

Dharma Stream

MOUNTAIN STREAM MEDITATION

NEVADA CITY INSIGHT CENTER



HOW LETTING GO HAPPENS

by John Travis

The question is: how it happens.

Arriving in Ladakh, India, after spending the night in the New Delhi airport, realizing my camera was gone, with all my precious photographs of my trek in Upper Mustang, Nepal.

Of course my first reaction was extreme disorientation.

Breath and heartbeat quicken, along with heightened alertness verging on a sense of panic.

Then comes a sort of disembodiment.

And determination to remember every little detail.

The emotion of self-incrimination slips past the discriminating mind.

“How could I be so unmindful and stupid?”

Clutching desperately to this sense of self-incrimination,

As if the emotion could fix it all.

Then realization slowly begins to dawn about how hard I’m being on myself.

Slowly the breath stabilizes itself.

The mind relaxes, feels the tension in the body.

A sense of compassion and self-forgiveness begin to emerge.

Only then do I have the possibility of accepting the situation.

Knowing full well, without a name-tag on the case, in a Third World country, after standing in many customs and immigration lines and traveling in a couple of taxis.....

This is an impossible situation.

The discriminating mind begins to accept the truth of the actual events and how painful the physical and mental reactions are.

What a relief it is to be back to my relaxed, aware self!

There’s always a slight shaking and repercussion when I remember the photographs or how cool I thought the camera was.

MAR 2015 - AUG 2015

This edition of Dharma Stream is devoted to the theme of “Letting Go.”

Recognizing that I have the essential tools:

Awareness of breath
Stabilization in the body
A forgiving mind

The heart softens, accepting the suffering in recognition of the human condition.

It’s great to know we’re okay, and how we have the power to forgive ourselves and others in all matters.

Learning to let go is an essential tool, presented to us over and over in life.

I see how this practice of experiencing the breath as it arises and passes away is an essential tool in the training to Let Go,

Helping the mind and heart understand its power of truth and self acceptance.

It helps when big lessons come along. ❁

LETTING GO

text and photo Kathy Schwerin



This sweater was one of the last ones my mother made before she died almost 30 years ago. She was an expert knitter who would rip out many inches of knitting if she saw even the tiniest mistake. Such beautifully crafted sweaters were a joy to wear.

But about 10 years ago I developed a problem: a reaction to wool. Even with a thick cotton turtleneck I would itch if I wore this sweater. It sat unworn for many years until a

friend mentioned she was keeping her house very cool in the winter and wearing a thick wool sweater which was almost worn out. I immediately thought of giving her this one, but felt the familiar contraction that can happen when thinking about letting go of something. Even though this sweater was stored in a cedar chest and I never even looked at it, much less wore it, I was attached! Taking a photo of it made it so much easier to give away. Now I can have the sweater even though I no longer have it.

I have just celebrated a milestone birthday and have pretty much retired. When people ask me my plans, I say “I am mucking out my house.” I wonder how many photographs I will take of things before I send them out the door? ❁

ALREADY BROKEN

text and photo by Kathy Schwerin

When my friend saw the exfoliating pot in the garden by my driveway, she gasped. “What happened?” Then she realized that I must have put it there deliberately.

It’s a good daily reminder to me of the truth of impermanence. Everything eventually disintegrates.

I often think of a frequently told story about revered Thai Buddhist monk Ajahn Chah. One of his students realized he had a favorite cup. The student reproved the teacher, saying, “You’re a monk; you’re not supposed to be attached.”



“Ah,” said Ajahn Chah, “I know the cup is already broken.” ❁

Raku pot by friend Mona, who understands why it’s in the garden.

SURRENDER

by Bill Larsen

At our house there live
a girl, a dog and a yard full of newly
planted flowers;
the dog came free, the girl is
priceless and the flowers cost three
hundred dollars;
a cozy scene but complicated
in that I love the girl, and the girl
loves the dog
and the dog loves to dig my flowers
and I do not love the dog,
creating a situation in which I
who crave even the illusion of
control
am stymied
between my need for the orderly
completion of my desire
and the beam of joyous fire
in the eyes of the girl;
and I’ve just discovered
in writing these lines
that the dharma of this dilemma
has less to do with my training
the dog to not dig my flowers,
than the dog training me
to love the girl ❁



HIKING THE EDGE

by Corey Hitchcock

Letting go is serious business. But so is holding on. If I am holding on to a rock ledge, higher up than is good for me, I know there will be consequences if I let go. Maybe a helicopter ride, with the unpleasant possibility of broken limbs and months of tedious rehab. But, there are also places I hold on tightly when I do not need to; where there would be absolutely no danger in a release. And yet these ledges are the most difficult to navigate. What do I imagine will happen if I loosen my grip? Will I explode, fall apart, shrivel and die? That is unlikely. But a story can weave a powerful spell. It can hide the possibility of a deeper truth. In that moment, I am mesmerized and have to hold back until I discover a way to trust, to move beyond that familiar viewpoint.

Once, on my first day in Zion National Park, I hiked straight up from the floor of the valley, on a steeply ascending trail. I met another hiker along the way, and we traveled on together. He said to me at one point, as we tired, moving steadily higher on the narrow switch-backing trail, "You are doing better than I did my first day! I got to this one point ahead, and just suddenly couldn't go any further. I felt I would fall off

"What do I imagine will happen if I loosen my grip? Will I explode, fall apart, shrivel and die?"

the world." And very soon, ahead of us, the trail made a sharp turn where it disappeared into oblivion. I scanned the deep shadowed valley, and the impossibly high cliffs on the opposite mesa. There was nothing between me, and the pull of that vast abyss. I sat down and could not get up. My body imposed vertigo, and refused to let me stand. My hiker friend said he was going on, because if he hesitated, he wouldn't make the turn either. He encouraged me, and said he knew I would eventually make it, too. The trail was perfectly safe, he said; it was an illusion I would eventually develop a capacity to move through without stopping.

These junctures are becoming more familiar to me now. I walk more confidently through my tightly held beliefs, growing my capacity to move, step by step around each fearsome turn, breath upon breath toward that more expansive view. ❁

EXTINCTION SONG

by Naima Shea

If you could follow the salmon on their upstream run you would know the power of god. Your heart would break for the human obstructions that defeat them and other species, going extinct one by one by one.

Where do they go when they go extinct?

I see a great tribunal not in the sky, but in a deep underground posthistoric cave where a gathering of the extinct sit at an oblong table big as a football field. Maybe the saber-tooth cat presides and the debate is fierce, incisive as his famous teeth.

If they sit at the right hand of the proverbial god, he doesn't wear a human face.

Perhaps this round table of the extinct to which the human species is accountable presides over our own future.

Will our corporal, corporate presence, our pulverized bones, dessicated blood, melted heaps of gold and SUV's become the fossil fuels of some future mutant lifeform? ❁

BUMBLING INTO BLISS - HOW DID I GET HERE?

by *Steve Solinsky*

Since childhood, I've been blessed with a passion for beauty, and the creative process. I've worked with this calling for about 40 years and have educated myself in the ways of spirit and the nature of my own creative yearning.

Some years ago, as my Buddhist practice deepened, I noticed a very familiar feeling arising. It felt similar to the experience I knew in pursuing my art. Through photography, I discovered the secret of "seeing", that is, uncovering the true beauty of things, by not obsessing on them, but in focusing on the feelings they induced in me. In this new connection, I found that beauty was an experience not "out there", but within. This can be complex; a mixture of harmony in the structure or color, or even a dark, unsettling mystery in the things experienced. I know these inner responses come from my gut, or "the small, still voice", and not from the shouting mind. I have learned to keep myself tethered to this deep feeling source, as much as to focus on any subject. When the voice whispers, "Take it, my boy," I obey.

Well, my spiritual practice is no different. I can point to the moment when it truly blossomed... when the visiting Tibetan teacher asked if we were prepared to take the Bodhisattva vow, to dedicate our lives to the service of all fellow beings. In contemplating this, all my doubts arose, "Who am I to



Awakening to the Dawn, Inle Lake, Burma
Photo by Steve Solinsky

take this on? Am I worthy? Will my heart open wide enough?" All the uncertainties of the ego.

But with my continued meditation practice, the doubts eventually subsided and I found courage to give it a try. Since then, I've incorporated the vow into my daily morning qigong ritual. In addition to breath and movement, I declare the conscious and verbal intention to follow the Bodhisattva precept of service.

I see this now as the critical element for my own spiritual awakening. It's had a profound impact on my worldview. Through letting go

of the habitual, rational, concrete mindset stuck on survival, I've been visited with a fresh view of unity, unlimited potential, creativity, and beauty. By soliciting the empty stillness around me, I fortunately stumbled into a kind of deep inner dialog with Source. I'm holding on to this precious relationship now, no longer with feelings of separateness, and my life is rewarded with peace, much bliss, and of course, lots of gratitude...

May all beings be so blessed... and the cycle goes on. ❁



PERSEVERANCE AND ADAPTABILITY, STEPS ON THE PATH TO REAL PRACTICE

by Indra Rinzler

Practice is defined as a process of systematic training by multiple repetitions. Spiritual practice or sadhana consists of proscribed activities with specific goals. I am reminded of my first spiritual book a long, long time ago on concentration and meditation that encouraged staring at a candle. Think of nothing but the candle.

It's certainly true that periods of discipline doing a practice mindfully and intently will, over time, help to train our minds and bodies. But eventually, we must bring wisdom's teachings into our daily lives. This is the real spiritual practice.

Practice in the fullest sense to me means attitudes that we live with 24/7, not just on the mat for hourly sessions. Amazing growth and change can result when we are determined to continue effort and concentrate on a firm purpose.

Through our sheer will of perseverance, many obstacles both inward and outward can almost magically disappear. When we refuse to be stopped and have made up our minds, surely something positive will result. Using will power can help to persevere and to hold on during periods of doubt and obstacles. Consciously observing our actions can lend insight into finding solutions to our limitations.

When we feel like we fall down, rather than thinking about failure, better to think we are just closer to our goal. "A saint is a sinner who never gave up." This old quote from Paramahansa Yogananda may seem a little dated using the idea of a sinner. But the point is timeless: don't judge yourself or your efforts just because you haven't yet met your goal.

When we run into resistance or circumstances change, then the ability to adapt becomes important to have. We might let go and use creativity to make changes in the goal or our process. We might find that there is an easier way to the same goal. Be open in your life to going around the walls that appear rather than trying to knock them all over. Flowing with the river is a lot easier than trying to swim up stream. Try loving kindness and complimenting yourself for the progress made.

I heard in India this winter about the practice of living in "undisturbed consciousness." This is the practice of a lifetime. Learn to go about your normal life and remain ever vigilant on the inner candle of infinite wisdom. This is the practice that never stops. ❁

BEYOND ALL PHENOMENA

by Douglas Raglin

Beyond all phenomena,
Glistening tears slide into my heart
Bringing awareness of such sadness
Both real and imagined

Through the ages, children
Harmed only by ignorance
Never given knowledge
That only clouds, can birth rainbows

When did I begin to believe
the stories around the fire?
Imbued with incited fear
That only heroes could slay

From such belief
Arose a tower of confusion
As I climbed to confront
the elusive demon
I lost myself somewhere along the way

The echo of simple knowledge
Reverberated through the many pages
As the story is told throughout the ages
The countless heroes slay countless
demons

From the chrysalis that birthed the
demon
Also gave rise to the hero
Then we pinned them to a mounting
board
Displayed for perpetuity

Beyond all Phenomena
Naturally occurring awareness
Can return us to innocence

As the flame burns into the night ❁

PILGRIMAGE WITH JOHN TRAVIS TO MUSTANG, NEPAL JUNE 2014

photos by Marcia Craighead



*“In pursuit of the world,
one gains more and more.
In the pursuit of the Tao, one gains less and less.
Loss upon loss until at last comes rest.
When nothing is done, nothing remains undone.”*
Lao Tzu
Tao Te Ching

*“Our human definition of
'everything' gives us, at best, a
tiny penlight to help us with our
wanderings.”*
Benjamin Walker
The Theory of Everything



*“When the heart grieves for what is lost,
the spirit rejoices over what it has left.”*
Wisdom quote from Sufi tradition

DAYLONGS AND RETREATS

March 2015 through August 2015

For the most up-to-date information, visit www.mtstream.org.

MARCH 28, SATURDAY

The Seven Factors of Enlightenment

Mary Helen Fein & Maeve Hassett
Mercy Center
Auburn, CA

INFO: maryhelen@mtstream.org or
maeve@mtstream.org

APRIL 9-12

Thursday-Sunday

John Travis
Bodega Bay, CA

INFO: bodega.bay.retreat@gmail.com

APRIL 12, SUNDAY

The Transformative Power of Awareness

Heather Sundberg
Placerville, CA

INFO: meburgess.lotus@gmail.com

APRIL 18, SATURDAY

The Transformative Power of Awareness

Heather Sundberg
Placerville, CA

INFO: bhakti.metta@gmail.com

APRIL 25, SATURDAY

John Travis

Nevada City Insight Center
Nevada City, CA

INFO: ann@mtstream.org

MAY 2, SATURDAY

John Travis

Reno, NV

INFO: www.dharmazephyr.org

MAY 3, SUNDAY

John Travis

Minden, NV

INFO: www.dharmazephyr.org

MAY 16, SATURDAY

The Four Foundations of Letting Go

Kevin Griffin

Nevada City Insight Center
Nevada City, CA

INFO: www.mtstream.org

MAY 31-JUNE 7

Sunday-Sunday

Body, Mind & Consciousness Itself

Heather Sundberg
Sierra Friends Center
Nevada City, CA

INFO: jenna@mtstream.org

JUNE 20, SATURDAY

Metta and the Body:

1st Foundation of Mindfulness

Heather Sundberg
Nevada City Insight Center
Nevada City, CA

INFO: www.mtstream.org

JULY 19, SUNDAY

Transforming the Roots of Reactivity:

2nd Foundation of Mindfulness

Donald Rothberg
Nevada City Insight Center
Nevada City, CA

INFO: www.mtstream.org

AUGUST 1-7

Saturday-Friday

Transforming the Judgmental Mind

Heather Sundberg,

Donald Rothberg

Cloud Mountain Retreat Center
Castle Rock, WA

INFO: www.cloudmountain.org

AUGUST 23-28

Sunday-Friday

The Integration of Love and Wisdom

Kamala Masters

Camp Galilee

Lake Tahoe, NV

INFO: www.dharmazephyr.org



LISTEN TO DHARMA TALKS ONLINE

Talks by John Travis and
Heather Sundberg can be found at:

- www.mtstream.org
- www.dharmaseed.org



ADD YOUR VOICE

The online *Dharma Stream*
newsletter is published twice
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warmly welcomed. Please submit
to submissions@mtstream.org
your articles, poems, photos, and
artwork by:

- August 15, 2015 for the
Fall edition
- February 15, 2016 for the
Spring Edition

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE CENTER

Ongoing Sessions at 710 Zion St., Nevada City

MONDAY NIGHT SITTING GROUP

7:00PM to 8:30PM

Silent meditation and dharma talk.

OPEN TEMPLE FRIDAYS

10:00AM to 2:00PM

Come sit, have tea, browse the library.

INSIGHT MEDITATION CLASSES

Spring and Fall 2015

6 weeks. (See website for dates)

1ST WEDNESDAY VIDEO NIGHT

6:30PM to 8:00PM

Come watch a movie together and discuss it.

OTHER WEDNESDAYS

Kalyana Mitta Group (Spiritual Friends)

6:30PM to 7:30PM

Small-group interactive Dharma Meditation and exploration of Buddha's Teachings.

FOR DETAILS, PLEASE VISIT WWW.MTSTREAM.ORG

MINDEN/GARDNERVILLE, NV

O2 Yoga and Wellness

1557 Zerolene Place

Thursdays, 6:00-7:00PM

Karen 775-267-2424

NORTH SAN JUAN RIDGE

Your Place Too

Tuesday evenings

Bruce 530-277-3470

bruce_pardoe@yahoo.com

PLACERVILLE

Sierra Insight Sangha

Boeger Winery

1709 Carson Road

Wednesdays, 6:30-8:00PM

sue@boegerwinery.com

RENO, NV

St. John's Church

1070 West Plumb Lane

Mondays, 6:30-8:15PM

www.dharmazephyr.org

One River Sangha

(GLBT and Allies)

Reno Buddhist Center

820 Plumas Street

Tuesdays, 6:30-8:15PM

www.oneriversangha.org

ROCKLIN/ROSEVILLE

Rocklin Montessori School

5250 Fifth Street

Mondays, 6:30-8:00PM

Donna 916-532-6955

Elke 916-632-8766

donna@mtstream.org

elke@mtstream.org

SACRAMENTO

Sacramento Buddhist

Meditation Group

Sundays, 7:00-8:45PM

www.smbg.org

Sacramento Insight Meditation

Thursdays, 7:00-9:15PM

www.sactoinight.org



For more details, contact
individual sanghas or visit
www.mtstream.org

SIT WITH OUR EXTENDED SANGHA

Connect with community in your local area

AUBURN

Canyon Spirit Yoga Center

538 Auburn Ravine Road

Thursdays, 7:00-8:30PM

Mary Helen 530-887-9400

maryhelen@mtstream.org

CARSON CITY, NV

Dharma Zephyr Sangha

213 N. Minnesota

Mondays, 7:00-8:30PM

www.dharmazephyr.org

Dharma Zephyr Beginner's Mind Sangha

213 N. Minnesota

Mondays, 5:30-6:30PM

www.dharmazephyr.org

West Wind Sangha

213 N. Minnesota

Wednesdays, 6:30-8:30PM

www.dharmazephyr.org

CHICO

Heart of the Lotus Sangha

Sky Creek Dharma Center

Tuesdays, 6:30-8:15PM

Joanne 530-895-1579

www.skycreekdharmacenter.org

Dharma Study Group

Thursdays, 7:00-8:30PM

Nancie 530-898-9139

DAVIS

Davis Insight Group

UU Church of Davis

27074 Patwin Road

Wednesdays, 7:00-8:30PM

www.davisinsightgroup.org

Monday, 7:00-9:00PM

2nd Saturday of Month, 9:00-12:30PM

Tony & Toni Bernhard 530-758-2904

DIAMOND SPRINGS

Metta Meditation Group

Baha'i Center

484 Main Street, Suite 6

Will Lister 530-306-7264

mettaphoto@mac.com

DIVINE PARADOX

by Susan Solinsky

These apple blossoms,
deep in their toiling,
defy sudden grief.
Their tight pink shells
burst open, display creamy centers,
seduce the bees, humming
deliriously with pollen-thick legs and
heads.

I stare dumb and mute while
wisteria buds unfold on a trellis
like lavish, purple firecrackers,
dizzying
the air with scent and green and
spring.

This is too obvious, too brilliant
against such bitter news
of that kind old man's death;
as if his passing would subdue life,
as if one could deny the surge
of root and sap and bud.

Two truths wrestle inside me:
loss and birth collide
in the succulence of blossoms,
in the musk of rotted leaves teaming
with sow bugs,
in the feast of burrowing earth
worms
soundless and blind. ❁



GONE FISHING

by Betsy Gosselin

A still, calm lake, a refreshing, cool
stream, a fishing pole in hand,
bait box strewn open full of tasty
nibblers or colorful lures, special
lunch packed away, the cares of the
world left behind, we're ready to
catch some big fish.

Fishing is like life. It can be quite
peaceful and freeing if we don't
set our intent on bringing home
a bucket full of fish to share with
friends.

Desire – one of the biggest things
that leads to unhappiness in life. We
all have desire, for an object or a
thing, like a job, a relationship, or a
certain pleasant experience. It's like
going fishing with the desire and
intent to catch a fish. However, to go
open-mindedly, without expecting to
catch anything, with a willingness to
experience the day just as it is, then
we can open to the possibility of
truly being happy.

The discomfort in our lives comes
from the hope of getting something,
of being fulfilled in some way, or
having a good experience. Similarly,
we 'get caught' when we wish for
things to stay the same. Naturally,
things don't always go the way
we hoped and things are always
changing. Some days we go fishing
and the lake is dried. Some days the
fish aren't biting. Another mindset
might reflect the old sportsman's
cliché, "It's not about the catching,
it's about the fishing". That is, it's
letting go of expectations and being
present with whatever is.

The truth is we have no insurance on
how our days will unfold. Is your life
as you expected? Have you caught a
lot of fish? Maybe, but surely you've
found a lot of unexpected pain,
sadness, and grief in that net, too.

Our practice is to be aware of what
motivates our everyday activities,
what mind states they're fueled by.
When we are moving through our
lives and find ourselves in certain
situations, it's an opportunity to
ask: are we hoping for a specific
outcome, a way to satisfy a personal
goal, to be acknowledged for our
talents and abilities? By becoming
more aware of how our desires are
working to "co-opt" our experience,
we can begin to implement a well-
known practice in the sport of
fishing called "catch and release".
We "catch" ourselves as we hope
for a certain outcome, and then
"release" or let go, into the present
moment just as it is.

This practice lets us "un-hook"
ourselves from thoughts of wanting.
Then we're set free to swim in that
beautiful lake floating in equanimity,
living a life filled with joy and
happiness. ❁

*"Fishing is like life. It can be
quite peaceful and freeing if we
don't set our intent on bringing
home a bucket full of fish to share
with friends."*



MOUNTAIN STREAM MEDITATION

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MOUNTAIN STREAM MEDITATION is an Insight Meditation community, serving as a resource for Buddhism in the Sierra foothills of Northern California. Our vision is simple: to inspire one another in developing an open heart, spacious mind and kindness toward oneself and others for the benefit of all beings. This is a core teaching of the Buddha.

NEVADA CITY INSIGHT CENTER located at 710 Zion St., joins the Insight Meditation community from coast to coast with a new name. We welcome you to explore spiritual practice in a peaceful environment which supports various kinds of mindful practice. This is a place to connect, reflect, and study.

FOUNDER AND GUIDING TEACHER John Travis is dedicated to teaching the Dharma so that it remains accessible to all. He began teaching in 1986 after studying in Asia with teachers in both the Theravadan and Tibetan traditions. John is a senior teacher at Spirit Rock Meditation Center, has a private practice as a meditation counselor and was trained in Hakomi body-centered psychotherapy.

RESIDENT TEACHER Heather Sundberg began teaching in 1999 after completing a four-year teacher training at Spirit Rock Meditation Center under the guidance of Jack Kornfield and Joseph Goldstein. Heather teaches at the Nevada City Insight Center and nationally in association with several other meditation centers.

GENEROSITY is foundational to meditation practice and sustaining the Buddhadharma. Together we invest in future generations by sharing the gift of a generous heart. Buddhist teachings are offered freely, available to all levels of practitioners. Opportunities to contribute include financial gifts, service, time and energy.

FOR INFORMATION

about Mountain Stream as a 501 (c) 3 nonprofit organization, residential retreats, classes, daylong retreats, and ways to contribute, please visit www.mtstream.org.

