

sangha

NEWSLETTER OF THE SANTA CRUZ AND MONTEREY BAY ZEN CENTERS

JANUARY 2015

MYSTICAL COMMUNION

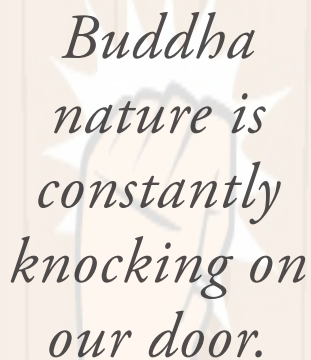
Dogen Zenji writes: "Arousing the aspiration for awakening, bodhichitta, is making a vow to free all sentient beings from suffering before freeing oneself, and actualizing the vow... This aspiration arises in the mystical communion between buddhas and sentient beings. It is not given by buddhas or bodhisattvas, it is not created by oneself, and it does not simply arise spontaneously."

This altruistic aspiration to free all beings and realize awakening arises in mystical communion, "kanno doko." "Kan" is to feel or perceive or intuit something. "O" is responsiveness. So "kanno" is intuitively perceiving a response from buddha. Buddha is always responding to us, and buddha is not somewhere out there apart from us. Our own buddha nature is right here - the open, compassionate, boundless nature of mind - but we're not usually in touch with it. When we, as sentient beings, put forth some intention, aspiration, or receptivity, we meet buddha; our buddha nature is always responding to our sentient being nature, and sometimes we can appreciate this meeting.

"Do" means way, and "ko" is crossing or meeting, joining or intersecting, communicating or exchanging, so "kanno doko" could be translated literally as "intuition and response, the way of communion." Other translations include "mutual affinity and interaction," "mutual resonance between stimulus and response", "sympathetic resonance," and "mystical communion." It's a dynamic term that's hard to translate into English.

Suzuki Roshi said that "to ask buddha to come is the meaning of offering incense." Sometimes we make an image of buddha - the awakened nature of all sentient beings - that looks like a person sitting in zazen, place it on an altar, and make an offering to buddha with the sincere wish to meet awakened nature. We put forth an inquiry or aspiration, and if we do so wholeheartedly, we may notice a response. I think we all have had this experience of inquiry and response coming up together. When you sit down for zazen and start working through all kinds of problems with the conceptual mind, eventually you catch yourself. A little bit of intention arises to stop and settle right here and now, giving up the endless turmoil of self-centered thought for the benefit of all. We put forth the intention and the response is right there: a deep breath of relaxation, ease, and presence, ahhhhh. Buddha meets us and confirms we are on the right track, and baby bodhichitta is born. This is the illusory sentient being called "me" in mystical communion with inconceivable buddha nature, "small mind" resonating with "big mind."

"Kanno doko" can also apply to the relationship of student and teacher. If a student in dokusan says, "Everything is going just fine, I don't have anything particular to bring up today" then the teacher can't do much with that. She might just respond, "Alright, well have a nice day," and the meeting is over. However, if the student says, "I'm really struggling, I have some embarrassing things to confess; I'm just going to put the issue out there because I trust you won't scorn me." The student puts it out there and the teacher doesn't scorn him. Instead the response is, "I understand, I really empathize, I'm with you." In such a meeting we feel met, but if we don't express ourselves straightforwardly, then the meeting may not even seem to happen at all.



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Here's a story told by Hakuun Yasutani Roshi about four kinds of "kanno doko" or mystical communion between buddhas and sentient beings. These are four types of relationship between inquiry or receptivity of people (kan) and response of buddha (o) as taught by Zhiyi, one of the ancient Chinese founders of the Tiantai School. They are: imperceptible inquiry and imperceptible response, imperceptible inquiry and perceptible response, perceptible inquiry and imperceptible response, perceptible inquiry and perceptible response. Zhiyi taught that, "The water does not rise up, nor does the moon come down, yet in a single moment the one moon manifests in all bodies of water. Buddha does not come, and sentient beings do not go to buddha, yet they meet through the person's inquiry and the buddha's response. This is subtle mystical communion."

A Japanese man, who was nominally Buddhist but didn't really know anything about Buddhist practice, decided to visit a Zen temple with his daughter to enjoy the beautiful gardens. His daughter was sick with the flu and he thought it would be a peaceful and serene place to walk around, maybe good for his daughter's health. They did walk around the gardens and they were beautiful and serene. This is an example of imperceptible inquiry and imperceptible response.

Since their spirits were a bit uplifted by the walk, they decided to stop in and visit the abbot, who served them some tea. As the father and daughter were leaving, the abbot offered them a small sutra book, the kind of free distribution book that is sometimes given to anyone who comes for tea in Asian temples, a little souvenir of their visit. The man didn't think anything of it, and when he got home he put the sutra book on his family's home altar. This is a kind of imperceptible inquiry and perceptible response; a book of Buddha's teachings entered this man's home without him consciously looking for such a thing.

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A few years later, the man was relaxing one afternoon and happened to be looking at the altar. "What's that up there?" he thought. "Oh yes, it's that sutra book that a Zen teacher gave me a while back. I've never opened it." He picked it up and opened it randomly to some words of the Buddha about cause and effect. "Actually, this is pretty interesting," he thought. "I've never heard this kind of thing before." The Buddha's words struck him in a new way, so he thought he might look more into such things. He went to a bookstore, picked up another sutra and read it, but he still was not receiving direct guidance from a living teacher, and wasn't sure exactly what the Dharma was really about. This is an example of perceptible inquiry but somewhat imperceptible response.

Eventually the man decided to pay a visit to the Zen teacher who gave him the sutra years before. He wanted to speak with a practitioner about some of the profound teachings he was reading, to engage the Dharma more directly, so he might better apply the teachings to his own life. He began visiting the Zen temple regularly, and the teacher suggested he take up the practice of zazen to help understand the Buddha's words. By now, this man's life had begun to really change, and great aspiration to deepen his practice arose in him, perceptible inquiry and perceptible response. Sometimes this is how things work in our life! It's hard to know how causes and conditions will play out over time, so there's no reason to be discouraged about how our practice is going.

Buddha nature is constantly knocking on our door, and sometimes we hear the knock, but we wouldn't think of calling it buddha nature. We may walk past a homeless person and then suddenly decide to turn around, go back, and give them some change. That could be a knock from buddha nature, opening our heart of compassion a little, beyond our small separate self. The buddha nature station is always sending out radio waves, but if we are not tuned in to that station we don't hear the music. When we think of the initial factors that brought us to spiritual practice, we can try to trace back our experience to various events, turning points in our life. These can all be seen as aspects of mystical communion. At the time these events may not seem related to practice, but later we come to see that they were quite important, sometimes perceptible and sometimes imperceptible "kanno doko."

Buddha can't just magically zap us with awakening, and we can't just wake up by the power of our small individual self. Some people think of "Pure Land" practice as simply relying on the "other-power" of Amitabha Buddha to save them because they are too deluded and lazy to practice themselves, but that's giving too much responsibility to buddha. Others believe in "self-power," relying only on their own individual practice effort, but that can be putting too much emphasis on the illusory separate self. As Dogen says, "Just cast body and mind into the house of buddha, then all is done by buddha. When you do so, you are free from birth and death and become a buddha without effort or calculation." Buddha responds when a person aspires to cast off narrow attachments to body and mind.

- edited from a talk by Kokyo Henkel

YEAR OF STUDYING AND PRACTICING THE MIDDLE WAY

The year 2015 will be a time to study and cultivate the Buddha's middle way, free from extreme views and practices, which leads to peace and compassion. The middle way is taught as the eightfold path, the unity of the two truths of emptiness and dependent co-arising, the harmony of wisdom and compassion. Classic Dharma teachings on these topics will be brought up, including the Buddha's first teaching "Setting in Motion the Wheel of Dhamma Sutta," the Heart Sutra, Nagarjuna's Verses on the Middle Way, Dogen's "Space," "The Nature of Things," "The Wholehearted Way," and more. Please see sczc.org for the complete 2015 calendar to plan ahead for sesshins and practice periods.

In support of Kokyo's 2½ month leave of absence to live and practice in Nepal, Patrick and Gene will be holding many of Kokyo's responsibilities during February, March and April 2015. This plan has been carefully considered by the Board of Trustees and the Leadership group. From the perspective of the sangha, we expect that during this period of time – other than missing Kokyo as a joyful dharma companion – the community's routine will continue uninterrupted. For Winter Practice Period we will have our customary opening and closing sesshins along with a class and ceremonies according to our liturgical calendar. February sesshin, preceded by a formal "shosan" question-and-answer ceremony, will be led by Gene. The class series, based on the teaching of "Setting in Motion the Wheel of Dhamma," will be co-taught by Patrick and Gene, and the closing sesshin, followed by a formal shosan ceremony, will be led by Patrick. As always, the very strong guidance and energetic support offered by our lay leaders and priests provide the stable foundation of practice at Warm Jewel Temple. Won't you consider reinvigorating and deepening your practice by participating actively during the first quarter of the new year?

NEW YEAR'S DAY CHANTING OF THE DIAMOND SUTRA

Thursday, January 1, 1-3pm.

Open the New Year with a recitation of the Prajna Paramita Diamond Sutra, the wisdom that cuts through delusion, dedicated to world peace. Free of charge.

KAZUAKI TANAHASHI ON THE HEART SUTRA

Friday, January 2, 7-8pm.

Translator Kaz will give a talk on his new book, a translation and commentary on the Prajna Paramita Heart Sutra. By donation.

GENTLE CREATIVITY WITH THE BRUSH, WITH KAZ TANAHASHI

Saturday, January 3, 10am-4:30pm (vegetarian lunch provided).

The art of calligraphy can be practiced by anyone who is willing to draw ideography. Anyone can take up a brush, follow

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stroke order, draw lines, and form characters. By copying ancient masters' samples even a beginner can create a fairly good piece of calligraphy. \$85 for sustaining members, \$95 for others. See website for details.

SHOHAKU OKUMURA ROSHI TALK ON "HOMELESS KODO"

Sunday, January 25, 10am-noon.

Dharma talk and discussion on Shohaku's new book "The Zen Teaching of Homeless Kodo," on Kodo Sawaki Roshi's profound and simple expression of practice. \$15-20 suggested donation.

BREAKAWAY SUMI-E WITH MICHAEL HOFMANN

Saturday, February 7. 10am-5pm (please bring a bag lunch).

Nanga (Southern Painting) emphasizes individuality and expressive brush work and retains its Taoist roots. The workshop will be geared toward beginners but could be interesting for artists who usually work with more Western materials. There will be an emphasis on expressive and spontaneous brushwork rather than formal technique. Along with some guided instruction (stroke by stroke), there will be a variety of themes for individual exploration. \$55 for sustaining members, \$65 for others. See website for details.

ONE-DAY SITTINGS

Saturdays, January 10 & March 14, 8:30am-5pm.

January led by Kokyo; March led by Patrick, which will also include tea ceremony with Gerow Reece. Please bring a bag lunch. Suggested donation: \$12/day for sustaining members and \$15 for all others.

SANGHA DAY

Saturdays, January 17 and March 21 (9:15am-4pm).

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.

INTRODUCTION TO ZEN

Saturday, January 24, February 28, March 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.

WINTER PRACTICE PERIOD

February 18-April 15.

Practice period is a focused period of time, eight weeks this winter, for a deeper commitment to zazen, individual and group meetings to explore Zen practice, and Dharma study. This winter practice period will include a class series, a 3-day Parinirvana Sesshin, a one-day sitting, and end with a 4-day sesshin to celebrate Buddha's Birthday.

PARINIRVANA SESSHIN

February 20-22 (3 days), 5am-9pm (ends 4:30 Sunday)

Each day will include morning teachings with Gene and formal Eoryoki meals. Sesshin ends with a ceremony at 3:45 to celebrate Buddha's Parinirvana, to which all are welcome. Suggested donation: \$35/day for sustaining members and \$40 for all others.

SETTING IN MOTION THE WHEEL OF DHAMMA SUTTA

6 Sunday evenings: March 1-April 5, 6:35-8pm.

The theme our study in 2015 will be the Middle Way. We begin this exploration with a class on the Buddha's first teaching. In this sutra, Buddha defines suffering and teaches that the Middle Way is the practice of the eight-fold path. It will be co-taught by Revs. Gene Bush and Patrick Teverbaugh. Suggested donation: \$10/class for sustaining members, \$13 for others.

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.



WONDER

Life creeps into the cracks of this wall
this side-hill, anywhere that will support it.
no opportunity is missed
lichen
moss
flower
six legged, eight legged things
sun-burned rocks,
let's not forget the rocks.
we sit open mouthed
at the wonder of it all
how could we ever
imagine that we were special
by Brian Bielefeld

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for current information on what's happening there, photos of events, and more.

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SANTA CRUZ ZEN CENTER		115 School Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95060	831-457-0206	www.sczc.org
DAILY SCHEDULE		NY Day Diamond Sutra	Thurs. Jan 1	1-3pm
Monday-Friday:		Kaz Tanahashi talk	Fri. Jan 2	7-8pm
5:45am	Zazen	Kaz calligraphy wrkshop	Sat. Jan 3	10am-4:30pm
6:25am	Service (chanting)	Precepts Renewal	Mon. Jan 5	5:45-6:30pm
12:00pm	Zazen	One-day Sitting	Sat. Jan 10	8:30am-5pm
5:45pm	Zazen	Sangha Day	Sat. Jan 17	9:15am-4pm
6:25pm	Service	Introduction to Zen	Sat. Jan 24	10-noon
Wednesday Evening:		Shohaku Okumura talk	Sun. Jan 25	10-noon
6:35pm	Lecture/discussion	Kobun Roshi Memorial	Mon. Jan 26	6:25-7am
7:30pm	Informal tea	Precepts Renewal	Tues. Feb 3	5:45-6:30pm
Saturday Morning:		Michael Sumi-e wrkshop	Sat. Feb 7	10am-5pm
8:30am	Zazen	Open Practice Period	Wed. Feb 18	6:35-7:30pm
9:10am	Service	Parinirvana Sesshin	Feb 20-22	5am-9pm
Sunday Evening:		Buddha's Parinirvana	Sun. Feb 22	3:45-4:30pm
5:45pm	Zazen	Sobun Roshi Memorial	Tues. Feb 24	6:25-7am
6:25pm	Service	Introduction to Zen	Sat. Feb 28	10-noon
LIBRARY OPEN		Wheel of Dhamma class	starts Sun. Mar 1	6:35-8pm
During tea after Wed. Lecture		Precepts Renewal	Thurs. Mar 5	5:45-6:30pm
ORDINARY RECOVERY		Mahapajapati Memorial	Mon. Mar 9	6:25-7am
Friday evenings at 6:45 pm		One-day Sitting with tea	Sat. Mar 14	8:30am-5pm
		Sangha Day	Sat. Mar 21	9:15am-4pm
		Kobun Roshi Memorial	Thurs. Mar 26	6:25-7am
		Introduction to Zen	Sat. Mar 28	10-noon