

sangha

NEWSLETTER OF THE SANTA CRUZ AND MONTEREY BAY ZEN CENTERS

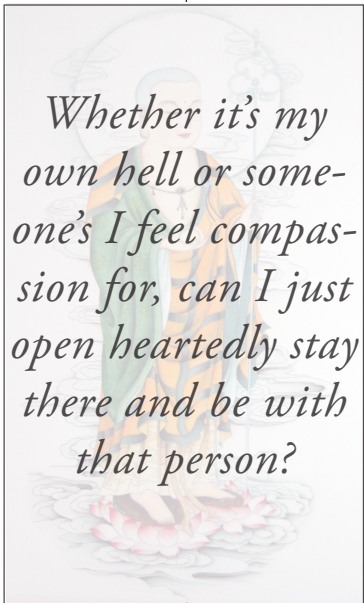
APRIL 2014

JIZO BODHISATTVA'S VOW

This year we are studying compassion in our lives and the teaching of compassion in Buddhism. In Zen we kind of get a bad rap regarding the topic of compassion. We perhaps talk less about compassion than some of the other schools of Buddhism. But I contend we're a pretty compassionate bunch! We learn that compassion and wisdom are the same—two sides of the same coin. In Zen we might talk more about the wisdom side. We describe wisdom as emptiness, realizing all phenomena as the confluence of causes and conditions rather than fixed, permanent forms. This allows us to realize our complete interconnectedness with the whole universe because we co-arise with all the causes and conditions in the universe, moment after moment. We're intimately connected. The expression of that connection, in these human bodies with these human minds, is compassion. Our connecting organ, our organ of that expression of the intimacy of the universe, is our heart. Our expression of wisdom as human beings is our big open-hearted connection to all beings! Our innate humanness – a big heart.

Bodhisattva Kshitigarbha, also known as Bodhisattva Jizo, Earth Womb – Earth Embryo, Earth Storehouse – is one of the Bodhisattvas who teaches us about making connections, understanding our intimacy with all beings. His image is in our garden – the baby-faced statue with the red bib carrying a staff. He vowed to go wherever there is suffering and as he walks around the universe saving all beings, he pounds the staff and the rings clang. On the staff there are six metal rings. They represent the six realms of existence and Jizo goes to all the realms to liberate beings from their suffering. There are three lower realms – the animal realm, the hell realm, and the hungry ghost realm. Hungry ghosts are the parts of us that we hide away; we don't like to show the light of day. We're embarrassed about these. They're hungry for food, hungry for attention. The animal realm is the sex and aggression realm – not much more than those desires in that realm. And we're all familiar with the hell realm. In the Kshitigarbha Sutra of his Fundamental Vow, he goes into detail about the many kinds of hell – there are many levels of hell. One of them is called the Endless Hell, for people who cause trouble in the Sangha. They complain a lot – “that person got an extra cookie and now there's not enough.” Causing discord gets you in a lot of trouble in Buddhism! Then there's the three upper realms. The human realm, our usual home. The fighting titans realm – I think the titans are the CEOs and life where you battle it out for power and gain. In the heavenly realm

things are going pretty well. It is sometimes said that you can't be liberated from the heavenly realm because it's going too well. You're not even aware that you're suffering. But I think that even there you might get a little glimpse that you're too comfortable. So people need rescuing by Jizo even there. Jizo goes around clanging the staff scaring away demons, weasels and little animals, so he doesn't step on them, so he doesn't cause them to suffer. He's taken this vow to go wherever there's suffering to support the sufferer so that person can be liberated.



Whether it's my own hell or someone's I feel compassion for, can I just open heartedly stay there and be with that person?

Here's a little bit of the Sutra. This sutra was preached by Buddha, extolling the virtues of Kshitigarbha Bodhisattva to all the beings in myriad worlds. Disciples have gathered around him to learn from the Buddha. He says that Kshitigarbha took this vow of going to all the realms to save all beings many eons ago. If every grain of sand of the Ganges River was itself a Ganges River, and every grain in all these rivers was a year – that was how long ago Jizo Bodhisattva took this vow to save all beings from suffering. He vowed to continue this practice until Maitreya Buddha is seated. Maitreya will be the next Buddha when Shakyamuni retires. Shakyamuni is still going strong – not near retirement! Maitreya is Buddha's young student, waiting in Tushita Heaven, waiting to be the next Buddha. This vow is a long, committed vow! Shakyamuni spoke: “If you find a person chanting the Kshitigarbha Sutra, or who has even one thought of praise for this Sutra, or says a word of praise for Kshitigarbha, or shows

respect for Kshitigarbha – pray, persuade him by all means to persevere unremittingly, in such work, never looking back. Tell them they will receive inconceivable merits in the present and future. If sentient beings see demons crying, sighing or frightening them, these devils or spirits were their families in past lifetimes. All are in evil realms from which they are unable to emerge and are begging for benevolent acts to be done on their behalf in order for them to be able to be relieved of their suffering. Tell those with frightening visions to chant this Sutra before an image of Buddha and if they can't do this themselves they can ask someone to do this for them. When deceased relatives hear this sutra, they will be relieved and be led to salvation.”

So Buddha asks us to follow Jizo Bodhisattva's example and to meet our loved ones right in the midst of their suffering. We might not pray to Jizo in our Zen practice, but when we identify anyone in the hell realm, or when we're in the hell realm, we might ask ourselves if we could put on the robe and carry the staff of Bodhisattva Jizo and fearlessly enter the hell realm. Whether it's my own hell or someone's I feel compassion for, can I just open heartedly stay there and be with

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that person? Can I stay with my feelings? Can I be skillful enough to liberate myself or the other person?

This is a tough practice that asks us to not turn away from the suffering in the world. I have to confess that I strayed from this vow recently. There's a person at work that has had a serious illness and will probably not return to work. The last I heard she was being treated in Stanford Hospital. I signed the card that was passed around and a few weeks later I asked someone how she was doing, and I was surprised that she had spent the last few weeks at a local nursing home and was about to be discharged back to her home. I'm a little embarrassed that I was oblivious to all this and wasn't more attentive to her suffering. I'd like to be helpful to her, so I'm going to have to start my efforts with an apology to her first. I'm glad she's recovered enough to be back home and I'm sorry I wasn't more available to her when she was feeling her worst. I now will have to fearlessly face my shortcomings and ask her forgiveness. If she'll let me, I'd like to support her in her journey to transform her suffering. I've not gone into her hell realm with her very effectively. Jizo shows us how to go there – you fearlessly go into those awkward situations and see if you can just be there.

Reb Anderson once said something about sitting at Tassajara in the hot weather, sweating with all our robes on. He said: "Just sit. Just to feel a little sweat on your upper lip is the sign the Buddha is sitting with you." Even if I don't save my friend from all the hell she goes through, being with her in the hell realm is being that breeze that might relieve a little suffering. I'm grateful to Jizo Bodhisattva that I might take up the staff and robe to relieve suffering.

Taigen Dan Leighton talked about Jizo in his book *Bodhisattva Archetypes*. He says Jizo practice is about our lives and family, it's a practice that's near at hand. It's not a remote ideal practice to perfect someday down the line. For instance, I already know what I have to do to help my friend. I need to re-establish a long relationship; I don't have to search very hard or learn a new skill. Taigen says this practice is not so much about going to the hell realm, but about doing virtuous deeds right here in our lives, so that when people are out of their hell realm, they'll be in a beautiful world that we've helped create by our deeds. Our deeds create a virtuous realm right where we are. Jizo practice is to recognize our connectedness and to be intimate with suffering. Jizo's vow is to be fearless and patient in the presence of suffering, and to be part of its transformation.

- edited from a talk by Patrick Teverbaugh

5-DAY BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY SESSHIN

With Kokyo Henkel, April 2-6, 5am-9pm (ends 4pm Sunday)

Sesshin ends with a ceremony to celebrate Buddha's Birthday at 4pm, to which all are welcome. Suggested donation: \$35/40 per day.

SHUSO DHARMA INQUIRY CEREMONY

Wednesday, April 9, 6:30pm.

Everyone will have an opportunity to ask a practice question to Shuso Hannah Meara to celebrate the completion of her term as head student.

SHODO CALLIGRAPHY CLASS

With Yoshi Shibata, 3 Sunday afternoons: April 13, 20, May 11, 18, 2:30-5pm.

Learn the fundamentals of Shodo Japanese Calligraphy using traditional ink and brush. See flyer or www.sczc.org/zenEvents. Fee: \$100/120 for series, plus materials.

DINNER & EVENING OF CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Saturday, April 26, 5pm.

Everyone is invited to an outdoors potluck dinner and an evening of skits, music, and poetry. Laugh, sing, appreciate, share, be inspired, get goofy, and generally love your sangha. Please sign up at the zendo, where you can also request the assistance of other actors, backup singers, etc.

ONE-DAY SITTING

Saturday, May 10, 8:30am-5pm.

With Cathy Toldi. Please bring a bag lunch. Suggested donation: \$12/15.

FOUR BODHISATTVA VOWS

With Eugene Bush, 4-week class series, May 11-June 15, 6:35-8:00

This class series will focus on the meaning of the vows and their relationship to the four noble truths. We will identify an archetypal figure in our literature for each one, and study one female and one male ancestor whose life exemplified the qualities of each vow. With this undertaking we will be prepared to apply this essential teaching to the actions of our daily lives.

Suggested donation: \$10/13 per class.

STONE AND SELF

Workshop with Michael Bashista, May 30-June 1.

Over one weekend we learn how to carve, texture, sand and polish a soft stone. In doing so we face our apprehensions and explore our creativity by irrevocably changing an object that has existed for millions of years and, in moments, hours and days, change it for millions of years to come. See flyer or www.sczc.org/zenEvents.

Fee: \$110/130

3-DAY SUMMER SOLSTICE "NO TOYS" SESSHIN

With Kokyo Henkel, June 20-22, 5am-9pm (ends 4pm Sunday).

Completely silent retreat: no chanting, lectures, dokusan. Suggested donation: \$35/40 per day.

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PARAMITAS COLLAGE

Workshop with Cathy Toldi, June 29, 1-4:30pm

Explore the path of paramita practice – generosity, patience, rigor, presence, wisdom & responsibility – through creative collage. We will create collage cards as way of enlivening our zen practice, while connecting with new and old Dharma friends.

Suggested donation: \$25/30.

INTRODUCTION TO ZEN

Saturday, April 26, May 24, June 28, 10am-noon

A monthly introduction to the body and mind of Zen meditation and the forms of practice at SCZC. The morning includes sitting and walking meditation, followed by discussion. Everyone is welcome, free of charge.

SANGHA DAY

Saturday, May 17, starts 9:20am

Sangha Day is a time to come together and help take care of the temple and grounds: cleaning the zendo, making candles, gardening, etc. Please bring something for a potluck lunch.

TASSAJARA STUDY WEEK: ASPIRATION OF THE AWAKENED HEART: HOW A DROP OF WATER ENTERS THE OCEAN

With Kokyo Henkel & Shoho Kuebast. Tassajara Zen Mountain Center, July 23-27.

On bodhichitta, the aspiration to realize complete awakening and selflessness for the benefit of all beings.

\$68/day for shared guest accommodations. To register, call Tassajara reservations at 877-833-5963 (toll free) or 415-865-1899 or email tassreservations@sfzc.org.

GLOBAL SANGHA EVENTS

Pride Parade: Sunday, June 1

Celebrate diversity with other Sangha members as we march with faith-based organizations, welcoming everyone to practice at Zen Center. This event is a lot of fun – spending a sunny morning together, waving to the crowd, and manifesting the interconnectedness our community! It's a brief but lively affair, 10am to noon.

Japanese Cultural Fair: Saturday June 7

Zen Center once again will open the Japanese Cultural Fair with a chant of well-being. While the Fair continues in the park with taiko drumming, food and crafts, we will host chado tea ceremony, sejiki ceremony for departed ancestors, bonzai demonstration, ikebana flower arranging, and kimono fashion show on our Zen Center campus. Come spend an hour or the whole day at this great annual event!

SCZC relies on fees and donations to continue its mission. If you can pay more, please consider doing so. If you cannot afford the suggested donation, please offer what you can. No one will be turned away for lack of funds.



Sunlight Mountain by Ellen Richter

“Morning Song”

by Ziggy Rendler-Bregman

Pewter moon lustrous
half-awake, half-full.
The bull in the
pocket of Orion.
In the concrete silence,
I try to name the
color of this darkness.
Nearby, a small bird
announces itself
trilling night into day.
I bow, kneel, touch my
head to the ground.
Rise into this dawn,
arms lifted in wonder,
we make

one

song.

“Katherine”

by Nannette Overley

When I flicked the scoop
of ashes
from the worn wooden spoon
they drifted,
then sifted
down
and the sage below us
burst into flame,
full of vibrant life
that couldn't be contained.

We were scooping the ashes
from a plastic bag
passing it hand to hand
down the slope
with awe
and bewilderment.

At the end of the line
Charlie shook out the bag.
The empty plastic bag waved in the wind
like a weary flag.
There was an odd, unexpected
misty rain that day.
This was the body of my teacher.

You hardly noticed the rain, really
but by the time we had wound our way
down
from the memorial site
water was beading on my hair
and my rakusu hung damp
soaked through
weighty
with her teachings.

Santa Cruz Zen Center
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MBZC AND SCZC ARE ON FACEBOOK: you can "like" the two Zen Centers Facebook pages for current information on what's happening there, photos of events, and more.

SANTA CRUZ ZEN CENTER 115 School Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95060 831-457-0206 www.sczc.org

DAILY SCHEDULE



Monday-Friday:

5:45am Zazen
6:25am Service (chanting)
12:00pm Zazen
5:45pm Zazen
6:25pm Service

Wednesday Evening:

6:35pm Lecture/discussion
7:30pm Informal tea

Saturday Morning:

8:30am Zazen
9:10am Service

Sunday Evening:

5:45pm Zazen
6:25pm Service

LIBRARY OPEN

During tea after Wed. Lecture

ORDINARY RECOVERY

Friday evenings at 6:45 pm

Buddha's B-day Sesshin	Apr 2-6	5am-9pm
Buddha's Birthday	Sun. Apr 6	4-5pm
Shuso Dharma Inquiry	Wed. Apr 9	6:30-7:30pm
Calligraphy Class	Apr 13-May 18	2:30-5pm
Precepts Renewal	Tues. Apr 15	5:45-6:30pm
Tenzo Training	Sat. Apr 19	9:30-noon
Sobun Roshi Memorial	Thurs. Apr 24	6:25-7am
Introduction to Zen	Sat. Apr 26	10-noon
Dinner & Entertainment	Sat. Apr 26	5-8pm
One-day Sitting	Sat. May 10	8:30am-5pm
Bodhisattva Vows class	May 11-Jun 15	6:35-8pm
Precepts Renewal	Thur. May 15	5:45-6:30pm
Sangha Day	Sat. May 17	starts 9:20am
Introduction to Zen	Sat. May 24	10-noon
Kobun Roshi Memorial	Mon. May 26	6:25-7am
Stone and Self	May 30-Jun 1	starts 4pm on 30
Precepts Renewal	Fri. Jun 13	5:45-6:30pm
Sejiki and Cultural Fair	Sat. Jun 7	11am-5pm
Summer Solstice Sesshin	Jun 20-22	5am-9pm
Sobun Roshi Memorial	Tues. Jun 24	6:25-7am
Tenzo Training	Sat. Jun 28	9:30-noon
Introduction to Zen	Sat. Jun 28	10-noon
Paramitas Collage	Sun. Jun 29	1-4:30pm