

Sangha Speaks

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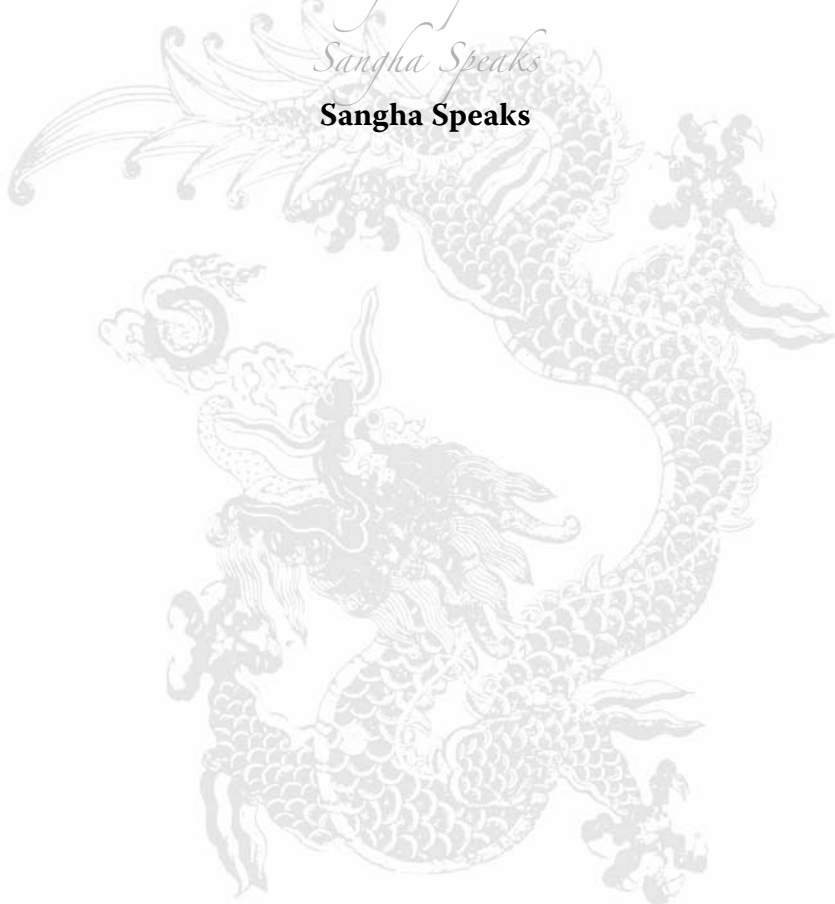
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I am the worst meditation student ever. When I ask my mind to concentrate with one-pointed attention, it wanders off like a retarded sheep. I fidget. My lack of discipline scandalizes me daily. I certainly didn't get to write the introduction to this book by being a good student. I am, nevertheless, deeply honored to be writing it.

What you hold in your hands is a collection of writings by students of the Hard Light School of Meditation in Los Angeles. The writing reflects us as a group, a sangha—fellow seekers who have gathered together to progress along the spiritual path that ends in enlightenment. The poems, essays, and stories are diverse because we are. We come from all walks of life and many different countries. We're all studying the same thing, yet each of us is having a radically different experience.

What kind of school are we? Just what do we think we're doing? And who is our teacher, anyway?

I would describe Hard Light in dog terms as a terrier—small but feisty, adventurous, ready for anything, focused and determined, stubborn even—capable of clamping down and holding on no matter how we're shaken and stirred. We are intrepid, a hearty band. We travel internationally; we camp in the wilderness; we meditate through heat and cold, by day and by night. We move at a fast pace.

How does it work? Showing up, that's the first thing—you see the teacher and the teacher sees you. And then, without further ado, the teacher silently (or, more amazingly, while he is lecturing) unleashes a maelstrom of energy *inside* you. It swirls around like a waterspout, rushes like a river, submerges you until you are marinating in it. It buzzes around you like a cloud of bees and sticks to you like honey. By the time you go home you can feel it vibrating, ringing in your ears, sitting on your head like a hat. It goes to work on you, all day long, even in your dreams. It changes you.

But really, how does it work? That's a big subject that can fill any number of books, but would quickly overwhelm this slender introduction. I offer instead the following brief, tantalizing explanation that raises more questions than it answers.

Lauren Freiman

she walks alone

a black crow
perched on a broken branch in the jungle,
watching the world from the inside

she walks alone

a red star
glistering in a shower of darkness and blinded monotony

she walks alone

barking, howling,
floating across the glass, bottomless floor
in pure ecstasy of the Self

listening for direction
waiting for the knowing
to take her thru the next seemingly clouded layer.

she walks alone

and the water cries
as it washes over the shadow of what she once was
the ocean of mercy
surrounding, enveloping
the one

i will not give up
she screams
i am invincible
and i walk alone
because i am the one and the many

i walk only so that we all may come to know the truth. ☸



Lauri Fraser

I'd like to say a few words about my search for God in Los Angeles—one of my many searches. It started with a phone call from my friend, Jay. “Hi, Lauri, I’ve found something that may be of interest to you and your search, an all-day meditation Intensive this Saturday.” “Saturday? I’m a hairdresser and it’s my busiest day of the week. Besides, I can hardly meditate for twenty minutes, let alone all day!” Everyone sits clearing their mind and all I can think about is global warming and Haagen-Dazs, not necessarily in that order.

I decided to do it. Maybe if I gave my busiest day up to God in the name of “spiritual seeking” then God would make an appearance. He’d owe me one, wouldn’t He?

When we arrived, we sat quietly and a young woman appeared and asked that we meditate for a few minutes. Suddenly I felt a strong presence in the room, but I kept my eyes shut. Slowly I squinted them open and there was Mark. He announced that he could talk about meditation all day long but meditation is experiential. “Who among us has never meditated before?” I held up my hand, quickly negating any of my previous attempts at meditating, as it was clear that I was in a whole other league.

I had been on the search for quite some time.

I’m from L.A. Born Jewish, I’ve never been drawn into any particular religion (including Judaism). Where was God? I was drawn to astrology at age thirteen. At age 20, when life seemed really tough, I got a Buddhist Gohonzon (an altar in a box with Buddhist scripture) and chanted for God. I went to the desert looking for God and found mescaline. Went back to the desert with the Indians looking for Spirit. I went with a friend to see a “saint” and stood in line for over two hours to be blessed and perhaps given the magic words to connect me to the Almighty. I saw psychics and healers and visited holy places. I looked for God in lots of different places, including my own altar in my home. I wanted some answers as to why my life wasn’t going better and why the world was

1 An Intensive is a day-long meditation consisting of four classic meditations. Mark, the teacher and founder of Hard Light, gives a discourse between sittings.





Stone Portal
Virginia LeRossignol Blades

The Sangha

THE SANGHA

Sangha: Conventionally, the sangha is the community of spiritual aspirants. Ultimately, the sangha is those beings with experience of ultimate reality or emptiness. These are the High Ones.