

December 2016

Greetings!!

I would like to wish all a very happy holiday season, and a very joyous new year. Again, I want to thank Allan and Geoff for their herculean efforts, without which these emails would not be possible. They have really shown me how very limited my English composition skills are. Thanks again!

Things are going quite well in Seattle. This coming year we are planning to start another group in this area, which will definitely keep me on my toes. The festival day at North Cascades Buddhist Priory, to remember and celebrate the life of Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett was quite a day, with a very nice turnout. I, myself, spent half the day with the children and one of their grandmothers who was visiting from Germany. What a joy!

In gratitude to Rev. Master Jiyu, I would like to spend some time with one of her inspirational teachings. She wrote a book called "How to Grow a Lotus Blossom", which sprang from an extended and very deep meditation retreat, which took place in 1976, and which she referred to as "the greatest experience of my life." I strongly recommend this book. It is currently out of print. You can go on the web to "howtogrowalotusblossom.org" for more information and very insightful commentary from Rev. Master Koshin Schomberg. Also he gives a series of dharma talks which offer his thoughtful commentary on the entire book (Link to these Dharma talks: <http://northcascadesbuddhistpriory.org/DharmaTalks/dharmaTalks.html>)

From one section of this book comes Rev Master Jiyu's commentary on the Kyojukai. The Kyojukai was Great Master Dogen's teaching on the precepts. The Kyojukai and Commentary is available on the North Cascades Buddhist Priory website (<http://northcascadesbuddhistpriory.org/Precepts/precepts.html>). When I first read this teaching, it really moved me. It showed me the deeper reasons that we keep religious and spiritual precepts. Rev. Master Jiyu's teaching comes from Shakyamuni Buddha, in that there is an Unborn, Undying, Eternal, which is an Infinite Love, infinitely compassionate and wise, and utterly free from judgement. Rev. Master, in the "Kyojukai and Commentary," refers to this as the Lord of the House, and throughout her teachings, she has referred to It in many different ways, such as the Buddha Nature, the Cosmic Buddha, the Unborn, and Vairochana Buddha. In our emails, we have referred to this as the Eternal or the flow of the Eternal. The Eternal flows through everything continuously. Our training and meditation is what connects us with It, allowing all sources of suffering to be washed by Its flow.

In the Kyojukai and Commentary, Rev. Master Jiyu lists and offers commentary on the Ten Great Precepts. These precepts serve as a guide to a way we can conduct ourselves in our daily lives, but on a deeper level they help in our training to connect with the Eternal with its love, compassion, and non-judgement. I cannot emphasize this strongly enough. It is the very foundation of my own training. Before I began the training, I pretty much broke many of the precepts on a regular basis. I was unaware of how this precipitated great suffering for me and those around me. It wasn't until I

began the practice and read the Kyojukaimon that I saw that I had been constantly blocking the flow of the Eternal, and in turn wasn't living in a peaceful and still place. I know I speak about the flow of the Eternal often, but there is a reason. The precepts can serve as a framework for the training, but getting in touch with the love, kindness, and compassion of the Eternal was life changing for me. When I allowed my suffering and dis-ease to be converted to the love and compassion of the Eternal, I was able to live in a state of greater peace.

In this email I would like to discuss three of the precepts. The first is "Do not be angry." This is a process, often referred to as "Trying to cease from anger." Anger is not something that we strive to just shut off, but in our meditation we can let it come up, observe it, and let it dissolve into the flow of the Eternal. I think we have all experienced the emotional disturbance that anger elicits, ultimately leading to our own suffering. There are so many stimuli out there that bring out our anger and oftentimes our internal thoughts can fan the flames of this fire. This is where our training and meditation serve us well, allowing this suffering to dissipate.

The next precept I want to talk about is "Do not speak against others." For me, and in speaking with others, this is one of the more difficult precepts to keep. When we speak against others, we are judging them, not only in speech, but in our thoughts. It can be very easy to do this and we see this often in our daily lives. In current politics, there is a tendency to judge people on a very personal level. We should remember that the flow of the Eternal is in everyone and everything. When we speak against others in speech and in thought, our training allows it to come up and be washed by the flow of the Eternal with its compassion and empathy.

Before we get to the third and final precept in our discussion, I want to address the inevitability that at times we will break some of the precepts. It is said in the Kyojukaimon that the Eternal will never tell you to break the precepts at any time, and that if you hear anything to the contrary it is the voice of the self that you are hearing. Inevitably there are times that we will all be influenced by this "voice of self", but this is where our mindfulness of the precepts is so important. When the breaking of a precept does occur, oftentimes in our thoughts, we don't let it get out of control. Through our meditation, we let it show itself, and we allow it to dissolve in the flow of the Eternal. This can be constant work, but it is so helpful in relieving our suffering and dis-ease, and thereby allowing us to live with the unconditional love of the Eternal.

The final precept in our discussion is "Do not be proud of yourself and devalue others." It is said in the Kyojukaimon that there is nothing to be proud of and nothing to be devalued; only self leads you there. How can we feel excessive pride, while belittling others, when the flow of the Eternal resides in all things? When I was a novice monk, I was oftentimes told that I was doing something incorrectly. At times, I became prideful, believing that I was in the right, but more often I devalued myself, thinking I was inferior and inadequate. This very often led to my devaluing others and seeing them as inferior and inadequate. It took me a long time to see this, and it was the meditation and training that showed me that this was very delusional. This was one of the most important times in my training, and converting

this delusional behavior through the flow of the Eternal helped me immeasurably. As with all the other precepts, when they are broken, we can train and convert the attitude of mind that led us to this. We do this by observing the attitude and the way in which it led us to break a precept, and by allowing for the flow of the Eternal to wash through it, with its unconditional love, non-judgement and pure heartedness. As we do this we allow the suffering that has caused us to be out of harmony with the Eternal to dissipate.

These teachings, along with my meditation and training have shown me how to live in peace within the flow of the Eternal. For this, I am very grateful. One thing that I want to say here is that it is important to have an openness to this training and recognize that your old ways and habits have led to great suffering. It is through embracing the love, compassion and non-judgement of the Eternal that we can find peace. It is not easy, and requires diligent practice, but the rewards are great.

To end this email I thought I would include a little bit from Geoff. I asked Geoff if anything came up for him in considering the precepts and the Kyojukaimon and Commentary. Here is what he had to say:

“Thank you Rev Master Basil. Like many others I find the Kyojukaimon and Commentary to be a powerful and magnificent piece of writing. It has been important in my own training. For some years now I have read a paragraph or two every day and it has been very helpful. The clarity and certainty in Rev Master Jiyu’s writing have been so helpful at times when self-doubt has been strong. She is so clear and certain that the Eternal IS and that one can hear It and follow It. I’ve found this so reassuring and upward looking – no matter what mental state I’ve found myself in, no matter what a mess I think I may have made, this writing makes it clear that I can go forward, and that the way forward is simply to do my best to listen to, and follow, the Eternal each step of the way. Time and again in this writing she returns to this essential point, always cutting to the heart of the matter and helping us understand what the precepts are truly about.

Another very helpful aspect of reading the Kyojukaimon and Commentary daily has been the way in which lines will float up into consciousness at precisely the time I need them. For example, in relation to speaking against others, one line that often comes to mind for me is “Do not speak against the Lord of the House.” Rev Master Jiyu is saying that if you speak against another you are actually speaking against the Eternal since “every being is the Temple of the Lord wherein the Lord dwells.” If these lines come to mind just as I find myself engaging in some conversation which is unkind to somebody, it is very powerful, because it helps me realize what I am actually doing and the sadness of such behavior. Then I can find a polite way to refrain from continuing, perhaps by re-directing the conversation, or excusing myself.”

With All My Heart,
Rev. Basil