

sangha

Newsletter of Santa Cruz Zen Center, Warm Jewel Temple - October 2015

THREE TYPES OF ZAZEN

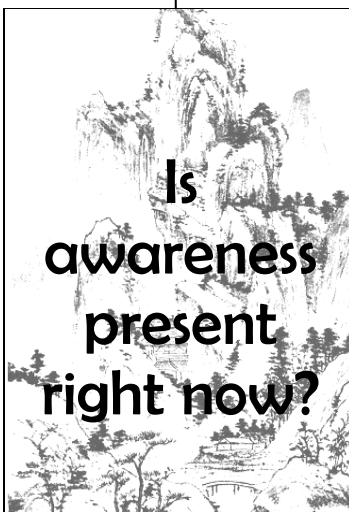
In the practice of zazen, sitting meditation, we start by settling the body in an upright posture, letting the breath be natural and full. The breath fills the area below the navel, which helps to deeply relax the whole body. As far as what to do with the mind in zazen, there are various options; here we can look at three ways to orient the mind in meditation, three types of zazen, which include all traditional forms of Buddhist meditation. The first is the type most commonly taught in the world of Buddha-Dharma, that is mindfulness of a mental object. Classic meditation objects include mantras or mentally visualized images of buddhas. The most common object that meditators use is probably the physical body or the breath, which is part of the physical body. But when we examine our experience closely, what are the body and the breath? They are tactile sensations. If we stay with our direct experience as closely as possible, without any preconceived ideas, the so-called body is more like a mass of tactile sensation, is it not? There are parts of this mass of sensation that have some tension in them, and parts that are more relaxed.

Along with tactile sensations, the Buddha also taught mindfulness of feeling which is not just the tactile sensation but also its quality of being either pleasant or unpleasant, before adding any conceptual stories to it. He also taught mindfulness of mental qualities which are also objects of awareness. For example, there might be a desire to move our legs and we can practice just being aware of that desire, not adding anything extra such as trying to figure out if we should actually move or not.

The result of mindfulness of these mental objects – tactile sensations, feelings, and mental qualities – is that we become more present and relaxed, and the mind wanders off less and less into thoughts of the past and future, which relieves a lot of unnecessary suffering caused by thinking. However, this type of meditation alone will not lead to liberation from all suffering. It can relieve us of a lot of distracting thoughts about the past and future, it leads to a relaxed abiding in the present, but it doesn't cut through the root of birth and death, the cycle of habitual discontent; it doesn't address the fundamental illusion of separation that is the cause of all types of discontent. As long as we believe there is anything apart from or outside of awareness, discontent and grasping and fear are inevitable.

But, isn't this what the Buddha taught in the "Foundations of Mindfulness Sutra" as the complete path to liberation from suffering? He did teach these objects of mindfulness, but he also taught another aspect in addition to mindfulness of tactile sensations, feelings, and mental qualities: that is mindfulness of the cessation

of suffering. The object of mindfulness called cessation is not actually an object at all. If one includes mindfulness of cessation, it is indeed a complete path to liberation and the unfolding of true compassion for all beings. The reason we need mindfulness of cessation is because everything else on the list is an object, which means that attention is directed towards something which seems to be outside itself. That illusory division between awareness and its object is the root of birth and death, of delusion and suffering.



The second type of zazen we can look at actually may not have ever been taught in traditional Buddhism, including Zen. This is mindfulness of the whole field of objects - not just attending to tactile sensations of body or breath, but opening the other senses as well, like the ears. Usually when we are attending to tactile sensation, we're intentionally not paying attention to sound. In this second type of meditation, we open the ears and let in sound, open the eyes and let in color and shapes. All the sense gates are thrown open, but we are not getting involved in conceptual thought. A thought can arise, and becoming aware of it, we let it go and return to the present experience of nowness. This wide field of experience includes sensory objects, feelings, and mental qualities, but awareness is not directed toward any one particular object like the breath. It is a more open awareness, attending to the whole field of present experience, mindfulness of nowness. What about the practice of not focusing on any particular object but just letting go of thought? When letting go of conceptual thought, awareness usually lands back on the present experience of tactile sensations, sounds, and so on, so this ends up being the same thing as using the present experience as an object.

This type of mindfulness of the whole field of body-mind experience may be commonly talked about in modern Zen, but looking into the foundational teachings of the Buddha as well as those of the Zen tradition, I have not been able to find this kind of practice. The twentieth-century nondenominational teacher Krishnamurti coined the term "choiceless awareness," referring to this type of meditation, and later Buddhist practitioners began using his term. I propose that this type of mindfulness – although it also relieves a lot of suffering due to letting go of thoughts, and is even more relaxing than focusing on a single object – also does not cut through the root of basic delusion because of the same problem, the same way of obscuring nondual reality, that is the sense of mind and object being separate. The whole field of experience right now is still an object of awareness that mind is attending to; it's not a specific object like the breath, but an all-inclusive wide object. It may not seem like an object at first glance, but this is worth checking out during zazen.

One time I was speaking with a Zen teacher from Korea who was checking out my zazen practice. He asked, "What is your meditation practice?" I said, "Letting go of thought, letting go of anything other than the present experience." He said, "After you let go, then what?" I said, "Something else comes up, some thought of past or future, so I let go again." "Then what?" he asked. "I let go again, and again, and again." The teacher said, "If you just keep letting go like that for years and years, how will this ever cut through the root of birth and death, basic delusion? It's like putting a rock on top of living grass. If you take the rock off, the grass just pops back up. It's still alive under the rock, since the root has not been cut. How could simply letting go ever cut the root?" This was disturbing to hear, since I had been practicing this way for a long time, but his point could not be denied.

There is a third type of meditation, which I propose is the hallmark of traditional Zen. The Zen ancestors of China and Japan usually taught a zazen we could call awareness of awareness, or just being awareness itself. Awareness that is usually directed toward an object of experience, either a specific single object or the whole field of objects, is instead directed back upon itself. Since awareness itself is the only thing that is not an object of awareness, this is the end of subject-object duality, the cessation of the division of mind and experience. This is mindfulness of no object, nondual awareness, and when immersed in it, this is therefore the cessation of suffering, the end of discontent and grasping and fear.

It may sound difficult or tricky to practice this way, but it is actually very simple. It's just unusual because awareness is virtually always directed towards some kind of object, all day long. That's why Dogen Zenji called this zazen "learning the backward step" which he defined as "turning the light of awareness around and shining back." He also called it "thinking of what doesn't think," and "the essential art of zazen." A simple way to enter this type of meditation is to ask, "Am I aware?" or "Is awareness present right now?" It's not a trick question. If we sincerely ask this question, the answer "yes" may be the most obvious conclusion that anyone could ever have about anything. Then, to follow up, we can ask, "How do I know this?" or "How is this awareness known?" Without referring to any object of awareness, the obvious conclusion is that only awareness itself can know it is aware. These two simple questions, asked sincerely, turn the light around. Now awareness can simply attend to itself, rest in itself. If attention strays onto objects, such as tactile sensations of body and breath, feelings, or thoughts – which is its usual mode of operation – we can simply let awareness return to itself. In this kind of objectless meditation, we have to take care not to make awareness into another object by subtly attributing graspable characteristics to it. Awareness, by definition, is ungraspable since it is not an object of awareness. Also, it is totally ordinary, always present, and cannot be lost.

If we get somewhat used to just being this awareness which we always have been – a practice which is very easy to realize though quite difficult to sustain because we are not used to it – we can start to explore some further aspects and implications of it. We can inquire, with total sincerity and honesty in present direct experience, without referring to any preconceived ideas or intellectual knowledge, "Does this awareness have any boundaries or edges?" The obvious experiential answer is no, it is boundless like space, we cannot find any edges or center. We can continue to inquire, "If awareness has no boundaries or edges, could it ever touch or meet objects of experience – such as visual forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations, thoughts, feelings, emotions, or the sense of individual personal self?" We can check out this list of objects one by one in direct experience, and conclude that awareness nev-

er touches anything, since if it were to touch objects that meeting place would be a boundary or edge of awareness.

One time, during sesshin at Tassajara, I came upon a deep sense of openness and went to check it out with my teacher, Tenshin Roshi. He asked me to tell him about the experience, which I did. We were walking slowly down the path during one of the breaks. He put his arm around my shoulder as we walked and he asked, "Can anything touch it?" The question surprised me, and I began to investigate. If an experience is any kind of object, it will appear to touch awareness or be touched by awareness – but awareness itself cannot be touched by anything, since it is not an object.

If awareness does not touch objects, then could objects be outside or apart from it? Thus, from the point of view of awareness, it is not possible to know anything other than awareness, all "things" must be included within it, therefore there actually are no "objects" of awareness, only appearances made out of awareness. Awareness is empty of anything other than itself, empty of subject-object duality; awareness is simply empty and aware. All appearing objects are like a movie on the screen of awareness. Can any experiences ever benefit or harm awareness? If nothing can harm awareness, is it possible for awareness to suffer? And is there any boundary or edge between what seems to be "my" awareness and the awareness of "others," all sentient beings?

This type of meditation is the classic style of Zen practice, which cuts the root of birth and death, and is called by many names: your original face, this very mind, ordinary mind, the unborn, the undying person in the hut, precious mirror awareness, the one who is not busy, knowing without touching things, dropping off body and mind, absorption in the treasury of light, the host of the house.

- edited from a talk by Kokyo Henkel

CEREMONY OF RECEIVING THE PRECEPTS (JUKAI)

Sunday, October 11, 2-3pm, followed by reception.

Richard Salzberg and David Ramirez will receive the bodhisattva precepts from Kokyo, along with a rakusu (Buddha's robe) they have sewn, and a Dharma name. Please come celebrate this joyful commitment to the bodhisattva's way of kindness for all!

FALL PRACTICE PERIOD

October 14- December 9

Practice Period is an 8-week time for making a deeper commitment to Zen practice with the sangha, to support others while being supported by others. Participants in P.P. commit to attending at least 3 zazen periods a week at SCZC, 5 of the 6-week class series, 3 of the 13 sesshin days, one dokusan with Kokyo, and 5 days of one of the weekly Dharma events.

GENZO-E SESSHIN: THE WHOLEHEARTED WAY

October 15-19 (5 days), 5am-9pm (ends 5pm Monday).

Genzo-e is a concentrated study retreat on a chapter of Dogen Zenji's *Shobogenzo*. In this retreat with Kokyo we will examine Dogen's first essay, *Bendowa*, or *Talk on Wholehearted Practice of the Way*, an inspired exposition of his understanding of zazen, which forms the basis of all his later writings, and explicitly makes practice accessible to lay people working in the world. Suggested donation: \$35/day for sustaining members, \$40 for others.

INTRODUCTION TO ZEN

Saturday, October 24, November 28, December 19, 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.

POTLUCK AND SKIT NIGHT, EVENING OF TALENT SHARING

Saturday, October 24, 5pm dinner, 6pm skits.

Laugh, sing, appreciate, share, be inspired, get goofy, and generally love your sangha (please sign up on bulletin board).

HEART-FELT ZEN: SUPPORT AND STUDY GROUP

facilitated by Cathy Toldi. Sunday evenings during P.P., 5-6:20pm. Facilitated discussion about integrating Dharma practice into our everyday lives. This fall, we will focus on practices that help us live from the heart: Generosity, Patience, Presence, and Creative Adaptation. These sessions will have two parts: from 5-5:30pm, we especially welcome people new to Zen or to our sangha to bring any questions you might have. This will also be a time for open sharing, connecting from the heart, about our ups and downs. Then, from 5:30-6:20pm, we will engage in discussion about our theme.

NAGARJUNA'S WISDOM OF THE MIDDLE WAY

with Kokyo Henkel. 6 Sunday evenings, Oct 25-Nov 29, 6:40-8pm. The brilliant second-century Indian teacher Nagarjuna wrote one of the most profound and influential expositions of Buddha-Dharma, the Fundamental Verses on the Middle Way, elucidating the teachings of the interdependent arising of all things and emptiness of independent existence. Chapter 24 of this great work presents the middle way, which has the potential to free the mind from fixations in zazen and in everyday life. Suggested donation: \$10/class for sustaining members, \$6 for others.

OFFERING TO HUNGRY GHOSTS CEREMONY

Wednesday, October 28, 6:30-7:30pm.

In this ceremony called seijiki 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.

ANNUAL ALL-SANGHA MEETING

Saturday November 7, 3-5pm.

An opportunity to hear about SCZC's vision and 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.

ONE-DAY SITTING

Saturday November 14, 8:30am-5pm.

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

SANGHA DAY

Saturday, November 21, 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.

THANKSGIVING POTLUCK DINNER AND DHARMA FILM

Thursday November 26, 4-6pm, followed by film viewing.

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.

ROHATSU SESSHIN (CELEBRATION OF BUDDHA'S AWAKENING)

December 3-9 (7 days), 5am-9pm (ends with Shosan Q&A Ceremony, and Closing of Practice Period 6:30pm on Wed. Dec. 9)

Each day includes morning teachings with Kokyo and formal oryoki meals. Suggested donation: \$35/day for sustaining members and \$40 for all others.

NEW YEAR'S EVE AND DAY

Thursday December 31, 8:30pm-12:30am, Friday, Jan 1, 1-3pm.

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.

SCZC relies on donations to continue its mission. If you can offer 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.

Painting by Carolyn Fitz



NEWS

Nannette and Chuck Overley are moving from Santa Cruz to Santa Fe this fall. They have been our co-inos, vice president of the board, administrator, work leader, and good-spirited Dharma companions. Rev. Hannah Meara, one of our senior priests, is moving from Santa Cruz to Berkeley this fall. We will miss these friends, and we wish them the best for their ongoing practice and life. Neti

Parekh and Mary Knudtson will be the new inos, Ken Collins the new co-work-leader, and Rev. Dana Takagi the new vice-president.

SCZC Global Sangha is preparing soup and cornbread for "Food Not Bombs" once each month. Food Not Bombs is a national volunteer organization that brings attention to poverty and homelessness. It just celebrated its 35th anniversary. In Santa Cruz, FNB provides a free meal downtown every Saturday afternoon, made of surplus vegetarian food gathered from stores and farmers' markets that would otherwise be discarded. FNB has invited other organizations and individuals to likewise use surplus food and provide a meal each Sunday afternoon. Global Sangha has been offering a monthly meal since January. Join us for cooking at 2pm the fourth Sunday each month in the Zen Center kitchen.

Starting with this issue of the "Sangha" newsletter, it will be divided into separate newsletters for SCZC and Monterey Bay ZC. Much thanks to the MBZC sangha for many years of collaboration.

THE TOURIST TRAIN

by Brian Bielefeld

my thoughts are like a tourist train
slowly moving out of dark forest
towards the limitless ocean
the cars filled with beings
who don't live here, just visiting
happy children waving
parents cautiously smiling
grandparents tense,
they know where this ends
I sit and watch
suppressing the desire to climb on

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DAILY SCHEDULE



Monday-Friday:

5:45am Zazen (all periods 40 min.)
6:25am Morning Service (chanting)
12:00pm Zazen
5:45pm Zazen
6:25pm Evening Service

Wednesday Evening:

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

Saturday Morning:

8:30am Zazen
9:10am Morning Service

Sunday Evening:

5:45pm Zazen
6:25pm Evening Service

Library open during tea after Wed. Lecture

See sczc.org for other weekly events including "Ordinary Recovery", qigong, and Dharma discussion groups

Bodhidharma Memorial Mon. Oct 6
Jukai Ceremony Sun. Oct 11
Open Practice Period Wed. Oct 14
Genzo-e Sesshin Oct 15-19
Sobun Roshi Memorial Fri. Oct 23
Introduction to Zen Sat. Oct 24
Potluck and Skit Night Sat. Oct 24
Nagarjuna class starts Sun. Oct 26
Precepts Renewal Tues. Oct 27
Hungry Ghosts Offering Wed. Oct 28
All-Sangha Meeting Sat. Nov 7
One-day Sitting Sat. Nov 14
Precepts Renewal Tues. Nov 24
Kobun Roshi Memorial Wed. Nov 25
Thanksgiving Dinner Thurs. Nov 26
Introduction to Zen Sat. Nov 28
Suzuki Roshi Memorial Thurs. Dec 3
Rohatsu Sesshin Dec. 3-9
Shosan Q&A Ceremony Wed. Dec 9
Introduction to Zen Sat. Dec 19
Precepts Renewal Tues. Nov 22
Sobun Roshi Memorial Thurs. Dec 24
Year-end break Dec 24-31
New Year's Eve Thurs. Dec 31
Diamond Sutra Chanting Fri. Jan 1

6:25-7am
2-3pm
6:35-8pm
5am-9pm
6:25-7am
10-noon
dinner 5pm
6:30-8pm
5:45-6:30pm
6:35-7:30pm
3-5pm
8:30am-5pm
5:45-6:30pm
6:25-7am
starts 4pm
10-noon
6:25-7am
5am-9pm
6:35-8pm
10-noon
5:45-6:30pm
6:25-7am
after a.m. zazen on 24th
8:30pm-12:30
1-3pm



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