



# THROSSEL HOLE PRIORY

vol.1 no.3

Newsletter

December 73

---

Throssel Hole Priory is a Zen Buddhist training monastery following the Soto tradition located at Carr Shield, Nr. Hexham, Northumberland, England.

---

## EDITORIAL

The autumn term at Throssel is beginning to draw to an end amidst evergrowing cold. The countryside has a thin layer of snow on it and is quite beautiful, so if you are coming up bring plenty of warm clothes.

The plans for the new building are going forward slower than we had hoped but by the next issue we hope to be able to say that we have outline planning permission for the new building. We also hope to include an artist's impression. So far it seems that it will be most adequate and still manage to stay within our original £5,000 budget.

Unfortunately we still do not have the money to build the new zendo when we have planning permission. We are still short £2,500 and unless we can come up with it we will not be able to build. I therefore again ask if those who are willing would please forward their donations or loans or pledges to the Priory or contact the Priory. We are in desperate need of this money. If we do not get it, the Priory as such is liable to cease to exist since the present zendo will no longer be usable past the end of the summer.

We have received a number of inquiries as to whether there are any groups that practise the same meditation as we do elsewhere in the country, therefore on page 5 you will find the names and addresses of either the groups or those who organise them. I should emphasise that these are small groups of private individuals who meet once a week to meditate together. They are not Buddhist monasteries and they are certainly not 'doss houses' for 'dharma bums'. You should remember that the first thing to learn in Zen is responsibility and consideration for others, so before you go make contact to find out whether it will be convenient. As I have said, they are small groups normally meeting in private houses, and you have no right to barge in unannounced. They all, as far as I know, consider the Soto form of meditation as their major form of meditational practise, but this does not in any way tie them to Throssel Hole Priory. They will probably represent quite a wide range of Buddhist, and even non-Buddhist, points of view. So if you sincerely wish to learn more about Buddhism, and our meditation in particular, and live close to one of these groups, I am sure you will be welcome.

Editor.

## ON FAITH AND WILL

The problem of how to lead one's everyday life is the most fundamental problem in Zen. Zen has never made any differentiation between the religious and everyday life, which is why in a Zen monastery much emphasis is placed on the everyday work. It is therefore true that those who live outside the monastery may practice in the same way as those inside. What is not realized by most people is that the main problems in everyday life are problems of faith and will. It is important to realize how these two interplay in one's life, and also to realize that basically they are not two, but one. They are two aspects of one thing: the true Buddha Heart.

True faith lies in two things: faith in oneself, and faith in the things outside oneself, the Three Treasures. Without faith in yourself, there can be no training, and this is normally one of the first blockages in the way of Zen trainees. They are not quite sure whether they can make it or not. They doubt whether they have the ability. It is the teaching of Zen, and it is the common discovery of all true Zen trainees, that in fact anyone can make it to the highest realms of Buddhism. There is nobody who does not have the capability. But how many of us really in our heart of hearts believe this, that we can do it? So, our first step is to find faith in ourselves, faith that we can become better people. But to do this, we must first look at ourselves, accept the Precepts, and be contrite for all that we have done wrong. We must accept all our past bad motives and actions. We must accept them for what they truly were, and be sorry that we have made them. We must see clearly that they keep us apart from our own true selves, and from all around us. From this, it becomes clear that a course of action needs to be outlined. This is the Precepts, which may be summed up in the Three Pure Precepts: Cease from evil; Do only good; Do good for others. These are not just simply a set of rules that may be followed like rote, but they are a deep expression of the outflowing of our own Heart. And we take them upon ourselves, not as some rules, heavily laid upon us by some outside authority, but as a great joy, because they will lead us back to our own Heart, because they are an expression of it. One might say that faith in oneself is determined by one's own self-knowledge. One must be constantly aware of what one is actually doing: not what one is pretending to do, or wanting to do, but what one is actually doing, and get on with it, or change it if it needs to be changed. This is fundamental. This is the basis of all training and meditation. It is not a good idea, however, to sit in one's head, and to wonder what one is doing, and to poke around and try and find out what one's motivations are. It is more important to get on with what you are doing with an open frame of mind, as this will lead you deeper and deeper into your own self, so that you may find these things out, and they will manifest themselves naturally at the right time.

Faith in the Three Treasures, that is in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, is to have faith in the things outside of oneself, that there is something which transcends both you and all other things, that it exists within you. This is the Buddha, your own Buddha Heart. This is, in a sense, the beginning and the end of all training. Without it, there is no training: with it, there is nothing but training. And though you may

not know it, if training is true it is always prompted from the Buddha Heart. This is the Buddha within you; the Buddha that you will, if you train, become; and are already since, without the Buddha Heart you could not exist. There would be nothing left of you. Not an atom or a molecule in the universe could exist without it. This is one side of faith in the Buddha. This is faith in the Buddha Heart, in the fact that you can become better, that you can transcend the bounds of your present small self. But also one must have faith in the historical Buddha, and the patriarchs. This is faith in the Buddha outside, faith in the fact that they have found, and that they pass on, the truth that you will find within you. This of course leads naturally into faith in the Dharma. This is the teachings, the method by which it is done, faith in what you have been told and read about Buddhism. Obviously if you do not have faith in this, there can be no progress. You cannot follow the instructions for wholehearted life if you are not wholehearted. So, faith in the Dharma. This means more than meets the eye. This means an unquestioning faith in the Dharma. Most people are prepared to accept bits of the Dharma, the bits they want to accept. This is not good. One must accept the whole Dharma, the true teaching, that manifests itself both in words and deeds; and, more importantly for those who live in the outside world perhaps than those in a monastery, the teaching that in fact is manifested by all things at all times. This is the expression of their Buddha Heart, and this expression is the things that 'rings through' to one's own Buddha Heart. Finally, one comes to faith in the Sangha. Faith in the Sangha is faith, not in the limited Sangha of those who are ordained, into this school or that, or this religion or that. But true faith in the Sangha is to have faith in the body of those who train: faith in accepting their help, faith that though they will make mistakes since they are human, they, like you, are trying to train, even if you cannot see it. This faith is the most important in some ways, because, although the others are more fundamental, this is the far-reaching aspect of them. When this faith is truly found, you will find that in their own way, all people, and all things, at all times are training to the best of their ability. Obviously, greater efforts must be made by you before Buddhahood is reached. So this is not a reason for complacency. You cannot see that you are training to the best of your ability ever, because there is always the capability of more effort, of better and deeper training. But, on looking out and around you, you will see when you truly develop this faith, that there is nothing that is not training. And so the Sangha will become all things and all people. Nothing will be excluded, from the Buddhas to the devils, from Bodhidharma to Hitler. All are trainees, in the true sense of the word.

Most people, when you mention the word 'will', do not really have a very firm idea about what you're talking about. They consider it to be some very noble, but rather abstract, idea. They tend to associate it with many aspects of things which it does not have: with forcefulness, which is all right in its place, but which is not will; with determination, which is important, too, but is not will. Will, in its true sense, is an acceptance of all things, grounded on faith in yourself, and in them; and a willingness, and this is the most important thing, at all times to accept what comes and to act to the best of one's ability. Acceptance is perhaps the keynote of willingness. We frequently find that we think we accept something when we

are in fact resigned to it. We will then notice that we are resentful towards these things, or people. Resentment is the total antithesis of all Zen training, and must be had out, root and branch. No trainee can ever think that he is in training whilst there is any resentment left in him. Resentment is an unwillingness to accept, and when it is active, it is an unwillingness to be willing, and of course this is a totally closed circuit. Frequently in one's work in everyday life, one comes across a situation which one does not like, which frustrates you, which you disagree with. That is fine; there is nothing wrong with that. This is an opportunity to do good training. If, however, you do not accept the situation, that is bad. Say your boss at work tells you to do something. Either you accept his order to do it, or you must leave. It is fairly simple and clear-cut in such an example. So, if you're willing to do what has to be done, despite what you feel, this is true acceptance. One does not necessarily agree with everything; that is not necessary. But, the emphasis must be on 'done willingly'. If one merely resigns oneself to having to do it, then you have said in your own mind, "I am right, and he is wrong", and in so doing, you will do a bad job, when the other person may be quite right in asking you to do what he has. You may be wrong. On the other hand, it may be that there are two equally good ways of doing something: your way and his way. And if in this situation you resent having to do it, this is your ego, and your ego is never willing to truly try and see anybody else's point of view. It only wants its own way. You must root this out. Resentment is a very common problem among people who train. As soon as they slacken off their training, it appears. It is therefore a very useful guide as to whether you are training or not. When you resent anything, whatever it may be, it is because you are unwilling to accept it, and the keynote of training in Sōtō Zen has always been true acceptance of all things. I should perhaps add here that this does not mean that one resigns oneself to the way things are, and does not attempt to change things if one thinks they need changing. But it does mean that you accept a situation before you try to change it; that you come to terms with it, and yourself. Otherwise these too will just obscure you and you will be unable to act in anything but a selfish manner.

It should be clear from this that there is no way in training to find fault. There is nothing to find fault with, in fact, and there is no fault to find. One must do what has to be done, willingly and with faith, whatever this may be. And frequently you will find that this will lead you away from the way things are done by everybody else, into paths that are very lonely. You must accept this. If you do not wish to follow these paths, do not take up training. If you wish to train, and become a Buddha, then you must accept that the road is often very hard and stony, and that it may be very lonely at times.

To have faith in one's own Buddha Heart is to accept its existence. This allows it to act. That action is will. But, and this is the most important aspect, faith is blind. It believes in what it cannot see. And many times will come in your training when you cannot find your own Buddha Heart. Do not let this disturb you. Just let your faith continue. Go on about your daily activities with faith in your own heart, and with a willingness and a will, and soon you will find your way back to your

Buddha Heart. For it is never far away. It is in fact in the faith and in the willingness and in the will. They are not separate from it. It was merely a little mistake that you made.

This is meditation in daily life. Meditation, when we do it formally, is just to sit in perfect faith with will and willingness, with one's whole body, mind and soul, leaving nothing out, and with all of one's energy directed in one direction. When this is done nothing disturbs you. You are, in a sense, as an iron being. The thoughts and the emotions and the states of mind and the passions no longer disturb, and so they go away. So when one sits, one comes back to one's own faith, to reassert it; to one's own willingness, to refine it; and to one's own will, to reuse it. And then, if one truly does this, the Buddha Heart will shine forth, clear and unobscured. When this happens, it is vital that you do not hang on to it. This is to be unwilling to lose the Buddha Mind, and you must be able to accept even this. If you are unwilling to lose the Buddha Mind, you are showing unwillingness and therefore you have already cut yourself off from it. What you are then seeing and feeling is your own ego once more. You must let it go, and accept whatever comes, and be willing to train at all times and in all situations.

This leads naturally to total freedom of will and pure faith, and a willingness to do what must be done, as it comes along. This is not a will controlled by the self, but one that leaps directly from the depths of your own being, from your own Buddha Nature. It is unobscured by anything, it is capable of all things, and it is totally free. And yet it never acts outside of the Precepts. To be thus is to walk hand-in-hand with the Buddhas and patriarchs, seeing with their eyes, and acting with their will, towards the total perfection of yourself and all things.

DAIJI STRATHERN

---

#### SOTO MEDITATION GROUPS

Always phone or write. Dates and places sometimes change.

The Mousehole Buddhist Group, Penaluna, Clodgy Moor, Paul, Fenzance. Phone: Mousehole 449. Meetings at 8:30 p.m. in winter and 9:30 p.m. in summer on Friday nights.

Ken Fry, 18, White Cottage Close, Farnham, Surrey. Phone: Farnham 24681. Meetings at 8:30 p.m. on Friday nights.

Rev. Kotei Sprenger, 16 Colmore Place, Armley, Leeds, Yorks. Meetings at 8:00 p.m. on Wednesday nights.

These groups are not necessarily affiliated to Throssel Hole Priory, but they do practice the same meditation.

PRIORY NEWS AND EVENTS

Transmissions

Before Kennett Roshi left for America Dogo Klein and Kembo Wyatt received the Transmission.

Departures

Rev. Dogo Klein has returned to Canada and will later be going to Shasta Abbey to take up the position as Chief Cook. Rev. Rikuko Pollack has also returned to Canada. It is hoped that a new monastery will be started in Canada after Christmas.

Past Retreats

Weekend retreats were held on the weekends of 3rd. November and 1st. December. Both were quite well attended, the latter despite the cold and petrol shortages.

---

FUTURE RETREATS

In the last issue of the newsletter we mistakenly gave the wrong dates for the coming weekend retreats. The dates are in fact on the following Saturdays and Sundays:-

- 5th. and 6th. January
- 9th. and 10th. February
- 2nd. and 3rd. March

There will be a week retreat 23rd. to 31st. March. Anyone wishing to come to a retreat please contact the Priory well in advance. Visitors are welcome at other times by arrangement.

---

THROSSEL HOLE PRIORY APPEAL

I, ..... of .....

..... hereby pledge the sum of .....

..... as a gift/non-interest loan (strike one out), to Throssel Hole Priory. This pledge will be held open for twelve months.

.....  
date

.....  
signature