with "I have arrived, I am home." This is used in walking and other meditations as an instrument to concentrate on breath and be present. In this way the fears and traumas of the past and anxieties about the future do not crowd in and overwhelm the mind. The *gatha* with walking meditation, connected to in-breath and out-breath, provides an essential tool to take care of the many mental formations that flood our waking consciousness with fear, pain and suffering. With daily diligent practice we can examine these same mental formations but from a place centered in mindfulness. This simple *gatha* has become the dharma seal of Plum Village.

The Vietnamese origin of the Plum Village *gatha* – "I have arrived, I am home" - provides a penetrating tool to touch our inner child who suffers from trauma and abuse experienced in childhood. It does not translate as: "I have arrived, I am home." It translates as: "Your child has arrived, your child is home." This is so beautiful to say to yourself as you breathe in and out whenever you do walking meditation, for each step welcomes your wounded child to be well and to come home to you. When you walk to your car or your office, by a river or in a park, you can be more specific and recite to yourself:

| | |
|------------|----------------------------|
| In-breath | My inner child has arrived |
| Out-breath | My inner child is home. |

This is good practice, for with intelligence you use your conscious breath and concentration to heal, simply by welcoming your wounded inner child home through the practice of being present. We are capable of arriving in every moment of practice, whether it is sitting meditation, walking meditation, having a mindful meal, taking a shower or even doing laundry. Being present in each moment is a way of practice that welcomes home the injured, frightened inner child harmed by abuse.

In order to heal it is necessary to cultivate the internal energy of mindfulness before stopping and looking deeply into what caused the fears and traumas of abuse. The practice of arriving in each moment nurtures that strength. From the space of clarity provided by locating yourself in the present moment, not only is your child welcomed home, there is also the lucidity and instrument of mindfulness practice to deal with the ghosts of the past and at the same time put the ghosts of future anxiety to rest.

In-Breath: My inner child has arrived
Out Breath: My inner child is home

Love Meditation for the Inner Child

Another tool is to adapt the Four Brahmaviharas meditation to focus on the injured inner child. This meditation is based on the Buddha's teachings on Love. Prepare for meditation by sitting comfortably with the spine erect. Bring your concentration and focus to breath on the In-breath and breath on the Out-breath. After ten or twenty breaths, whenever you feel calm and stable, begin by bringing each of the components – Love, Compassion, Joy, Equanimity – into yourself, the adult you. The next sequence now provides a focus and concentration to water the seeds of Love, Compassion, Joy and Equanimity within your inner child.

In-breath I bring Love
Out-breath to my inner child.

You can say a loving name for your inner child if you wish. Say silently "Dear Mary" or "Darling Joseph." Feel the energy of love fill you from top to toe and register with the energy for several breaths. Then continue in the same way with:

In-breath I bring Compassion
Out-breath to my inner child

In-breath I bring Joy
Out-breath to my inner child

In-breath I bring Equanimity
Out-breath to my inner child

Then conclude the meditation by once more bringing Love, Compassion, Joy and Equanimity to the adult you. This meditation nurtures the wounded inner child wonderfully and at the same time nurtures the adult you. The Buddha's teachings on Love provide the foundation for this Love meditation to the wounded inner child. The concentration on these four qualities is an incredibly powerful instrument for healing. I do not have the words to adequately describe the impact but Thich Nhat Hanh does (Teachings on Love pg 18):

The Buddha says if we gather together all the virtuous actions we have realized in this world, they are not equal to practicing love meditations.....If we collect together all the light from the stars, it will not be as bright as the light of the moon. In the same way, practicing love meditation is greater than all other virtuous actions combined.

Dharma at Denny's

Cheryl Barnes-Neff

Cheryl mentored with Ian for the Order of Interbeing and was ordained by Thay at the Stonehill College retreat in Boston last August with the dharma name: True Happiness in Peace. She and her fellow aspirants from Orlando organized a visit, which evoked a hilarious adventure – below.

When I was in nursing school, one of the older instructors would teach us a variety of maxims about the realities of being a nurse. One of my favorites was “Never stand when you can sit, never sit when you can lie down. Pee whenever you can and eat whenever you can. You never know when you’ll get the next chance!”

When my mentor as an aspirant for the Order of Interbeing, Ian Prattis, was going to be able to come to Orlando to offer a Day of Mindfulness and spend time with me and the other aspirants, it turned out that he and his wife Carolyn would be able to spend about a week in town. My first thought was to take advantage of this opportunity and ask Ian to speak to the staff at the hospice where I work. I didn’t want to stop there, either! I wanted to look for other ways for healthcare workers to hear about the Buddhist perspective on death and dying. We in the healthcare field spend long hours taking care of our patients, learning about the latest technical advances, dashing around trying to fulfill all the demands on our time. What a great opportunity to bring a spiritual teacher to my colleagues who often ignore this important aspect of their and their patient’s well being.

One of the organizations that I contacted was the Association for Death Education and Counseling

(ADEC). This multi-disciplinary group concerns themselves with the way we grieve and how professionals can better help their bereaved patients and family members. They were very interested in having Ian speak, so we arranged for him to speak at their next meeting. Their meetings were held at a Denny’s restaurant near a highway off ramp. I wondered at this point what Ian would think about this group of healthcare professionals, the kings and queens of multi-tasking, having a dinner meeting at a Denny’s diner. When the day of the meeting arrived, Ian and Carolyn arrived and sat in a quite corner of the diner enjoying a cup of tea as the ADEC members held their brief meeting and finished their meal; well, they were *supposed* to be finishing their meal before the presentation.

They were ready for the presentation so Bob Allen, a fellow aspirant, got the projector and screen set up, and I brought Ian to the small meeting room. Ian was introduced and warmly welcomed by the group. I was holding my breath a bit, since folks were still munching the last of their meals and waiters were buzzing in and out, cutting in front of Ian as he started to speak. In dread I kept an eye on the door from the meeting room to the kitchen and sure enough, a young man entered to clear plates, almost knocking over the projector and looking a bit confused at hearing Ian’s soft but firm voice discussing Tibetan death rituals! When he left the room, Ian lead the group in a Phowa Meditation on the OM, AH, HUNG Mantra. The group was very receptive to this and jumped right into closing their eyes and chanting along. I couldn’t resist looking over at the window as the tones of Ooommmm.... Aaahhhhhh.... Huuunnnnggg... filled the air to see a couple of bus boys peeking in with puzzled faces at what was going on.

Ian played a video of Thich Nhat Hanh’s dharma talk on death and dying, telling the beautiful story of Anathapindika and the teachings on no-birth and no-death. Ian and Carolyn shared their diary entries of their personal experiences of the time when Ian was deathly ill in India and Carolyn waited at home, wondering and worrying about what would

happen. They shared their insights into the nature and impermanence of life and the possibility of overcoming our fear of death. The hum of people talking, dishes clinking, and the general busyness of the diner surprisingly seemed to settle and became almost totally quiet. With the last food on plates and coffee in mugs forgotten, the ADEC members were as moved as Anathapindika himself in learning that these principles are commonly taught to Buddhist monks and nuns, yet we lay people need to learn these wonderful teachings as well.



The meeting ended and we helped Bob pack everything up and he, Ian, and Carolyn drove home. I stayed behind and many of the participants stayed to talk more about the teaching and the need to bring more talks like this to the healthcare field. I explained that ideally, the setting for this kind of talk should be a quiet place where everyone could listen in mindfulness. They laughed and agreed, mentioning a few settings where we could hold the

next talk. One of the things we also agreed on with a smile was that sometimes we have to bring the Dharma to where the people are, in order to spark their interest. The Buddha taught that taking even one breath in mindfulness can bear fruit, so too can bringing wonderful teachings to a Denny's Diner in Orlando plant seeds that may someday bloom in the most unexpected places.

Marion Dewar

Vinh Nguyen

Marion Dewar received a peace award at the 2005 Peace Prayer Day. Vinh Nguyen, Chan Ngo, introduced her on behalf of the Vietnamese community and presented the award to her. Here is his warm speech.

I would like to thank Ian Prattis and Friends for Peace for giving me this opportunity to present one of the Peace Awards today. The word "Inspiration" written on the wall behind me is a beautiful word. We inspire to build a better city, *nous nous inspirons à bâtir une ville meilleure*. When I saw this logo on the wall, the first person that came to my mind was Mrs. Marion Dewar, the very special person that I would like to introduce to you today. Mrs. Dewar is very well known in our Vietnamese community. Some of you probably remember the Vietnamese boat people saga, but some of you may not have heard about Project 4000. The fall of South Vietnam in 1975 resulted in hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese fleeing the new Communist regime in order to avoid forced relocation to remote areas, concentration camps designed to "re-educate" non-supporters or, in some cases, forced exile from the country. Many fled in boats, seeking refuge in neighbouring Asian countries, earning the Vietnamese refugees the title "boat people".

In 1978, with many neighbouring countries closing down their borders to the refugees and hundreds of thousands of the "boat people" falling victim to the

sea, starvation and pirates, their struggle was difficult. Witnessing images broadcast around the world of overcrowded, dangerous boats and abysmal refugee camps, Mayor Marion Dewar was moved to help these Vietnamese refugees. A campaign initiated in May 1979 by then-mayor Marion Dewar, Project 4000 succeeded in bringing 4,000 Vietnamese refugees to Ottawa. Project 4000 is a model for rapid community involvement in a humanitarian crisis and successful refugee integration into a community. Marion Dewar's call in May 1979 for a public meeting into possible sponsorship of 4000 Vietnamese refugees was met with overwhelming support by Ottawa's citizens. Volunteering to privately sponsor a refugee or family entailed a commitment by the group to provide financial, material and emotional care for the refugee or refugee family for its first year in Canada. Numerous volunteer groups undertook this challenge, including staff from the health units in Ottawa and City Hall, various churches across the city, community associations, and private citizens. The sponsorship program was a huge success, sparking similar initiatives across the country.

However, there remained thousands of Vietnamese families who still required a home. As a result, Marion Dewar decided to honour Canada Day by calling a press conference to challenge other municipalities across Canada to sponsor Vietnamese refugees. Communities across the country moved quickly to take up the challenge. Smaller communities across Canada, such as Yellowknife, also volunteered to help Vietnamese refugees. And by the end of July, only a month after her challenge was issued, Prime Minister Joe Clark's Progressive Conservative government increased the number of Vietnamese refugees it would admit into Canada from 8,000 to 50,000. But Marion Dewar refuses to accept praise for Project 4000's success, insisting that all she did was to give the citizens of Ottawa the opportunity and recourse to help the Vietnamese refugees.

Twenty-five years later the Vietnamese community has established itself as a vibrant and integral part

of this city. The Vietnamese population has grown in the Ottawa-Hull area from virtual non-existence prior to 1975 to around 7,000 at present. According to a report issued by the Vietnamese Canadian Federation, "the majority of [Vietnamese refugees in Canada] have successfully settled down. They own homes and businesses and have children in college, and have more than one job or wage earner in the household". Such success would not have taken place without the efforts of people like Marion Dewar.

On November 11th last year, the Vietnamese community celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Project 4000. This anniversary was an opportunity for the Vietnamese refugees to celebrate the successes of their community in Canada, and also to express thanks to the organizers, sponsors and volunteers who helped them settle here. Marion Dewar was one of the key organizers of the Project 4000 and a very special tribute to her took place at this anniversary. On behalf of the all of us here today and of the Vietnamese community, with my deep gratitude and respect, I would like to invite Marion to come forward and accept the 2005 Peace Award.

Healing Hands Himalayas – Reflections

Sami Aly

Sangha member Sami Aly organized a medical team to go to the Himalayas in the fall of 2004. Here are his reflections on priorities to be considered for the next trip. His team was sponsored by Child Haven International and by Pine Gate Sangha.

I have some views for how to improve on what we have done with the medical and dental team that set up camps in Nepal, Tibet and Bangladesh for the next time around. Let us start by defining "improve". How do we measure better? Obviously there is no single answer. The one I used is maximizing the provided sustainable healthcare. As

a small team, what we can do is always short compared to what is needed. As such it would be wise to do it most effectively.

1- Whom should we serve

There is plenty that we can do. Needy patients are everywhere from highly populated areas to remote sparse locations. Patients' illness varies from acute, complex, chronic or emergency. Although each patient deserves the utmost care, with limited resources it is prudent to set a priority. A priority based on the number of patients cured for the resources taken sounds like a fair one. That will set our future goal to Primary Care and Public Health/Preventive Healthcare in highly populated areas. The Preventive Healthcare is sometimes a bit difficult because it is tied to multiplicities of cultural issues and its results are long term but the benefits are very high. The beauty of this focus is that in a given region, there are a limited number of diagnoses that cover a large number of patients. Focusing on good diagnosis and treatment on those ones take us a long way. The other beauty is that we can effectively train local clinicians on these illnesses and achieve higher benefits.

2- Where should our emphasis be

- a. Offering the service
- b. Enabling locals to offer the service

There are two situations. In an emergency situation (e.g. earth quake, flood, natural disaster etc.), there is a need for immediate relief right at the time of the disaster. The places we went to are a good representation for the second situation (b) where it is not urgent. Patients have been ill for years (10 or so as they told us) but their healthcare system is not capable to reach everyone. A better goal in this situation is to help increasing the capacity of the healthcare system through sustainable development of the local resources. While the medical camp main objective has been to see as many patients as possible, training comes in the way and typically becomes a secondary side benefit. Local

practitioners are there 365 days a year. We go there for 10 days.

3- How can we help for the long term

Another part of the equation is the root cause for the shortage and lack of advancement for their healthcare system. More clinicians, working modern facilities and equipments can do a lot of good

4- Where do we get medication

It was good to carry our medication with us. However, we were successful also to buy local ones when we ran short. The advantage of the local ones is their availability for a sustained period of time. Transitioning to mostly local medication is a good goal. Cost is likely to match the discounted prices we get in Canada

Conclusion

The model I like to see is to set up a free local clinic by hiring a local clinician (nurse or a physician) to provide primary care in a highly populated area. The clinic will best be hosted in a Child Haven International premise. Based on the funds we raise, arrangements such as: some days are for a fee and others are free are set. The clinic becomes the anchor point for a medical camp. The objective of the medical camp shifts from offering service to mainly training for the local clinician, examining the more complicated patient cases and stocking up the pharmacy. The local nurse does the first line of contact (triage) and all referrals will be seen by a guest clinician as part of a medical team. To make that work without hitting ego barriers, we need to focus on young progressive local clinicians to be the CORE part of our team there.

As more funds become available, the model can evolve by

- seeking more skilled local clinicians,
- moving from no to free medication

We also have to realize the other intangible benefits of the traveling volunteers. These are the benefits you get by the cultural mix over there and on their return by sharing their experience with others and enticing others to join in. A pilot project is underway called “Medical Haven” in the village of Noakhali in Bangladesh. Arrangements have already started to setup up the clinic and recruit a nurse. Fundraising to keep this clinic running will change to be monthly pledges from local families in Ottawa and from Pine Gate sangha.



My Blogging Journey

Sarah Mae Ives

A few months ago, the concept of a blog was very foreign to me. I've never been one to eagerly embrace new technology, trends or gadgets. I know enough about computers to get by and that's about it. Well, this year it all changed. Creating a journal was required for my tutorial with Ian Prattis at Carleton. My friend Natalie decided she would be adventurous and create a blog for the journal requirement. I thought, *how wonderful for Natalie!* Meanwhile, I turned back to my desk, sipped my tea, grabbed my pen and started jotting down my sangha experience the good old-fashioned way: on

paper with a fancy fountain pen. I had visions of a new leather bound journal with writing, maybe a little drawing, a couple photos, cutting and pasting; I loved the creativity and craftsmanship involved. This would not be possible in any new technological forum. Or was it?

My journal vision came crashing down days later in Ian's office. I could tell he preferred the new blog forum and suggested (i.e. strongly requested) that I “try it too.” With Ian, my old “I'm not that technologically sound” argument didn't get far. Heck, I was young and I'd surely catch on fast. He was right - days later, I had posted my first entry and was hot on the trail of blogging. I was impressed (and slightly nervous) at seeing my name and writing online, although still not entirely convinced. Soon after my first few entries, my old internal critic had risen to the fore of my affairs. *Who's going to read it? Is it wise to write my private thoughts and feelings online? Or presumptuous to think that my unexamined thoughts about sangha life are interesting?* Well, it turns out blogs are good for more than a few reasons. First, people can comment and, although there weren't many, I appreciated the few I received. People are busy and, even if many didn't respond, I brought the questions that arose while writing these entries back to sangha. Secondly, it's not presumptuous – if people aren't interested, they simply won't read. With a journal or book, one often expects feedback (even if they don't necessarily want it). One reason that blogging is so wonderful is that it's casual; one can read and enjoy without feeling the pressure of having to respond.

To my great surprise, I began to thoroughly enjoy posting my thoughts and experiences of practice online; I was constantly thinking of things to say and exactly how to say it. I now realize that blogging is an authentically creative way to interact with people in a community or those browsing the internet. Over the span of three months, I mulled over many new concepts, experiences, setbacks and triumphs. The topics ranged from my initial nervousness, to the mindfulness trainings, to my

apprehension during silent meditation and love of guided meditation, and the many concepts from Thay's "Ultimate Dimension" series of dharma talks. Writing about impermanence, death, dharma, Qi-Gong, breath, energy, love, compassion and understanding enabled me to reflect on the magnitude of these issues and the real way in which the principles of Engaged Buddhism apply directly to my life. Above all, blogging was a fun learning experience that exposed me to a fresh new way of communicating. They say one should never underestimate the power of knowledge and, with the internet being such an influential medium, blogging is an imperative and practical skill if you want to have a voice. I believe that the sangha deserves to be talked about, discussed and questioned in an open and forthright manner. The mindfulness trainings, the environmental issues, the concepts of mindful speech and consumption - these are all subjects that need to be heard so that people are aware of what the world can look like. Above all, the loving and caring that is fostered in the sangha is important for others to know and I believe blogging is an authentic, inexpensive, easy and efficient way to accomplish this. I send my gratitude to everyone in Pine Gate sangha for a wonderfully fulfilling journey that has only just begun.

www.observemeditation.blogspot.com

Sangha Fairy Tales

Nat Ward

I am not certain how to enfold all of my experiences and observations over the past several months into one neat and tidy pile. It is a daunting task, to be sure. I set out to examine experiential methodology, the general notion of observing yourself and your own experiences in research and Engaged Buddhism. Experiential methodology is often overlooked by researchers because we are never considered the observed, only the observer, seeking to understand other people's experiences. This notion is problematic because all of human life

is made up of experiences for observer and observed alike. Although we cannot experience what others do, we can do our best to relate to them through our own experiences. We understand each other by relaying our experiences through text and narratives.

To communicate my experiences I decided to keep a blog: A public space wherein all my thoughts and experiences could be relayed to anyone who wanted to examine them, comment on them, or seek to understand them. The blog was a new task and seeing that I don't keep a journal in my non-virtual life, I was unsure of how I would feel about trying to keep one online. Fortunately for me, I love technology (when it works) and I liked that Sarah was doing the same and that I could check in on her blog to see what she was thinking about, and then we could discuss it. I enjoyed having the space, somewhere to post my thoughts, photographs, and questions. The blog is a forum of silence. I communicate my thoughts with others through silence and they respond in kind. The use of silence is something I noticed and remarked upon. On the path to the present moment, I have found silence and the benefits of silence have found me. It is easiest to contemplate in this setting.

Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings guide us all and have prompted many thoughts from deep within. Although he is not physically present at the sangha, somehow it seems that he is right there. Together, the sangha explores his ideas and seeks to make sense of how to apply these thoughts to our modern day existence. How we can make this real and embody the teachings. We seek to practice the art of being mindful, beginning within the sangha itself. Individually and together, we create compassion and mindfulness in our lives, and look for peace within ourselves, knowing that peace within translates to peace without. With each step we try to tread carefully on the earth, with each breath we attempt to be aware and appreciative. My experiences with the Pine Gate sangha and the teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh have changed my life. Much in the same way that going to the gym

and living a healthy lifestyle is a way of life, living mindfully is too. Although difficult at first, it becomes enveloped in our day to day interactions. Energy is no longer expended wastefully because what is being put forth is a more positive and conscientious way of being. The realization that we are all in fact interconnected leads us to rethink those harsh words we were going to say. Life is not easy for anyone and so, if we recognize how we are all interconnected, then we will work harder to be kind to others.

This has been a learning experience that will surpass all others because it will be carried through in my day-to-day interactions instead of written into a paper and forgotten, as most research is. I have learned to observe myself, without objectification or judgment, but with the careful eye of a researcher, and to explore Engaged Buddhism. I have found these experiences enlightening as an individual and also as an anthropologist. This is what has been missing from our research methods and my life...Pine Gate, thank you for opening the door. www.sanghafairytales.blogspot.com

Two Poems

Nadia Nesrallah

Interêtre

Il y a qu'une émotion
 Il y a qu'une pensée
 Aujourd'hui je me sens à l'aise
 Demain n'existe pas
 Toutes mes aspirations
 Sont contenues dans mes inspirations
 Toutes mes inquiétudes disparaissent
 Chaque fois que j'expire
 Et en même temps
 Je sais seulement
 Qu'il y a maintenant

Les nuages
 Le ciel

Le soleil
 Sont refléter quand je respire
 La paix
 Serait facilement atteinte
 Si les autres
 Feraient de même

My Mindfulness Bells

The gentle breeze
 Blows softly
 Eyes close
 Breathing deeply

The clear blue sky
 Inspires joy
 Taking a moment
 Feeling alive

The warmth of the sun
 Sends a gentle reminder
 Being aware
 Present here and now

The darkest storm clouds
 Call for notice
 The beauty of nature
 So easily found

The sound of thunder
 Speaks for silence
 A jolting reminder
 Of the impermanence of calm

The twilight
 Brings millions of stars
 Though only few are visible
 Their magnificence brings peace

Taking Refuge

Ian Prattis

This is an excerpt from the “Taking Refuge” chapter of Ian’s forthcoming book “The Buddha at the Gate.” Parallax Press, August 2006

Taking refuge can also provide many delightful surprises. It is not always a dharma teacher, wise sister or high monk who is there to provide solace and guidance. My grandson Callun has provided quite a few surprises for me. He lives with his father on Vancouver Island in British Columbia. One summer holiday Carolyn and I spent a sea kayaking adventure with Callun and his father Iain, exploring the fascinating coastline of Vancouver Island. On one occasion when Iain and Carolyn went shopping, I stayed at the house to meditate. Callun was playing outside. He came in crying after a while and tapped me on the shoulder. “Grand Pooh Bear” – that is what he calls me – “Grand Pooh Bear, I am so sorry to disturb your practice but I have been stung by a bee on my neck and it hurts.” I opened my eyes and took Callun into my arms and said: “My dear Callun, you *are* my practice.” I gently took the stinger out of his neck, put some ice on it and cuddled him for a while before he happily went outside again to play. He had brought home to me that all of life is my practice. To my grandson Callun I bow down in gratitude for being such a mindfulness bell for me.

When I take refuge in this manner, I am aware of the Buddhanature being graciously presented to me. Another grandchild, Millie, recently sent me some drawings for my sixty third birthday in 2005. With her five year old determination she endeavoured to draw a picture of me – no feet, only one arm, with a fuzzy beard, jug handle ears and much slimmer than reality! Over my head she had drawn a yellow halo, which is totally undeserving, yet I learned

from my daughter that this is how Millie thinks of me. I realized that my grand-daughter was revealing her Buddhanature to her grandfather and I joyfully took refuge in her love and kindness

Several years ago, after leading a meditation retreat on the British Columbia mainland I arranged to take a ferry across to Nanaimo on Vancouver Island to visit with my son and grandson Callun. It was a beautiful calm sea voyage with the sunset dancing in the wake of the ferry. Although I was tired from the retreat this was a delightful respite. Both Iain and Callun were there as the boat docked in Nanaimo. As it was almost Callun’s bedtime he asked if I would read him a story once we got to their home. I was happy to do this. Callun quickly changed into his pyjamas and chose a story for me to read. I lay down on his bed beside him and started to read. In only a few minutes I was fast asleep! My son, Iain, on hearing the silence, came into the bedroom and saw that Callun had pulled the bedcovers up over me and was sitting up in bed with one hand resting lightly on my shoulder, a beautiful smile on his face as he took care of his grandfather. My son was moved to tears by this. He drew a chair into the bedroom and sat there with us for several hours. He did not want to miss the magic. Three generations taking refuge in one another. Totally present, hearts wide open. Only one snoring, but gently!

2006 Talks and Retreats with Dharmacharya Ian Prattis

Friday March 24, 2006
 Elizabeth Wyn Wood Secondary
 Ottawa
 10.00am – 11.00am
Contact: Catherine Cosstick

Mindfulness Talk with Ian Prattis

Catherine_cosstick@ocdsb.edu.on.ca
 613 828 5016; School: 613 225 8826 ext 281

Wednesday April 8 - 9, 2006
 Orlando, Florida
Contact: Cheryl Barnes-Neff
 Pam Allen

Mindfulness Weekend

nightngle@yahoo.ca
PAllen1236@aol.com 407 353 2000

Tuesday September 26, 2006
 7.00pm – 9.00pm
 Warren Wilson College
 Ashville, NC
Contact: Ryan Boyle

Public Talk “What’s Love Got To Do With It?”

rboyle@warren-wilson.edu

Thurs Sept 28 – Sunday Sept 31, 2006

Southern Dharma Retreat Center: ***DYING WELL, LIVING WELL*** with Dharmacharya
 Ian Prattis & Carolyn Hill, Order of Interbeing

North Carolina, USA

Contact: Southern Dharma Retreat Center, 1661 West Rd, Hot Springs, NC 28743, USA
 828 622 7112 info@southerndharma.org www.southerndharma.org

Registration: <http://www.southerndharma.org/registration.htm> forms in HTML and PDF

The Buddha’s teachings on death and dying contain a wonderful surprise. The practice of preparing to die well is similar to the practice for living well – mindfully being in the present moment. Understandings of death and dying are all in the mind, so in our everyday mindfulness we also prepare for that final moment of merging with the Wisdom Mind of the Buddha. Tools of deep listening and being present equip caregivers to encounter death and dying with compassion and strength. Retreatants will be introduced to the mind and its levels of consciousness, to the *bardo* states and to the tools of preparation and guidance for an aware death. This enables our consciousness to take a form that serves all sentient beings. The teachings and practices provide tremendous hope and inspiration, for if we know how to die well, we will also know how to live well.

The schedule will include dharma talks, sutra readings, exercises, ceremonies, walking meditation, and silent time with Mother Earth. There is a lot of silence during the retreat so that we may nurture deep compassion. From that energy we can derive answers to the questions: “Did I live well? Did I love well?” Gentle instructions and meditative silence will help us to become more present. The retreat culminates with a transmission ceremony of the Five Mindfulness Trainings and a sharing circle.

| Pine Gate Winter Session: January 2006 - May 2006 | |
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| Thursday Jan 5 7.00pm – 9.00pm | Gathering of the Sangha as a Council Fresh Eyes for 2006 |
| Thursday Jan 12 7.00pm – 9.00pm | Thich Nhat Hanh: Bishop's University Retreat CD 1: My Dear I Suffer, Please Help - Part 1 |
| Thursday Jan 19 7.00pm – 9.00pm | Thich Nhat Hanh: Bishop's University Retreat CD 1 - Part 2 |
| Thursday Jan 26 7.00pm – 9.00pm | Sutra Study: The Better Way to Catch a Snake Dharma Discussion Groups |
| Thursday Feb 2 7.00pm – 9.00pm | Thich Nhat Hanh: Bishop's University Retreat CD 2: Karma: Cause and Effect – Part 1 |
| SATURDAY Feb 4 5.00pm – 7.00pm | Dharma Talk Pot Luck Supper |
| Thursday Feb 9 7.00pm – 9.00pm | Beginning Anew Process Dr Frank Musten – True Precious Seed |
| Thursday Feb 16 7.00pm – 9.00pm | Thich Nhat Hanh: Bishop's University Retreat CD 2 – Part 2 |
| Thursday Feb 23 7.00pm – 9.00pm | Thich Nhat Hanh: Bishop's University Retreat CD 3: Empty Sex and True Love – Part 1 |
| Thursday March 2 7.00pm – 9.00pm | Thich Nhat Hanh: Bishop's University Retreat CD 3 – Part 2 |
| SATURDAY March 4 5.00pm – 7.00pm | Friends for Peace AGM and 2006 Peace Prayer Day Organization |
| Thursday March 9 7.00pm – 9.00pm | Five Mindfulness Trainings Recitation |
| Thursday March 16 7.00pm – 9.00pm | Thich Nhat Hanh: Bishop's University Retreat CD 4: Closing Dharma Talk – Part 1 |
| Thursday March 23 7.00pm – 9.00pm | Thich Nhat Hanh: Bishop's University Retreat CD 4 – Part 2 |
| Thursday March 30 7.00pm – 9.00pm | Deep Relaxation and Touching the Earth |
| SATURDAY April 1 5.00pm – 7.00pm | Dharma Talk Pot Luck Supper |
| Thursday April 6 7.00pm – 9.00pm | Pema Chodron: True Happiness CD 1 |
| Thursday April 13 7.00pm – 9.00pm | Film Night |
| Thursday April 20 7.00pm – 9.00pm | Pema Chodron: The Way of the Bodhisattva CD: Practicing Peace in Times of War – Part 1 |
| Thursday April 27 7.00pm – 9.00pm | Pema Chodron: The Way of the Bodhisattva CD: Practicing Peace in Times of War – Part 2 |
| Thursday May 4 7.00pm – 9.00pm | Pema Chodron: True Happiness CD 2 |
| SATURDAY May 6 11.00am – 1.00pm | Sangha Hike in Gatineau Park Gather at Parking Lot #7 – Kingsmere |
| Thursday May 11 7.00pm – 9.00pm | Pema Chodron: True Happiness CD 4 |
| Thursday May 18 7.00pm – 9.00pm | Pema Chodron: True Happiness CD 6 |
| Thursday May 25 7.00pm – 9.00pm | Beginning Anew Ceremony Winter Session 2006 Closure |

The Lazy Days of Summer program (June, July and August 2006) every Thursday at 7.00pm provides an opportunity for sangha members to bring forward topics and practices suitable for the mandate of Pine Gate sangha, cultivating the seeds of leadership and responsibility for the community

DIRECTIONS: Take Queensway to Woodroffe S. exit; Go to Baseline Rd; RT on Baseline; RT on Highgate (next lights); RT on Westbury; LT on Rideout and follow the crescent round to 1252 Rideout Crescent, home of the Pine Gate Meditation Hall.
www.ianprattis.com/pinegate.htm (613) 726 0881