

sangha

NEWSLETTER OF THE SANTA CRUZ AND MONTEREY BAY ZEN CENTERS

OCTOBER 2014

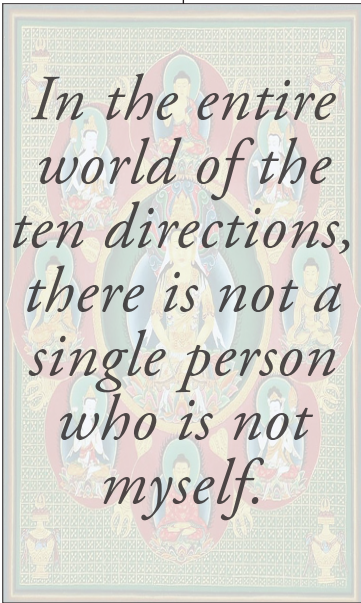
EQUALIZING SELF AND OTHERS

The bodhisattva's vow to alleviate the suffering of all sentient beings is truly awesome, beyond awesome. It may even seem impossible to really relate to the world in this way. If it is possible, the main thing it comes down to is the knowing and feeling in our heart that others are really not separate from us, that our well-being is not more important than that of others. We've probably heard this many times, but actually experiencing life that way doesn't come naturally or easily for anyone. Thus we have teachings and practices to help us. Teachings point us in the right direction, and as we come to understand and remember them, again and again, our mind can start to shift gradually, and our view of how things are can actually change. The more we align our life and practice with the teachings, the more we taste their truth.

For example, we can make a point of recalling how ourselves and others are completely interdependent. We can't actually survive more than a few hours when we are first born without the kindness and support of others. Then, throughout the rest of our life, we are completely dependent upon others in a way that is easy to forget and take for granted. Every time we eat, every time we drink water from a faucet, every time we have a warm place to sleep on a cold night, is all due to the support of others. To intentionally remember this again and again actually starts to change the mind, and opens us to appreciate others more deeply.

One of the greatest teachers of the bodhisattva path is Shantideva, who lived in eighth century India. In Chapter 8 of his *Way of the Bodhisattva*, he writes about equalizing self and others. This is more than just equanimity, it is seeing that there really is no fundamental difference between self and others. Shantideva says, "Since I and other beings are both equal in wanting happiness, what difference is there to distinguish us, that I should strive for happiness for myself alone? Since I and other beings are both equal in not wanting to suffer, what difference is there to distinguish us, that I should save myself and not the others?" Of course this makes sense logically – why should our suffering be more important than that of any others? But this truth does not sink into our heart. The way we are conditioned as human beings is to experience ourselves as a separate individual and as the most important one. That's how we got here, at the top of the evolutionary ladder; those who put themselves first are the ones who survived. So this way of thinking that doesn't really make sense is deep in our genetic structure, and no small matter to undo. Through continuous familiarity with this new way of looking at our life, gradually we can

start to change. Shantideva continues, "Suffering has no 'possessor,' therefore no distinctions can be made in it. Since pain is pain, it is to be dispelled. What use is there in drawing boundaries between my pain and yours?" Pain is simply pain. It's not that it is mine or yours. It belongs to nobody, it is kind of impersonal, since there is no real "self" to possess anything. Suffering always seems to have the location of a particular sentient being, but it doesn't matter which one; the bodhisattva's vow is to alleviate all suffering.



In the entire world of the ten directions, there is not a single person who is not myself.

"Just as in connection with this body, devoid of self, the sense of 'I' arose through strong habituation, why should not the thought of 'I,' through habit, not arise related to another?" With the thought "I," the view of myself as an individual body and mind comes to be. This way of thinking, that we all have, arose very early on, soon after our birth, and it continued to arise through habituation. We kept thinking and saying "I" over and over until we really believed that this body and mind is separate from others and more important than others; this is the result of habituation. So then why couldn't the thought of "I" through further habituation – called practice – not arise with respect to another? In other words, this mind can be trained to think of "I" as all of us, as a much larger self. As the Chinese Zen Teacher Changshan once said, "In the entire world of the ten directions, there is not a single person who is not myself."

Is it possible to really change our perception like that? Isn't this kind of like undoing evolution? That seems to be the proposal of the ancient buddhas and bodhisattvas. Admittedly it may take a long time, but the mind is infinitely flexible. Though our habits are deeply entrenched, in fact they can change. It's a matter of first understanding this new way of thinking of all of us as one body, and then rethinking it again and again and again. This may sound like a lot of thinking for a Zen practitioner, but if we don't train the conceptual mind, it's not just going to automatically change. How about just dissolving the boundaries of self and others in zazen, letting go of all conceptual thought? We need to do this too, to directly taste the freedom of not conceptualizing our separation. If we combine zazen with remembering these teachings over and over – "mindfulness" can also be translated as "remembering" – then this may be the most effective way to stir up and dissolve our ancient twisted habits.

How about some practical modern applications of this kind of mind-shifting? The contemporary ethics philosopher Peter Singer has two books that are closely related to Shantideva's teaching of equalizing self and others. In *Animal Liberation* he brings up the reasons why people don't treat animals the same as they treat humans – not to

SANTA CRUZ ZEN CENTER

(continued from page one)

mention the same as themselves. This is what he calls “speciesism,” which is exactly the same principle as racism and sexism, but a biased delusion we often don’t notice. People sometimes say that since animals are not as intelligent as humans, their life is not as valuable; therefore killing an animal is very different from killing a human. Much of the human world generally holds this kind of unconscious belief. Peter asks: if we really base the worth of a life on intelligence, then what about an adult pig versus a newborn human infant? Actually an adult pig may be more intelligent than a newborn infant. The infant has the potential to become more intelligent than the pig, but actually in terms of value right now, which life would be worth more right now, if intelligence is the main criterion? If we really start looking at our underlying beliefs and inconsistencies, they may start to fall apart. We usually don’t want to do this because it brings up big implications for our lives. Peter asks what is the appropriate basis upon which we should decide whether it is ethical or not to kill life. Intelligence is not the point. Basically, it all comes down to suffering, the being’s ability to suffer and feel pain, which is what Shantideva says as well: all sentient beings are equal in that they all want basic well-being and they all want to be free from suffering.

It does seem pretty clear that animals with any kind of nervous system, even insects, try to move away from suffering and danger, and towards comfort and safety. Even if they are not rational and intelligent beings, they seem to suffer and feel pain. The more rational and intelligent beings, like us, seem to suffer more, when we think about pain in the past or the future. Other animals are a little more free of that than we are, but they surely feel pain and want well-being. When Peter Singer began to really look into this kind of reasoning as a basis for killing or protecting life, contemplating the equalizing of self and others, he became vegetarian. His life actually changed in a major way, based on his opening to a deeper truth.

Another book by Peter Singer, called “The Life You Can Save,” also has powerful arguments similar to Shantideva’s, pointing out our unconscious biases to break down the division between caring for ourselves and other people. Peter asks us to imagine coming upon a child drowning in a lake when nobody else is there to help her. Would we go into the lake to save her life, even if it meant ruining our new shoes? Of course, a human life is worth more than our shoes. But what if the child is dying in Africa due to lack of medical treatment that costs the same amount as our shoes? Would we spend that amount on aid to save the life of a child? Though many people feel that this kind of aid is not reasonable, since it’s just a drop in the bottomless bucket of extreme poverty, what if our own child was that particular “drop in the bucket”? This way of looking at things is quite disconcerting. After examining such ethical arguments, opening to equalizing self and others, Peter Singer ended up changing his life again; he set up an organization called “The Life You Can Save,” which researches the most efficient aid organizations around the world that help sick and dying people, and then recommends that we donate a small part of our income to help the poorest of the poor. Actually, if everybody in first world countries donated a small percentage of their income to the most efficient organizations, it could completely eliminate world poverty and prevent countless deaths. Courageous bodhisattvas are willing to look into their unconscious biases, train their minds in equalizing self and others, and joyfully benefit living beings in all kinds of practical ways.

- edited from a talk by Kokyo Henkel

FALL PRACTICE PERIOD

October 15-
December 10

Practice Period is an 8-week time for making a deeper commitment to zen practice with the sangha, especially daily zazen. Participants in this P.P. will

commit to attending at least 3 zazen periods a week at Zen Center, a 6-week class series, 5 Wed. evening Dharma talks, and 5 of the 13 sesshin days. (Please fill out a personal commitment form by Oct. 10 to join P.P., and speak with Kokyo if interested in the year-long Warming the Hearth study and practice program)



Mountains and Waters by Ellen Richter

DENKO-E SESSHIN ON KEIZAN ZENJI’S “TRANSMISSION OF LIGHT”

October 16-20 (5 days), 5am-9pm (ends 5pm Monday)

Denko-e is a concentrated study retreat on several chapters of Keizan’s Denkoroku, the awakening stories of the Zen ancestors. Each day will include morning and afternoon teachings and discussion with Kokyo. Suggested donation: \$35/day for sustaining members, \$40 for others.

EIHEI DOGEN’S INSTRUCTIONS TO THE COOK (Tenzo Kyokun)

with Cathy Toldi, Oct 26-Nov 23

Through this text and through our daily activities, we will explore how to “live out the vivid and dynamic quality of our life as a total self, in whatever circumstances arise.” This class won’t involve hands-on kitchen work: it’s about cooking our lives. Suggested donation: \$10/class for sustaining members, \$13 for others. Five Sunday mornings: Oct 26-Nov 23, 10-11:30.

AROUSING THE AWAKENING MIND, DOGEN ZENJI ON BODHICHITTA

with Kokyo Henkel, Oct 26-Nov 30

Kokyo will offer a class series on Dogen’s “Shobogenzo Hotsu Bodaishin,” exploring the aspiration to realize awakening for the benefit of all beings. Suggested donation: \$10/class for sustaining members, \$13 for others. Six Sunday evenings: Oct 26-Nov 30, 6:35-8pm. (There will also be a tea and discussion group with the shuso, 5:30-6:20pm).

SANTA CRUZ ZEN CENTER

ONE DAY SITTING

Saturday November 8

Includes a lecture by Kokyo in the morning, and tea with discussion in the afternoon; please bring a bag lunch. 8:30am-5pm. Suggested donation: \$12/day for sustaining members, \$15 for others.

ROHATSU SESSHIN (CELEBRATION OF BUDDHA'S AWAKENING)

Each day will include morning teachings with Kokyo and formal oryoki meals. Suggested donation: \$35/day for sustaining members and \$40 for all others. December 4-10 (7 days), 5am-9pm (ends with Shuso Dharma Inquiry Ceremony, and Closing of Practice Period 6:30pm on Dec. 10)

SCZC relies on donations to continue its mission. If you can pay more than the suggested amount, 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.

SHUSO SHOSAN ELLEN RICHTER

The shuso, or head student, for fall practice period is Rev. Shosan Jungyo, Ellen Richter. She began practicing at SCZC in 1974 with Kobun Chino Roshi, and later practiced at Zen Center of Los Angeles with Taizan Maezumi Roshi and Joko Beck. Ellen received the precepts from Maezumi Roshi in 1982, and was then asked by him to move to Japan to teach English. While there she practiced at several different Zen temples. Ellen returned to SC in 1985 and resumed practice with Kobun and Jikoji. She was ordained as a priest by Angie Boissevain in 2013. The role of the shuso is to support the sangha by attending as much zazen as possible, leading discussion group on Sunday evenings, giving Dharma talks, and answering questions in a Dharma Inquiry Ceremony to close Practice Period.

FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

"In the zazen posture, your mind and body have great power to accept things as they are, whether agreeable or disagreeable."

- Shunryu Suzuki, *Zen Mind, Beginners' Mind*

It is a year after our fundraising campaign for a remodel of the dokusan building. We had envisioned that by this time, we would be enjoying a fresh and beautiful new building, completed according to our careful plans and tight timelines. And a fresh and beautiful new building we will enjoy, in time. The sequence of events over the course of this past spring and summer, however, has required us to let go of our original timeline for building, and respond with care, flexibility and patience to events as they unfold. Due in part to our location in a historical district within the city, the City Planning Department has reviewed our plans with much attention to detail. No new soil can be disturbed on the site, the exterior of the new building must have the same roofline as the existing building and must have an appearance consistent with the existing buildings. In addition, we have been required to conduct a new survey of the property boundaries, and apply for an adjustment to the property line, so that the new building can be completely within the limits

of our property, and so that our neighbor's house resides within the bounds of his property. Although these steps have all taken time, we believe that having an accurate new property line, as well as a sound new building, will be of benefit in the long run. We move through the required changes and alterations, step by step, attending as skillfully as we can to the best interests of the current sangha, and of future generations of practitioners who will warm the cushions and gardens of our Warm Jewel Temple. Thank you for your generosity and patience. Thank you for your practice.

- Nanette Overley

INTRODUCTION TO ZEN

Saturdays October 25, November 22, December 20, 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.

OFFERING TO HUNGRY GHOSTS CEREMONY

In this ceremony called sejiki (a.k.a. segaki) we call forth the restless, unsatisfied yearnings of our own life, inviting them to be known, cared for, and released – as well as raising the deep intention to nourish all hungry spirits in the world, and remembering departed ancestors and friends. Offerings of food will be made, and we will chant together for all hungry ghosts and departed spirits. Wednesday October 29, 6:30-7:30pm.

SANGHA DAY AND ALL-SANGHA MEETING

Sangha Day is a time to come together and help take care of the temple and grounds: cleaning the zendo, gardening, etc. Please bring something for a potluck lunch. The annual All-Sangha Meeting is an opportunity to hear about what is happening at SCZC, our financial health, and to give input to the Board about things you would like to see happen at Zen Center. Please join in the conversation. Saturday November 15, 9:20am-3pm with potluck lunch, followed by meeting 3-5.

THANKSGIVING POTLUCK DINNER

Celebrate gratitude for the gifts of the earth, life itself, community, and the present moment. Please bring some food to share for a vegetarian feast. Thursday November 27, 5-7pm.

NEW YEAR'S EVE AND DAY

The evening will include sitting and walking meditation until midnight, when we welcome in the New Year by ringing the big bell 108 times (to release 108 delusions), followed by a fire in the courtyard, along with tea and noodles. Celebrate New Year's Day with a recitation of the Prajna Paramita Diamond Sutra, dedicated to world peace. Wednesday December 31, 8:30pm-12:30am, Thursday, Jan 1, 1-3pm.

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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		Bodhidharma Memorial	Mon. Oct 6	6:25-7am	
Monday-Friday:		Shuso Entering Ceremony	Wed. Oct 8	6:30-8pm	
5:45am	Zazen	Precepts Renewal	Thurs. Oct 9	5:45-6:30pm	
6:25am	Service (chanting)	Oryoki Server Training	Sun. Oct 12	1:30-4pm	
12:00pm	Zazen	Open Practice Period	Wed. Oct 15	6:35-8pm	
5:45pm	Zazen	Denko-e Sesshin	Oct 16-20	5am-9pm	
6:25pm	Service	Sobun Roshi Memorial	Fri. Oct 24	6:25-7am	
Wednesday Evening:		Introduction to Zen	Sat. Oct 25	10-noon	
6:35pm	Lecture/discussion	Tenzo Kyokun class	starts Sun. Oct 26	10-11:30am	
7:30pm	Informal tea	Bodhichitta class	starts Sun. Oct 26	6:30-8pm	
Saturday Morning:		Hungry Ghosts Offering	Wed. Oct 29	6:35-7:30pm	
8:30am	Zazen	Precepts Renewal	Thurs. Nov 6	5:45-6:30pm	
9:10am	Service	One-day Sitting	Sat. Nov 8	8:30am-5pm	
Sunday Evening:		Sangha Day & Meeting	Sat. Nov 15	9:15-3, mtg 3-5	
5:45pm	Zazen	Introduction to Zen	Sat. Nov 22	10-noon	
6:25pm	Service	Kobun Roshi Memorial	Wed. Nov 26	6:25-7am	
LIBRARY OPEN		Thanksgiving Dinner	Thurs. Nov 27	5-7pm	
During tea after Wed. Lecture		Precepts Renewal	Tues. Dec 2	5:45-6:30pm	
ORDINARY RECOVERY		Suzuki Roshi Memorial	Tues. Dec. 4	6:25-7am	
Friday evenings at 6:45 pm		Rohatsu Sesshin	Dec. 4-10	5am-9pm	
		Shuso Dharma Inquiry	Wed. Dec 10	6:35-8pm	
		Introduction to Zen	Sat. Dec 20	10-noon	
		Sobun Roshi Memorial	Wed. Dec 24	6:25-7am	
		Year-end break	Dec 24-31	after a.m. zazen on 24th	