

Walking Mountains

“The green mountains are always walking” –*Daokai*

Dear Sangha and Friends,

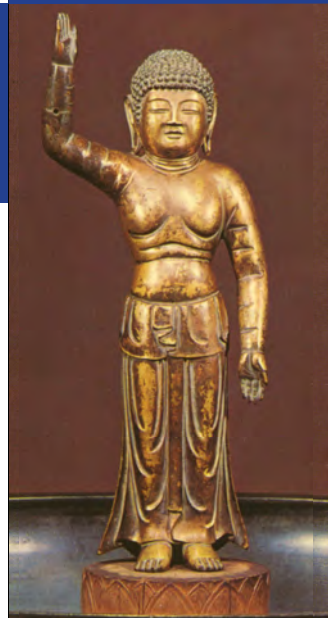
Song sparrows, cardinals, chickadees, and more fill our landscape with the abundance of their song and chatter. Happy to be home. The crow’s strident call retreats to background noise. Tulips, narcissus, and crocus pop up everywhere and terrestrial rainbows abound. Happy it’s spring

We begin the month of May honoring our teacher’s teacher, Roshi Phillip Kapleau, and in so doing, we honor all of our ancestors. This memorial service is soon followed by Vesak, a celebration of the Buddha’s birth, with chanting, songs, stories, and an elephant parade. And of course, birthday cake!

June brings the Sangha Garden Weekend when we come together to tend the many gardens at the Center. It’s also a weekend of camaraderie and fun among Dharma sisters and brothers. Please join us.

Backbone and muscle.
Come to rake and dig and plant.
Cooks will cook for you!

—*Joan White*



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Pilgrimage Reflections

February Triple Sangha Pilgrimage to India



Intense experience, joy that does not fit in the heart, sharing with the Sangha, testimonies of the direct and true path, new universes of wisdom and compassion, affection, brotherhood, revelations, deep love for Siddhartha, infinite gratitude to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

—*Maria Julia Westphal*

MISSION

The Vermont Zen Center’s mission is to create a peaceful and inviting environment to support those who seek wisdom, compassion, joy and equanimity within a Buddhist context. The two-fold practice of the Center is to overcome the causes of suffering through spiritual development and to alleviate the world’s suffering through outreach activities and the cultivation of a caring attitude to the earth.

The fifty-five pilgrims
who returned from India
were unremarkable

(except for the invisible,
glistening thread
binding them for all time
to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.)
—Rose Martin

Walking with Buddha
India, China, Japan
Flowers scatter far
—Susan Grimes

To stand on top of Vulture Peak
and see the sights that the Bud-
dha saw as he preached the Pra-
jnaparamita, the same rocky
craggs, the same mountain sum-
mits—was the experience of a
lifetime.
—Bill Petrow

Arrival
Cacophony—full throttle
Sensory overload,
Beauty, color, pain, suffering,
joy, and peacemaking
The heart bursts open
—Jhana Piche

Before leaving, the notion of pov-
erty, pollution, and meeting possi-
ble illness was concerning. How-
ever, after the pilgrimage, there
was a deeper realization that the
Buddha walked these same paths.
There was no separation. In the
midst of the clamor, I could see
more clearly, we must function and
thrive within the Saha world.
—Theodore Tsaousidis

Bodh Gaya, Mahabodhi temple
At dawn, the tree's shadow embraces us,
heartbeat goes faster, tears of happiness,
emotions beating our throats,
the chanting invades every cell of our body
and brings ease to the heart...
remember, remember, follow the way...
Sit, attention, attention, attention!
—Nelly Lopez

Following in the footsteps of the Buddha, three Sanghas,
two teachers, priests, disciples, and students reached India.
Difficult to assimilate this journey, to know where he was born,
where he lived until his awakening,
where he shared his teachings with those who abandoned him,
And then continued on the path until he reached Nirvana.
To live that, my brothers, is a blessing and good karma!
The years will pass, and this experience will remain with us,
deepening every day and strengthening our faith,
It reinforces that it is possible to achieve Buddhahood!
Infinite gratitude. —Margoth Vargas



Climbing Vulture Peak

The stillness of the religious sites
contrasts with the chaos and con-
stant noise of the cities. The smil-
ing and friendly inhabitants are
happy with what they have. I feel
enormous gratitude for having
been a participant in this wonder-
ful experience.
—Catherine Hermann Legueu

The strongest impressions for
me on the pilgrimage centered
around devotion. The members
of the Triple Sangha certainly
displayed their commitment
during our own devotional ac-
tivities. There were also plenty
of other Buddhists at the sites
we visited, manifesting devo-
tion to practice through their
presence, chanting, sitting, and
the like. The sites themselves
also exuded their own residual
devotional energy from ardent
efforts from days gone by. It
was palpable.
—Jim Kahle



Bodh Gaya

I'll always remember visiting the Kesariya Stupa near Vaishali. It was early morning and very foggy so when we drove up to the site, we couldn't see anything. As we walked towards the monument, this incredible structure came out of the mist, over 100 feet tall. For hundreds of years the site was forgotten, earth covered over the stupa, and it became a hill. On one side, trees were growing. The mist had gathered in hundreds of spider webs, and they were all sparkling. As we circumambulated the stupa, chanting "Om muni muni," we saw men working to uncover the monument. I couldn't help feeling that civilizations rise and fall, but the earth remembers. You could feel the legacy of practice in that place, and the responsibility we all have to uphold it.

—Aylie Baker

Going on pilgrimage to India with the Triple Sangha to honor the Buddha and ancestors was a very moving experience, and one which I will continue to carry in my heart. It felt like making a journey home—together. I'm very grateful for everyone's efforts in making such a meaningful journey possible. Thank you.

—Josh Berger

Under a mist that permeates everything and encloses a faint reddish sun, 55 pilgrims full of hope and not knowing what to expect, sometimes by bus, sometimes walking, sometimes meditating, they find it all. A legend, a story, a teaching becomes reality. The Buddha lives: in the bricks, in the stupas, in the broken figures, in the caves, in the peaceful gardens, in the songs and prayers of the endless devotees.

These 55 pilgrims with their hearts open, full of love, full of humility and hope, travel through the places where the Buddha was born, grew up, became enlightened, taught, and died. In a land of contrasts, of garbage and sacred rivers,



of kind people and poverty, from ancient people with spiritual vocation.

These 55 pilgrims from the new world prostrate themselves before an ancient world, and with their hands in gassho renew their vows to continue, strengthen, spread and live the Dharma, that wonderful teaching that liberates and affirms life.

—Carlos Murillo

Being in India, and actually walking in the footsteps of the Buddha, Ananda, Sariputra, Mahaprajapati and the first Buddhist nuns was truly awe inspiring. It was unexpected and amazing to find that at each of these sites we visited – the actual first monasteries built for the Buddha and his followers, Vulture Peak where the Buddha and his followers would meditate at sunset, the location of the first sermon of the Buddha which was about the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, had a power and energy that was palpable. It felt as if I was meeting the Buddha and his followers every time I sat down to sit at these sites. The energy from their practice still remains and is palpable. The hope for our humanity that emerged

as a result of this was also unexpected. It made me realize how important pilgrimages are. They are a way of giving thanks for this practice that has been passed on to us, and also a way of deepening our understanding that the healing power of the Buddha's teachings are still very much alive for all of us today.

—Kelly Story

The pilgrimage was like diving into a bottomless lake of practice, every day sinking further into how the Buddha and his followers lived and practiced. Trying to describe the experience betrays it somehow, but I can say that every moment I felt enveloped and supported by the energy of the sites, our chanting, our teacher, and our very special Sangha. Thank you from my heart. Thank you, thank you!

—Marcela Pino

Intense practice
Growing up
Reaching out
Deepening faith
Renewing vows
Transcending karma
Expanding limits
Sutras come alive!

—Katia Rodriguez



At the Ajanta Caves

“The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in the past were like us, and we will, in the future, become Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.” This quote from the Jukai ceremony comes to life when one sees the place where the Buddha was born, where he walked, where he went through austerities and hardships, where he ate the rice milk that brought him back to life and continued his efforts, and where he exhaled his last breath. It reminds us that by following his teachings, our efforts and hardships will lead us to the perfection, the equanimity, and joy he found.

—Gerardo Selva

Perspective. How easy it is to be pulled by world events into a vortex of negativity and thereby minimizing the power of practice. Our limitations blind us to other worlds. We saw a world residing here on earth where practice is central. A huge valley at Vulture Peak with multitudes silently absorbing a Buddha’s teisho. Parks, temples, stupas, universities and caves and figures chiseled out of bare basalt. All crying out the Dharma. Asian monastics and lay practitioners sitting, chanting, circumambulating. And 55 brown robed North Americans becoming another brick in the stupa.

—Josh Kelman

Making contact with the places where the Buddha lived, taught and died, made him very much a human being to me. When we were in Kapilavastu, where it is believed Gautama as a prince grew up and spent the first 29 years of his life, we sat zazen and chanted under a grove of trees before circumambulating the stupa there. I gazed out on the rolling landscape, and I could truly envision young Siddhartha as a little boy, as a child. I imagined him running on those fields, playing with animals, delighting in the sound of the birds and the wind. This is where he became real to me. And this has made all the difference.

—Meredith Markow

I am filled with profound gratitude for the pilgrimage and all those who made it a reality. Each day, site and moment were intimate and magical. A few highlights for me include:

- Ceremonies at the Mahabodhi Temple and Vulture Peak
- Early morning sitting at Venuvana with huge, stately bamboo gently swaying overhead like massive elephant heads and then long leafed bamboo fluttering in the breeze like so many butterflies all welcoming us
- Walking the path and touching the rocks at Vulture Peak that the Buddha and his disciples walked and touched
- Sharing time with fellow pilgrims sitting, chanting, eating, and talking while riding on bus trips

Much like a sesshin, the days seemed to flow and fly by seamlessly. Even the traffic, initially terrifying, came to be appreciated for its harmonious chaos.

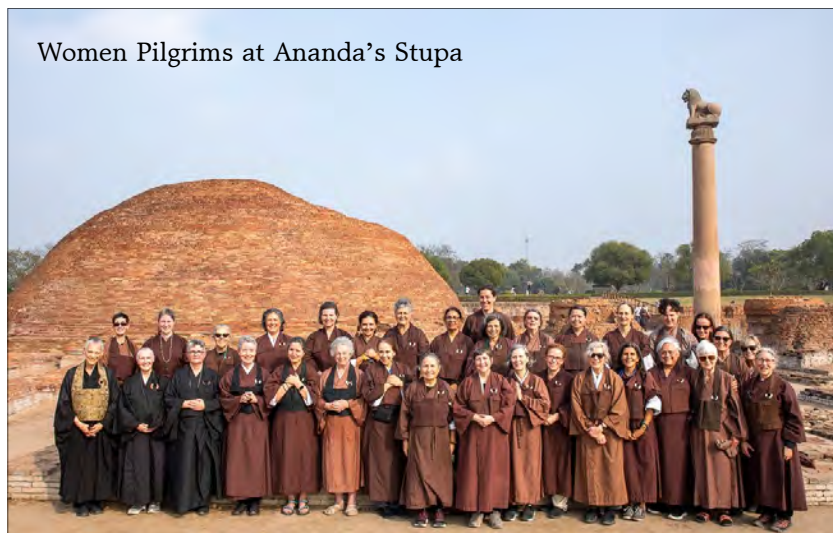
—David Sweet

After a 17-day immersion of Buddha, India, and the beauty of 54 fellow travelers and searchers, I sit here mildly jet lagged, painfully and deeply grateful, and curious about the long-term effects of such a life experience. I learned an awful lot about myself on this trip and awakened to the fact that my ego and I have a long journey ahead of us, uncovering and redefining what it means to see, feel, and act. I reflect on the long-term impact of other beautiful life passions such as music, business, and dance, and realize that my natural proclivity towards Buddhism is probably the most natural of them all.

—Victoria Wacek

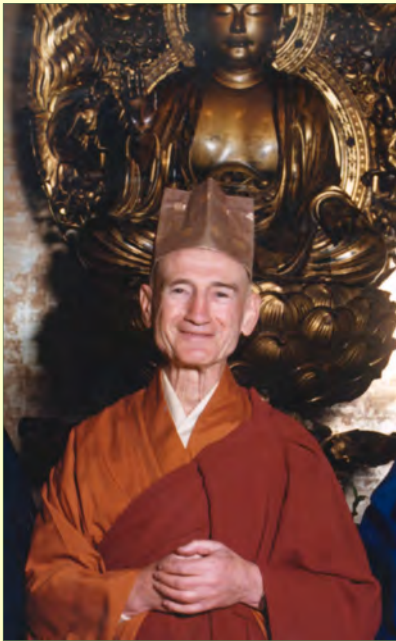
To go on the pilgrimage with our teacher and Sangha was such an opportunity that I am very grateful for!

—Gerry Farrington



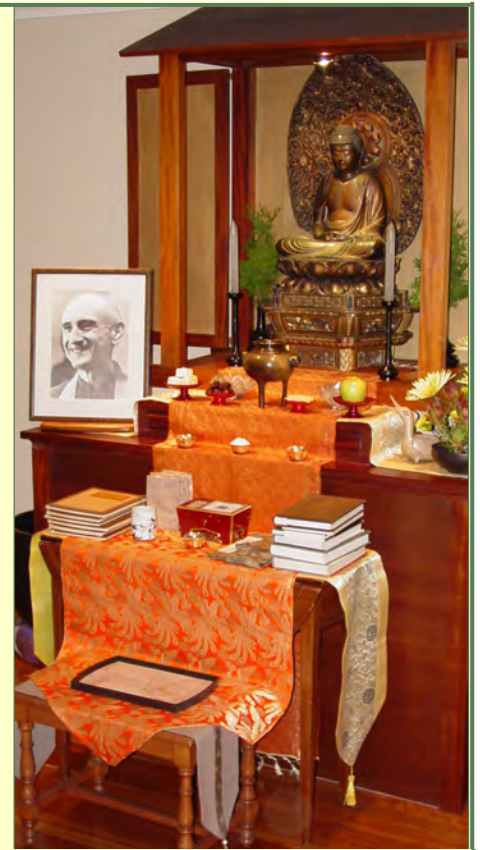
Women Pilgrims at Ananda's Stupa

All-Day Sitting in Honor of Roshi Philip Kapleau



Roshi Philip Kapleau passed away on May 6, 2004 at the age of 91. As is our tradition, a special **Day of Remembrance** honoring Roshi will be held at the Center on **Sunday, May 5**.

On this day we will have an all-day sitting **beginning at 7 a.m. and ending at 3:30 p.m.** During the day there will be a special chanting service including the memorial prayer. There will also be dokusan, and we will listen to one of Roshi Kapleau's taped teishos. —



Sangha Work Periods in May and June

CEREMONY WORKDAY on **Saturday, May 4** for the Roshi Kapleau Memorial All-day sitting.

VESAK WORKDAYS on **Friday, May 24 and Saturday, May 25**. Please lend a hand whenever you can. Help is greatly needed and truly appreciated with setting up for the Buddha's Birthday Celebration.

SANGHA GARDENING WEEKEND SET UP WORKDAYS on **Sunday, June 2** and **Tuesday, evening June 4**.

Vesak 2024



Vesak, the celebration honoring the birth of Shakyamuni Buddha, will be on **Sunday, May 26, beginning at 10 a.m.** (There's no morning sitting prior to the ceremony.) According to tradition, the Buddha was born on April 8. However, for purely practical reasons we celebrate this event when the weather is warmer and we can be outdoors.

Of all the Buddhist holidays, this one is the most fun. After all, it's a birthday party! People of all ages are most welcome, but please register if you are planning to attend in person.

Following the ceremony is a Pot Luck Picnic. Please bring a vegetarian dish to share. The Center will provide plates, cups, and utensils as well as drinks and birthday cake.

Part of the ceremony is to present a small, wrapped baby gift for the Buddha which is later donated to the Lund Home. Presents need not be expensive—diapers, pacifiers, bottles, bibs, booties, rattles—anything is appreciated by the young mothers. Please also bring a flower offering for the baby Buddha.

More information and **registration** at: www.vermontzen.org/ceremony-vesak.html. We hope to see you there! —



REMEMBER TO BRING:

- A flower offering
- A baby gift
- A vegetarian dish to share



Spring Sangha Gardening Weekend

Thursday evening, June 6 – Sunday afternoon, June 9



Get together with Sangha members to work in the gardens, weeding, planting, and preparing our temple grounds for the warm weather ahead.

Lunch will be provided. **Registration is essential** so that we can prepare food, lodgings, work assignments, and more.

Additional information and **registration** here:

[www.vermontzen.org/
events_gardenweekend.html](http://www.vermontzen.org/events_gardenweekend.html)

Upcoming Courses at the Vermont Zen Center

www.vermontzen.org/courses.html

Haiku Workshop Saturday, May 11

Learn the essential elements of traditional haiku and how the form has been played with by American poets. In this course you will gain an understanding of the interaction between spiritual practice and poetry as well as an appreciation of how haiku provides a way to engage in nature. There will also be time to write and share haiku.

Indian Cooking: Lunch Saturday, May 18

Learn how to prepare a delicious and authentic vegetarian Indian meal in the Vermont Zen Center's spacious kitchen.

Manju Selinger will guide you through the process of preparing the meal, which all will enjoy for lunch. No cooking experience is necessary. Limited enrollment. Manju's courses fill quickly!

Flower Arranging Saturday, June 15

Learn basic Ikebana and flower arranging elements: triangulation, depth, placement, color, container size and materials. Through understanding the interaction between spiritual practice and flower arranging, participants will gain an appreciation of the deeper meaning of flowers as offerings and as a way to bring a sense of tranquility to one's environment.



Vermont Zen Center

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*From what flowering tree
I know not, —
But ah, the fragrance!*

—Basho



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If you have time over the next several months to help with mowing, weed whacking, or gardening, please contact Jhana, Jim, or Nowa.

Thank you for helping to keep our land beautiful and welcoming.