

The Dharma Rag

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September, 2003

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A Koan for Sesshin

Joan Sutherland Roshi

During the fall sesshin, September 17-21, we will be looking at one koan, 'Which Is the True Qian?', which is based on an old Chinese folktale. On Thursday I'll introduce the story and give a talk about it. On Friday we'll have a koan seminar, in which we'll work with the koan in our usual way. Saturday's talk will continue with themes that have arisen on the previous evenings. *Visitors are welcome on any night but will get the most out of it if they can come both Thursday and Friday nights.*

The True Qian

This koan is based on an ancient Chinese folktale, several versions of which were published in English by Lafcadio Hearn in 1898.

In a provincial town a long time ago lived a young girl named Qian. She often played with her cousin, a boy named Zhao. They loved each other a great deal, and one day Qian's father jokingly said, "When you grow up, you two will marry." They remembered these words and believed they were betrothed.

But when Qian came of marriageable age, her father felt he had to acquiesce to a powerful older man's desire to marry her.

This grieved the cousins, and Zhao decided it would be better if he moved away. At sunset the next day, he left home without saying goodbye to anybody and sailed away to start a new life. In the middle of the night, he heard a voice calling, "Wait! It's me!", and he saw a figure running along the bank. He realized it was Qian, and joyfully he welcomed her onto the boat. The two of them sailed away together to the next province.

They got married and had two children, and they were by all measures exceedingly happy. But, as time went by, Qian began to feel the weight of what she had left behind, and the nagging feeling that she had betrayed her parents. So after six years had passed, she and her husband agreed to return home to see if they could reconcile with her family. They got back in the boat, went down the river, and docked near her family home. Zhao said, "You wait here; I'll go first and see how things stand." He went up to the house, not knowing what kind of reception he would find.

To his surprise, his uncle and father-in-law welcomed him with



open arms, saying, "Oh, it's so good to see you. We were worried about you; we always wondered what had happened to you."

This was not at all the reception Zhao expected. He asked, "Aren't you mad at me? I came to ask for your forgiveness for running away with Qian."

"What are you talking about?" Qian's father replied. "Qian has been sick in bed all this time, ever since you went away."

"But Qian has not been sick. She and I have been married for six years, and we have two children.

Don't mock us like this!"

The two men stared at each other for a few moments, and then Qian's father said, "Come with me." He took his son-in-law into the house, to an inner room where a woman lay sick in bed. It was unmistakably Qian, though thin and pale. "She cannot speak," explained her father, but she can understand." He spoke to Qian, "Zhao tells me that you ran away with him!" The sick woman looked at Zhao and smiled but remained silent.

A bewildered Zhao then said, "Come with me to the river, because I assure you that Qian is down there." He took the old man down to the boat, where Qian was waiting.

When she greeted her father, he said to her, "If you really are my daughter, I have nothing but love for you. But there's something I don't

understand...Come with me back to the house." As they walked up the path they saw that the sick woman was coming down to meet them, smiling. The two Qians approached each other and then embraced, melting into each other so that only one Qian remained, showing no sign of the one's sorrow or the other's illness.

Her father said, "My daughter has seemed like someone in a drunken stupor. Now I understand that her spirit was absent."

Qian herself said, "I never realized that I was still at home. I saw Zhao leaving in anger, and that night I dreamed that I ran after his boat...But now I can't tell which one was really I—the one who went away, or the one who stayed at home."

The koan that comes from this story is Case 35 of the Gateless Gate: "The Chan teacher Wuzi asked, 'The woman Qian and her spirit separated. Which is the true Qian?'"

If you Wish to Come. . .

Joan Sutherland will be leading the retreat at the Benet Pines Retreat Center on September 17-21. She will give talks open to the general public on Thursday, September 18, Friday, September 19, and Saturday, September 20, at 7 p.m. in the main building (Aberhaven Hall) of the Retreat Center, which is located at 15780 Hwy 83 n., approximately 4 mi. north of the PPCC Rampart Range Campus, in Black Forest. Those planning to

attend the talks are encouraged to come half an hour early to sit with the group prior to the presentation. There will be time for discussion following the talk. There is no fee, but donations are appreciated.

Current Affairs Impermanence and Death: Living with Change

An Evening Talk with Ruth Denison

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2003, 7:00-9:00 pm All Souls Unitarian Church, 730 N. Tejon

This is a benefit for Rocky Mountain Insight. Suggested donation is \$10-\$15 .

On the notable date of Sept. 11th, come and share Ruth's insight on ways to be free from fear and anxiety around impermanence of both life and death. Ruth Denison is one of the foremost teachers of Buddhism in the U.S. and continues to be a pioneer in the Vipassana movement. Ruth and S.N. Goenka and two others are the only Westerners to have received Dharma transmission from the renowned Burmese meditation master U Bha Khin. A master of mindfulness meditation, Ruth has a unique and engaging teaching style that offers a powerful call to awaken. Her presence is not to be missed!

Metta Meditation

Pat Tegler, Leader
5:15-6:15, 4th Friday of each month
Eternal One Yoga
115 E. Willamette, CO Sprs.

New Elements of Form in SMS Monday Services

- ❖ If you arrive early, take a seat nearer the altar
- ❖ Incense will not be burned during Monday services
- ❖ Sutra Books are collected after chanting
- ❖ Readings or thoughts are welcomed from *everyone* during Sharing Time
- ❖ Hands are held at *Gassho* or in lap for *Four Boundless Vows*
- ❖ After ending bows, straighten cushions & return with hands in walking position for one final bow!

New in the Rag (again)!

Well, the new sangha-wide *Question of the Month* program, introduced last month, yielded a one very thoughtful response, and beyond that--resounding silence! Based on the one response received, I still think this idea can provide a much-needed forum for interchange of ideas and views about the value of our zen community.

So let's try this one more time. Each month we will pose an important Sangha-wide question for consideration *and response* from members and friends. This month's question is: **What is the most important meaning of "sangha" to YOU???** Does the community help you to commit to a regular meditation practice? Do you benefit most from discussing meditation or dharma issues with other people? Why do you want to be a part of Springs Mountain Sangha? Just email your response to Dharmarag@comcast.net or contact David Cockrell, editor, at

(719) 546-3409 or at the address on the outside of the newsletter. Responses will be summarized anonymously in next month's edition. The one response received this month follows:

"The Sangha takes on many meanings, depending on where and what is going on in my lifestream.

It is a place of repose.

It is a place of social interaction, spoken and unspoken.

It is a place that gives the opportunity for introspection in the deepest way, allowing you to see your own triggers, blocks, resistances, and openings.

It is also something you take with you when you leave the physical group, because there is a connected energy of communion that takes place in the Sangha.

All these things defined as Sangha have the potential of creating a deep core peace and center, so there is a grace to ones life at all times."

Dharma Connections in Colorado Springs

Springs Mountain Sangha

P.O. Box 7875

Colorado Springs, CO 80933-7875 (719) 684-0210

Email: SMS.Zen@pcisys.net

<http://www.zencorner.org>

See calendar for schedule

Rocky Mountain Insight (RMI)

(719) 634-0566

<http://www.rockymountaininsight.org>

Theravadin Vipassana meditation group meets Wednesdays at 7:00 pm at the Mason's Lodge, 455 El Paso Blvd., Manitou Springs, CO

Thubten Shedrub Ling Center for the Study of Buddhism & Tibetan Culture (TSL)

Ganden House

506 W. Taylor St., #2

Colorado Springs, CO 80932-1566 (719) 635-7804

Email: tslcolorado@juno.com

<http://members.nbci.com/tsling/>

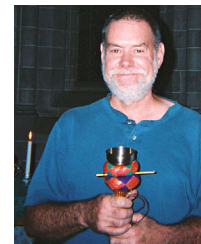
meets Mon. at 7 pm @ Ganden

House and Wed. at 6:30 pm @

Shove Chapel

Not Sacrifice, but Mercy

William Jeavons



Many of us come to religion seeking peace, seeking an end to suffering. At our

meetings we chant a sutra about the saint of compassion, who finds in the practice of deep meditation, the transformation of "all suffering and distress". This is the traditional goal of the Buddha's way.

Zen, the stream of Buddhism that stresses meditation, is a practice of seeing more and more clearly, and at the same time, opening the heart to all our lives. Looking at this practice from the perspective of peace versus war, this is a case of coming to terms with our ongoing lives, moment by moment.

Peace in this world can only flow from peace in my heart, in each of our hearts; we make this peace with our lives, we are the only ones who can. This is the quality and action of mercy.

I have, most of us have, a complicated truce in place. We are not at peace, but we've made a ceasefire with life. There is an enormous amount of work going on at the border, constant negotiations about violations of this ceasefire, charges and counter charges, reparations to be made.

What is finally required, however, is full and complete surrender to the terms of life. This is the end to angry negotiation and retribution. But being human, we are loath to give up the idea of being in control of our lives; we have to suffer a great deal before we can finally surrender.

The meditative path relies on a simple, temporary, physical surrender: We just sit still, quit talking (after a while, even to ourselves), let go of the world, but stay awake and watch. We ask, in one form or another, "What is this?" and watch with a warm curiosity if we can manage that.

We watch our own mind, the only mind, just do what it does, feel what it feels, and notice when we've run away. As we accept more and more of it, we settle into peace and a joyful sense of belonging right here. We surrender to things being just as they are, as they have always been: We have mercy on it all, especially ourselves, and then it's just mercy pervading everywhere.

Vogler's Cove

Sarah Bender



The water of Vogler's Cove (on the southeast shore of Nova Scotia) is glassy this morning. I didn't wake especially early.

The sun is well up and promising to bake us, though right now it's working it's way through a tufted quilt of cloud.

Just under my window, a single gull paddles along methodically, its tail end bobbing a little with the strokes. It watches me, but not with any apparent concern, and sends its perfect fan of ripples out behind. This water surface is so placid that even when the gull moves half-way across the cove and sits flapping its wings (its morning bath), those ripples, too, arrive at my pilings in clear lines----long, flattened, well-spaced ranks of wavelets. And after those ripples, for a while there are none. I look down into rows of broken cloud my mother used to call a "mackerel sky".

It's never perfectly quiet here in the morning. Vogler's Cove sits about a mile and a half in behind a long sandy beach, and this morning there's the steady sound of surf coming from there. The morning conversations of crows and gulls are ongoing, and once in awhile the heron standing across the cove utters its strange, croaking sound----the voice of the ancestors.

This kind of quiet reminds me of the quiet of zazen---or

sometimes the other way around, zazen reminds me of this. The profound quiet of this morning is not a matter of no sound. Even the buzz of a passing motorboat is part of it. In this way, too, the events----sensations, perceptions, feeling, thoughts---that arise during zazen present themselves as part of that silence: distinct, wholly themselves, but not at all separate from it.

This is a kind of silence we can practice carrying, as our "words of the ancestor" suggest: "Always I carry light and silence."

So this afternoon, when my tiny house fills up with brother, sister-in-law, 12-year-old twins and my own two grown children, I'll see what that's like. What will it be to carry silence then?



Articles for the Dharma Rag are always appreciated. Contact David Cockrell if you wish to submit your work or discuss an idea. **Deadline: 20th of the month.**

September, 2003

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
	1 6:15 Sutra Service (Shove)	2	3 6:00 - 7:00 am Zazen at Shove	4	5	6 6:30-8:30 Zazen 9:30 - 11:30 Discussion
7	8 6:15 Social Night (Shove)	9	10 6:00 - 7:00 am Zazen at Shove	11 6:30-8:30 Orientation to Zen, Sarah Bender, loc. TBA	12 4:00 Steering Committee at Jeavons	13 6:30-8:30 Zazen 9:30 - 11:30 Discussion
14	15 6:15 Teisho Night (Shove)	16	17 Evening Fall Sesshin begins at Bennet Pines	18 7:00 Sesshin evening talk Joan Sutherland	19 7:00 Sesshin evening talk Joan Sutherland	20 6:30-8:30 zazen. Dharma Rag due date. 7:00 Sesshin talk
21 Noon Fall sesshin ends	22 6:15 Two Periods Zazen (Shove)	123	24 6:00 - 7:00 am Zazen at Shove	25	26	27 6:30-8:30 Zazen 9:30 - 11:30 Discussion
28	29 6:15 Two Periods Zazen (Shove)	30		<i>Future Dates</i> Nov 7 and 8 Orientation to Zen with Sarah Bender	<i>Future Dates</i> Dec 3- 7 Rohatsu sesshin with David Weinstein	<i>Future Dates</i> Joans' residency 4-10 to 5-10-04

October, 2003

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
			1 6:00 - 7:00 am Zazen at Shove	2	3	4 6:30-8:30 zazen
5	6 6:15 Sutra ervice (Shove)	7	8 6:00-7:00 am Zazen at Shove	9	10	11 6:30-8:30 zazen
12	13 6:15 Social Night (Shove)	14	15 6:00-7:00 am Zazen at Shove	16	17	18 6:30-12 Half day sit at Cockrell's
19	20 6:15 Teisho Night (Shove) Dharma Rag due date	21	22 6:00-7:00 am Zazen at Shove	23	24	25 6:30-8:30 zazen
26	27 6:15 Two Periods Zazen (Shove)	28	29 6:00-7:00 am Zazen at Shove	30	31	

Dana for Springs Mountain Sangha

Springs Mountain Sangha engages in three weekly sittings, study groups, retreats, residencies for our holding teachers, the Dharma Rag, website, and other communication media. Contributions from members and friends are the Sangha's sole financial resource. Let's share the dharma assets!

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Phone: (h) _____ (other) _____
Email: _____
Contribution Amount Enclosed: \$ _____

Checks should be made out to Robert King, Treasurer.

Springs Mountain Sangha is an affiliate of Pacific Zen Institute, in both the Soto & Rinzai traditions. To learn more, visit our website, <http://www.zencorner.org> contact us a Dharmarag@comcast.net.

Please check if you prefer to receive the newsletter by email, saving resources & expenses.

Dharma Rag

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