

December 2021

Greetings,

I would like to wish everyone a very joyous holiday season and a very happy new year. At this time of year I like to say thank you. First, I would like to thank those who edit and contribute to these emails. Without them the emails would not be possible. Thank you Rev Master Bennet, Allan Pober and Geoff Nisbet.

I would also like to thank all who have supported me throughout the year. Without this support I would not be able to stay in Seattle and do what I do. For those who would like to offer their support, the way to do it is to make out a check to "North Cascades Buddhist Priory" and at the bottom of the check where we state the purpose put "for Seattle refuge". The check should be mailed to me at: Rev Basil Singer, 2208 2nd Ave # 404, Seattle, WA, 98121.

For those who don't subscribe to the Serene Reflection Dharma Association newsletter (which I strongly recommend) I would like to reprint two recent articles, and a poem. In the article I wrote, I describe a way of life and an attitude that I grew up with that caused me suffering, how I became aware of it and converted it. The other article is by Rev Master Mokushin Hart. Rev Master Mokushin talks about our relationship with the Eternal. The poem is by Geoff. I hope you find these helpful.

With all my heart,
Rev Basil

Reunion with the Eternal **Rev. Master Mokushin Hart** **Dean, Serene Reflection Dharma Association**

When someone first undertakes a meditation practice, there can be any number of ideas they have about what that practice will do for them. Consequently, we hear people talk about meditation in a lot of different ways.

It is helpful to differentiate between the actual purpose of the meditation practice that we do, and some of the "side effects" that arise at times in the course of one's practice. It may seem like a subtle difference, yet it is an important one.

Even if we are not fully, consciously aware of it, we undertake a spiritual practice to find recognized reunion with the "Unborn, Undying, Unchanging, Uncreated"¹ or to use a more succinct version, *recognized reunion with the Eternal*. The practice of meditation and the Precepts helps us negotiate through our habitual ways of turning away from our True Nature, and thus obscuring our oneness with the Eternal.

When being introduced to meditation we are often given the analogy of it being like sitting beneath a bridge, with our thoughts, feelings and sensations going back and forth like traffic above, while we sit in meditation beneath it. There is no need to either jump into the middle of the traffic or to try to make it stop or go away. When we find our minds jumping around in the “traffic,” we put our effort into sitting back beneath the “bridge.”

At times, we arise from a formal meditation period with a sense of being much more grounded and peaceful than we were when we sat down. This may not always happen, however, and one should not take this to mean that one is doing something wrong. The process of coming to the recognized reunion with our True Nature includes facing the obstacles we ourselves put in the way. We have to be willing to look at our actions squarely, accept that they have consequences, and be willing to change.

The Buddha taught that *feeling* is the reaper of karmic consequence. Thus, our different actions of body, speech and mind will result in different states of feeling arising. We are not in control of the form that karmic consequence will take. It arises naturally from our actions, and cannot be separated therefrom.

The consequences of acting in non-preceptual ways—ways that hinder us in knowing our True Nature—tend to be pretty uncomfortable at times. And the consequences of acting in harmony with our True Nature tend to be felt more as inner peace, quiet joy, and the “moments that make one dance.” All of the above are transient experiences, however, and can linger longer or pass sooner than we might wish.

It is so tempting, when feelings arise that are difficult to bear, to blame them on external circumstances. It is true that sometimes external circumstances can also be quite hard to bear, yet ultimately we alone are responsible for our own inner pain. I have had this teaching brought home to me over and over again, and yet still, when the going gets tough, it can be very hard not to start laying blame somewhere else (and we can get very creative about this!)

It will not work to expect any particular state to arise in meditation through the exercise of our **will**. We cannot hold on to any of it, the effort is like trying to contain water in a colander. Trying to do so just leads to judgement and frustration. We need the **willingness** to keep letting whatever is there arise and pass, which can take a very considerable effort. Sitting still with whatever consequence is arising at any given time is part of the journey, and helps move things along. To allow the practice to go deeper, we have to be willing to feel, without judgement.

Life is an unfolding kaleidoscope of experience. Yet beneath all the changeability, there is a True Refuge. Whatever arises in our experience at any given moment, we need to be willing to return again and again to the Mind of Meditation and ask for help. In doing so, we allow the seeming obstacles to the “Recognized Reunion” to be bathed in the pure love of the Eternal. This is far beyond simply finding a sense of inner peace.

There is a deep transformation that longs to take place within us, and we beckon to it whenever we sit down to meditate. If we are truly willing, we are given so much more than we ever dared to hope for. It is a choice that is offered to all of us.

¹ F.L. Woodward, tran., “Udana: Verses of Uplift” from the Minor Anthologies of the Pali Canon, Part II, Chap. VII, sec.iii (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), pp. 97 & 98.



The *Kyōjukaimon* **Rev. Master Basil Singer** Seattle Dharma Refuge

The theme of the introductory retreat when I first went to the monastery was the *Kyōjukaimon and Commentary*.¹ The *Kyōjukaimon* sets forth the Three Pure Precepts, the Ten Great Precepts, and the merits of the Three Treasures of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

The *Kyōjukaimon* was first written down and commented on by Great Master Dogen in the 13th century. Rev. Master Jiyu’s very deep retreat in 1976, described in *How to Grow a Lotus Blossom*, inspired her to write an expanded *Commentary* on the meaning and implications of the Precepts. During that first retreat I attended there were talks and Q&A about it, and when I found myself staying on at the monastery we had a formal reading of the *Kyōjukaimon* in the meditation hall every day after breakfast. This focus on the Precepts had a very big effect on me and my developing spiritual training.

I think that the teaching of the *Kyōjukaimon* had such a big impact on me because it describes an orientation to life quite different from the way I was raised. Where I grew up, the prevalent attitude was that if you could get away with breaking a law or rule, that was OK and a way of life. It was to be admired.

I scoffed at those who believed that if they did not abide by certain rules, laws, or commandments they would go to a “bad place” after they died. I was also cynical of those whose way of life was morally very restrained and, to my eyes, restrictive and limiting. I felt that they were not getting the most out of life. You might say I was a “60’s kind of person, just letting it all hang out.” What this way of life did was get me in all different kinds of trouble and cause all kinds of suffering.

The self-centered way I was living was so deeply ingrained in me that I was blind to the suffering it was causing both myself and, through my words and actions, others around me. But the deeper part of me knew that I was out of harmony with my True Nature, my Buddha Nature. So, when I came to the temple and was guided to the *Kyōjukaimon*, I finally saw how deluded I was and how it was causing me to

suffer and to spread suffering to others. The teaching of the *Kyojukaimon* and Rev. Master Jiyu's *Commentary* helped me to see the deeper reason for keeping the Precepts and living an honest life.

A Precept that particularly resonated with me when I first began training, and still does, is “Do not speak against others.” The commentary for this Precept is, “Do not speak against the Lord of the House. Every person, every being, is the temple of the Lord wherein the Lord dwells.” This taught me that, instead of letting my heart harden towards someone, I could instead see them as part of the Eternal and offer love to them instead of mentally and verbally putting them down. There are many aspects to this Precept, and one we often find ourselves around (or generating) is ordinary, everyday *gossip*. Gossip is a terribly destructive force and, since it can kill someone's reputation, also reflects the first Precept, *Do not kill*.

The commentary on the Precept “Do not be angry” also had a big effect on my seeing things in a new light: “We may see the Lord of the House, no matter how angry the person is who is with us; we may see in him, too, the Lord if we are truly looking, if our own ego is out of the way and, in seeing the Lord in him, he can see the Lord in us.” This made me realize that my habitual cynicism and anger blinded me to the Light of the Lord in another and enveloped myself in a dark shroud of negativity that prevented others from seeing It in me.

Studying the *Kyojukaimon* so thoroughly early in my training helped soften my confused and hardened heart. I learned that when you live by the Precepts you allow the pure love and compassion of the Eternal Buddha Nature to flow through the interactions of daily life. We thereby lessen the suffering of ourselves, and others in our life.

The *Kyojukaimon and Commentary* contains profound teaching that goes to the root of what a spiritual life is all about. I recommend reading at least part of it each day. Absorbing its teaching helps us live a very beautiful, spiritual, compassionate and loving life. A copy of it can be found by [clicking here](#).

¹ Great Master Eihei Dogen and Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett, *Kyojukaimon and Commentary*, available at: <http://northcascadesbuddhistpriory.org/Precepts/Kyojukaimon.pdf>.



Tenderness

Geoff Nisbet

Reading the poems of the ancient masters,
What a joy to realize that the same timeless Buddha Nature
Is here, now in the sound of the rain, the stillness of my room;
Its exquisite presence reminding me that It IS,
And that all the troubles and difficulties of life are held in Its tender
embrace.

