

The Berkeley Buddhist Priory Newsletter January-February, 2005

Enlightenment: It's Not What You Look For; It Might Be What You Find by Rev. Master Jiyu- Kennett

(The following section on Enlightenment is an excerpt from *The Roar of the Tigress*, page 13-16, Shasta Abbey Press, 2000. This book is drawn from the many lectures of the late Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett that had been taped and transcribed. The late Rev. Master Daizui MacPhillamy did a masterful job of editing these talks into this book.)

What, then, is this "enlightenment" that the Buddha found? Understand that the Buddhist world has been stuck with the word "enlightenment" for two-thousand-odd years. That has been very unfortunate, because the Buddha did not go out to look for enlightenment; He was not trying to "get a spiritual experience". He went out to find the reason for birth, old age, decay, and death. In other words, to put it in Zen terminology, he had the first koan in existence: "Why is there misery in the world? Why is there suffering? How do I get out of it?" He was trying to escape from life instead of accepting that life exists and being able to rise above it. In trying to escape from it, He could find nothing; in accepting it, He found all. His koan is the same koan, which we dress up in various ways, that every one of us brings to Zen training; "How can I escape living? How can I escape dying? This same koan appears at every turn. We can call it what we like, we can use what terminology we like, but it is the same question as Shakyamuni Buddha's. And we have to solve it by the same method: by first accepting it and then transcending it.

As I said, Shakyamuni Buddha did not go out to look for enlightenment; He went out to look for the cure of suffering and

by accident, He found the Eightfold Path which was the method that got over the problem. By accident He got something else: He got peace of mind. The only way I can describe it accurately to you is by this story: supposing you've got a caveman who wants to break a stone, so he goes on slamming it with another stone and nothing happens. One day, by accident, he has a bright idea: he fits the second stone to a piece of wood, and so he makes a hammer with which he breaks the first stone. He did not set out to make a hammer, he set out to break a stone. By accident he got the hammer-that is, enlightenment. That's how you "get" it, and that's what it is: it's the bonus you get for doing something about you.

If all you're looking for is the bonus, you're not going to get it, because the thing that matters is doing something about you, doing something about the inner wall. You built it: you pull it down. You made the mess of you: you have to clean it up. If the pond is muddy and you can't see the moon of Zen, it is because you polluted it. In this day of environmental concern, you should get the point of that loud and clear. If you pollute the water, it will not reflect the moon. We put all the daft ideas into our own skulls: we have to throw them out. Shakyamuni Buddha tried all sorts of ways; He had to go back to the naive mind of the child to find the purity and the stillness, and the iron, with which to live life.

And when you realize the true extent of this purity and stillness, you realize your position in the scheme of things and you know the awe-fullness of the Unborn. You "see" the world as if through an ever-changing kaleidoscope that can see the Buddha in everything. This is what is meant by the line in our Morning Service scriptures which says, "The wooden figure sings and the stone maiden dances." And the fence posts sing and dance: they all glorify the Eternal. To be able to see Buddha Nature in all things, to be able to see the spirit in all things (for it exists in all things), this is what is meant by enlightenment. It is not something that will make you a better ballet dancer, or a better

writer, or a better this, or a better that, although it may very well do that. That's a bonus; that's not what you've done it for. Bonuses exist, but they must not be taken as the purpose for which you train. That's not what you go to study Zen for, or what you go to study any religion for. You go there because you are so fed up with you that you are ready to give up everything in order to know the Eternal, to know God!

Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett being ordained as a Buddhist monk by the Venerable Seck Kim Seng, in Malaysia, on January 21, 1962.

I can remember saying, many years ago, to a Christian monk who was asking why I wanted to go into monasticism, "Well, at least it will help me get rid of my sins", and I was sixteen or seventeen at the time. He said, "You think that's what you go into a monastery for? You've got another one coming!" Yes! I thought it might help me to be a better person, but when I really analyzed it out, I discovered that this did not go nearly far enough: what I wanted was what at a later date I came to call "the perfection of Zen". I was willing, eager, to give up "me" completely, which is to want to know God, or the Eternal. And when you sit in meditation, that is what you sit for. If you sit down to meditate today, know that that is what you are sitting there for. There are ways and ways in which you can be helped in doing this, and later on we hope to show you how they work, but you need to know why you are sitting there.

¹ Koan: a statement or story of the catalyst for an ancient master's enlightenment which is used by a Zen master as a teaching device to help a disciple realize her or his True Nature. By extension, it means any spiritual barrier or fundamental question in one's training which one needs to face, penetrate, clarify, and transcend. In Rinzai Zen, the formal koans are used in meditation practice; in Soto Zen the naturally arising koans of

everyday life.

² The way to transcend suffering as taught by Shakyamuni Buddha in the Fourth Noble Truth. The eight aspects are right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

Priory News

On Sunday, November 7, the Priory held its yearly memorial for our founder, Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett. It is a joy for the Sangha to offer our gratitude and willingness to Rev. Master Jiyu who died eight years ago, on November 6, 1996. Rev. Kinrei's ordination as a Buddhist monk was 25 years ago, on November 4, 1979 and the Sangha also gathered to offer their gratitude to Rev. Kinrei for his teaching and training. Many generous gifts were given to him including a beautiful lotus scepter and money. After Rev. Kinrei's Dharma talk, people went around the corner from the Priory to Judy Brown's house to celebrate the day with a wonderful potluck lunch. It was a very warm and joyful gathering with much good food, many cakes, and good company.

On December 12, the Priory celebrated the great Enlightenment of Shakyamuni Buddha. It was a beautiful ceremony with the Sangha singing many special Enlightenment Day hymns. After the ceremony we offered our best wishes to Rev. Karuna as she has been ordained as a Buddhist monk for one year. After the Dharma talk, we had another very pleasant potluck to celebrate the day. The wonders of Bay area weather is that even though it was December, the weather was sunny and we had the meal outside.

There is major remodeling and reconstruction being done to the Priory's downstairs bathroom. Since we have been looking for a

larger building, we had an inspection of the existing building to see if it had any problems that could come up if we ever wish to sell it. The termite inspection uncovered major problems with the bathroom. The tile shower floor had been leaking for a very long time and the underlying floor and structural members were rotten. We are having a contractor take out much of the floor and remove the existing shower stall and small tub. We will be putting in a new bathtub with a shower head and we will probably need a whole new bathroom floor. The extensive work began on December 28 and is scheduled to finish in mid January. It is going to cost about \$7000 and any donations to help us cover these much needed repairs will be greatly appreciated.

Beginner's Class- January 22 (10am - 12:00pm)

This class is designed to be a follow-up to the basic meditation instruction that we offer every Thursday evening. It will include a short talk on meditation practice, then a period of meditation and then another short talk on bringing mindfulness and compassion into our daily lives. There is no charge for the class but we ask that people register in advance.

Meditation Retreats: January 13-15, February 12 and March 10-13

Retreats are an excellent way to deepen our meditation and training. For the three-day retreats, since many people will not be able to free themselves to be here for all three days, it will be fine to attend these retreats for just one or two days. Please register in advance and let us know which days you can attend.

The Path is open and goes straight to the Source. The Heart is boundless and enfolds everything. Darkness is a dream since the Light

shines everywhere. Since the whole universe is our home, how can our hearts ever express our gratitude.

With Gratitude

Charity is one of the four wisdoms and demonstrates the Bodhisattva's aspiration. Deep appreciation and gratitude is extended to all those who contribute their spiritual practice, money, time, energy, and various gifts to the Priory. The generosity of the entire Priory Sangha is what makes it possible for the Priory to exist and for the Dharma to be offered.

In recent months, we have been given many generous gifts, including a 1990 Mazda RX7 car which the Priory is now trying to sell, lumber, concrete, tools, paper, cleaning supplies, incense, hardware and many books.

Providing monks with food is the traditional offering given when coming to a Buddhist temple, and we appreciate all the generous food offerings we have been given which provide most of the food for the Priory. Rev. Kinrei has become aware that he is allergic to cow dairy products, so please try not to donate foods with cow dairy in them. Although we are grateful for any gift of food, the most helpful food donations are prepared meals, soy milk, goat milk, fruit, goat or sheep cheese and vegetarian "meats". You are always welcome to ask Rev. Kinrei what is currently needed at the Priory.

A Southern Californian bookstore has offered to try to sell any books that the Priory is given. We encourage Sangha members and friends to donate any unwanted books on an ongoing basis. A steady stream of books seems to arrive at the Priory and all of these generous donations are earning a considerable amount of

money for the Priory. We very much appreciate these gifts of books.

Helping the Priory and Work Days

Buddhist training is based not just on receiving the spiritual nourishment that the Sangha offers us, but also our own willingness to cultivate gratitude and to be willing to find ways to give. Offering our valuable time to help with the work of the Priory is very much needed if the Priory is to flourish. During the past few months, Sangha members came by the Priory and helped with many different tasks, such as gardening, cleaning, cooking, computer work, bookkeeping and laundry. Please contact Rev. Kinrei if you wish to help; the Priory always has plenty of work that needs doing.

In addition, the Priory has been having regular work days which have been a great help with fixing up and maintaining the Priory and its grounds. You are welcome to come to the Priory whenever you can and offer your help. The next work day is scheduled for Saturday, November 27 and Saturday January 29, from 9:30 to 3:00, but we welcome everyone to help for whatever part of the day they can come. Working together as a Sangha is a way of both giving to the Priory and sharing in the brightness of our fellow members of the Sangha. Work days include a lunch at the Priory which is a relaxed meal. Please let us know if you can attend as it is helpful in planning the work.

Spiritual Counseling

Rev. Kinrei is available to discuss your spiritual practice and to help you to better apply the Dharma to your life. Taking refuge in a senior member of the Sangha is an important aid in gaining a better perspective and deeper insight into our spiritual life. It is also helpful in learning to cultivate openness and trust. You are

welcome to either sign the spiritual counseling sheet on the Priory bulletin board, or call the Priory and arrange a time to meet.

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In addition, the Priory has been having regular work days which have been a great help with fixing up and maintaining the Priory and its grounds. You are welcome and encouraged to come to the Priory whenever you can and offer your help. The next work days are scheduled for Saturday, January 29 and March 26, from 9:30 to 3:00, but we welcome everyone to help for whatever part of the day they can come. Working together as a Sangha is a way of both giving to the Priory and sharing in the brightness of our fellow members of the Sangha. Work days include a lunch at the Priory which is a relaxed meal. Please let us know if you can attend as it is helpful in planning the work.

Meditation Instruction

Meditation instruction and an orientation to the practice at the Priory are offered each Thursday at 6:45 pm. Please arrive a few minutes early so that we can begin promptly at 6:45. The instruction is followed by a 7:30-8:05 pm meditation period. We

ask all people new to our practice to attend this instruction. The meditation instruction is free, as are all the activities at the Priory. If your schedule will not allow you to come on Thursday evening, you are welcome to call the Priory to try to arrange a different time for the instruction.

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Priory Membership

The Priory has no fees for participating in meditation, Dharma talks, Buddhist services, retreats, spiritual counseling or any other service we offer. We are supported by the donations of our congregation and friends. All gifts of any kind, whether money or materials or labor, are deeply appreciated.

One of the best ways to help the Priory is to make the commitment to be a Priory Member. What this involves is making a pledge to contribute a certain amount of money to the Priory each month. There is no set or recommended amount as we leave it up to each individual to offer what he or she feels is appropriate. This commitment is a tremendous help to the Priory because it gives us a stable financial base. More importantly, deciding to become a member has deep spiritual significance. It means you are choosing to help take responsibility for the continued existence of the Priory. Some of you may only be able to pledge a few dollars a month and think it is not worth making

such an insignificant commitment. Yet it is important to offer whatever you can and be willing to make a formal commitment to be part of the Priory. The most important help members bring to the Priory and the Sangha is not their donations but their Buddhist training. By being willing to come to the Priory and train with others, we help make the Priory a true refuge of the Sangha.

However, we are not suggesting that everyone who occasionally attends the Priory or gives us donations should become a member. For many people, it is not appropriate to make such a commitment, and we welcome them to join us whenever they wish, to help us in the manner they feel appropriate, and to be valued friends of the Priory.