

sangha

Newsletter of Santa Cruz Zen Center ❖ Warm Jewel Temple - Summer 2016

MAKING OFFERINGS TO BUDDHA

Devotion is to give oneself completely, and one way to practice devotion is to make offerings to buddha. In Sanskrit this is called *pūja*, in Japanese *kuyo*. Suzuki Roshi once told a story about offerings. As a young priest in Japan, he would regularly visit a British woman named Miss Ransom, learning English from her and teaching her some Japanese while they had tea. Someone had given her a carved wooden buddha statue which she put on the tokonoma in the apartment where she was living. A tokonoma is a low altar-like shelf, a place to hang a scroll or put some flowers, but since it was low and by the door she thought it would also make a convenient shoe rack. So when Miss Ransom came in to her apartment, she put her dirty shoes on the shelf next to the buddha, and young Shunryu Suzuki felt uncomfortable seeing this. After many days of visiting Miss Ransom and seeing her shoes next to the buddha, one day Shunryu took his cup of tea and respectfully offered it to the buddha on the shelf there, without saying anything. He started doing this on all his visits, and as it became more of a regular practice she began to tease him about idol worship and how silly it is to relate to a wooden statue in this way. Miss Ransom's friends even started leaving burnt matches on the shelf there and using the incense bowl as an ash tray for cigarette butts. But at some point Miss Ransom became curious about Shunryu's devotion and she asked him about the meaning of his strange activity.

Finally Shunryu was able to explain why he was making offerings to a wooden image of buddha and what buddha really is. He told her about the three bodies of buddha: dharmakaya, sambhogakaya, and nirmanakaya. I don't know what he said about them, but I would say that all three bodies are our own true nature, already complete but temporarily obscured by our dualistic thoughts and emotions. The dharmakaya or reality body of buddha is the boundless spacious nature of our awareness, this ever-present awareness that we're usually not paying attention to because we're so directed toward objects. The sambhogakaya or bliss body of buddha is the cognitive aspect of our awareness. Awareness is not just empty space, it also has a knowing quality that experiences life. The nirmanakaya or manifestation body of buddha is this boundless awareness with knowing cognition taking form as the appearance of a sentient being like you and I, manifest in this world in a particular time and place, out of compassion for beings. The historical buddha, Shakyamuni Buddha, is a nirmanakaya. If the dharmakaya is like boundless space, the sambhogakaya is like radiant sunlight filling the boundless space, and the nirmanakaya is like this sunlight reflected on the water, where each wave creates a momentary sparkle for all to see. If we just look at sunlight filling space it doesn't look like anything particular, it's just bright and clear; but when the sunlight touches the water we can see the light sparkle for a moment. That impermanent manifestation of sparkling wave is like each of us and the

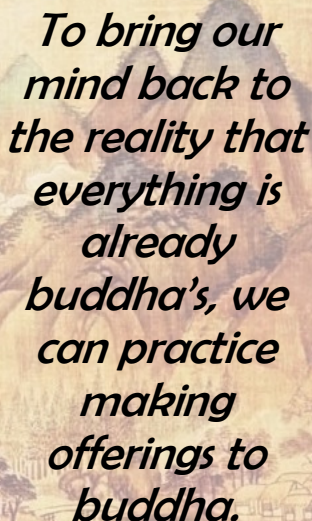
world that appears to us, where buddhas can benefit beings in conventional ways because they can meet others and speak with them. Formless, shapeless, ungraspable awareness is taking form every moment as some manifestation, so we can't actually separate these three bodies of buddha. Emptiness itself is form and form itself is emptiness.

Somehow young Shunryu Suzuki spoke about these three buddha bodies to Miss Ransom, and said, "You think buddha is this wooden image, but it's actually these three bodies of buddha." According to Suzuki Roshi, "She was rather amazed. She didn't know Buddhism was so profound, and she started to become interested in it... After a year I think she had a pretty good understanding of Buddhism and one day she took me downtown to buy some incense and she started to offer it." I appreciate this story because Shunryu didn't set out to teach Miss Ransom about Buddha-Dharma; she was inspired to learn through seeing someone making offerings to a buddha image.

So when we make offerings to a buddha image we can understand that we are offering them to these three bodies of buddha. Since the boundless knowing compassionate awareness that all beings share – the three bodies of buddha – is what makes liberation from suffering possible, for ourselves and everyone, what could be more worthy of our devoted offerings? We can even understand the carved wooden image as a manifestation body of buddha. The image is not a sentient being like

many nirmanakaya buddhas, but buddha can take any form in order to help people. If a carved wooden image could help people open up just a little bit to buddha's wisdom and compassion, then buddha could manifest in this way, with the help of a wood carver. How these things happen is very mysterious – does the wood carver know that she's producing a nirmanakaya buddha? That may be her intention but maybe not. Due to the awesome and inconceivable power of buddha, the reality body can manifest in any way.

Therefore we can offer incense, flowers, light, water, food, chanting, and prostrations to buddha with this understanding. Our offerings need not be material things; we can imagine offering any experience that we enjoy to Buddha. We might doubt the validity of such an offering, since it is just imagination, but buddha's teaching is that there actually is no real incense or flowers anyway, that everything we experience is our imagination, just a manifestation of awareness. Because we have physically manifested bodies, it helps to do physically manifest practices and offer physically manifest flowers and incense, to align body and mind – but if we're stuck in a place where we can't offer physical flowers, like during zazen, we can always imagine offering anything, and since we're using our imagination, we might as well imagine billions of beautiful flowers, with no limitation.



*To bring our
mind back to
the reality that
everything is
already
buddha's, we
can practice
making
offerings to
buddha.*

Dogen Zenji has a, has a fascicle in the Treasury of the True Dharma Eye called *Kuyo Shobutsu*, or “Making Offerings to All Buddhas” where he says, “You become buddha by the merit of making offerings to buddhas. How can a sentient being who has not made offerings to even one buddha, become a buddha?” Dogen goes on to say, “Making offerings to buddhas does not mean providing buddhas with what they need. It's devoting moment after moment of our life to buddhas without wasting a moment. What use can buddhas make of gold and silver, even if they are offered? What benefit can buddhas receive if incense and flowers are offered? However, buddhas receive our offerings out of great compassion to help increase the merit of sentient beings.”

If buddha is boundless all-inclusive awareness that's present here and now for each of us, this is also the totality of everything in the universe that is being experienced. We might ask why we would want to make offerings to that buddha: it's just because we think there are lots of things that don't already belong to buddha. If buddha is the totality of everything then already everything is given to buddha, but we often forget that. We think we have some thing that's actually not buddha's, it's “mine.” This is our usual deluded human way of thinking. To bring our mind back to the reality that everything is already buddha's, we can practice making offerings to buddha.

Usually we think of offering outer things in the world outside of us, such as incense, flowers, and candlelight, but we can also make inner offerings of our own body and mind. Actually, outer offerings are mentally created images arising from our own mind too, so in reality they are also inner offerings, but we can understand inner offerings more easily when we offer our five physical senses and five aggregates of body and mind. We can make this kind of offering to buddha during zazen or at any time, such as walking down the street. We could start with the eyes, our own eyes, offering them to all buddhas throughout space and time. Sincerely offer them, feeling, “I give them to you, buddha, do what you will with them.” For them to be received, that means buddha has to actually inhabit them. We might think that buddhas would say, “No, I don't want your eyes” but they're too compassionate to do that; they are always willing to receive our offerings. For the buddhas to receive our eyes, they have to come in and inhabit our eyes and then buddha is looking through our eyes. If buddha is the boundless totality of everything, if we give our eyes to that, then the totality of everything starts seeing through our eyes. Then I, as an individual person, am not really in control anymore of what I'm seeing. Buddha gets to decide, it's kind of like giving our personal power over to buddha. So, when walking down the street and seeing beautiful trees and flowers, we can offer those beautiful trees and flowers as outer offerings, and also offer these eyes that are enjoying the beauty; we can give them all to buddha.

We can give these ears to buddha, letting buddha inhabit the ears, so now buddha can hear through these ears. We can give this nose, tongue, and body sensations to buddha. Since we generally want to offer the best to buddha, to make the most wholehearted gift, we might relax first and feel the ease of a relaxed body and then offer that. However, one nice thing about buddhas is that they don't discriminate between a tense body and a relaxed body, so they compassionately receive and inhabit them equally. Since we especially want to offer anything that we're holding onto, if we're holding onto a tense body, we can give that to buddha too.

That's how to offer the five physical senses, and then there are the five aggregates that make up what we call a person: form is those five physical senses, so we've already covered that. The next aggregate is feelings. We can offer feelings to buddha, especially pleasurable feelings. It may be quite hard to do this, to remember in the midst of pleasure to offer it to buddha instead of just enjoying it oneself. Also, unpleasant feelings of this body and mind we can offer to buddha. Then buddha, boundless awareness, the totality of everything, can inhabit every feeling. The third aggregate

after form and feelings is perceptions or conceptions. We can offer the way we label things, name things, and think things – offer all our thoughts to buddha, both good and bad thoughts. But since I appreciate buddha so much, if I'm doing that practice of offering my presently arising thought to buddha, I might try to let go of an angry thought and offer a loving thought instead. The fourth aggregate is mental formations: all our karmic tendencies, habitual patterns, we can offer these to buddha. And then the fifth aggregate is dualistic consciousness, the way it seems like there's a mind over here perceiving objects over there. Even though this is just our normal way of being in the world, by its very nature consciousness is unsatisfactory since it's divided, split in two. Buddha is not split in two, buddha is undivided all-inclusive awareness. So we can offer this dualistic consciousness to nondual awareness, giving ourselves away completely.

- edited from a talk by Kokyo Henkel

NEW NEWSLETTER FORMAT

Starting with this issue, we will only be publishing the Sangha Newsletter twice a year, in summer and winter – to save paper, mailing costs, energy, and time. The newsletter will also not have descriptions of upcoming events, since that is available on our website. The focus will be on sangha news, poetry, and artwork. Therefore if any newsletter readers have poetry and artwork suitable for printing, please send them to Kokyo. Thank you!

EDIE BROWN ORDAINED

Edie Brown was ordained a Zen priest by Rev. Patrick Teverbaugh on April 24. She was given the name Moon Lotus Peace Heart, Getsu Ren On Shin. In attendance were her husband and two sons, her father-in-law, friends from her work, as well as many sangha members. She says, “My deepest questions have always been and continue to be ‘what does it mean to practice wholeheartedly’ and ‘what is important right now?’ This is the path.” Edie began sitting at Tassajara in the 1970s, then studied with Katherine Thanas for twenty years. She is currently the President of the Board at Santa Cruz Zen Center.



Rev. Getsuren Onshin Edie Brown at her priest ordination

ONE WEEKEND IN JUNE: TWO BIG CELEBRATIONS

On June 4 and 5, SCZC once again participated in both the Japanese Cultural Fair and the Pride Parade. These are two important events in our yearly calendar. We have the opportunity to invite the greater Santa Cruz community to meet Warm Jewel Temple and get to know us. The Japanese Cultural Fair (JCF) celebrated its 30th year, and we have been participating for the last 15 years. Once again, we were asked to officially open the Fair on the main stage with chanting and a dedication. (A video of our chanting appears on the website www.jcfsantacruz.org.) Throughout the

day we gave tours of the Center and hosted the ikebana demonstration and the kimono fashion show. At the end of the Fair, Rev. Kokyo Henkel led the sejiki ceremony for feeding hungry spirits, accompanied by Zen instruments played by Sangha members.

The Pride Parade, held the next morning, has always been a lot of fun. This year, ten sangha members marched down Pacific Avenue behind our large Zen Center banner and waved rainbow flags. We were among other faith-based organizations showing their support for diversity in their congregations. Zen Center participant Laurie McCann said, "Diversity – life in all of its innumerable and amazing manifestations – is the ground of our embodied existence on this planet. Everyone matters!"



FIRST FRIDAY ART SHOWS

During the summer months SCZC is participating in "First Friday Art Tour," hosting sangha artists. Each first Friday three different artists showcase their work in our garden and on the patio, accompanied by live music and refreshments. It's an opportunity to illustrate Zen's connection with the arts and introduce SCZC to the broader, local community. Some of the art shown and planned to be shown so far includes Michael Bashista (stone sculpture), Laurie McCann and Chuck Overley (sculpture), Shin-I Deborah Good (prints and photography), Ziggy Rendler-Bregman (prints and poetry), Rosemarie Penhallow (wood sculpture), Eduardo Izquierdo (painting), Gene Bush (wood), Edie Brown (fiber arts).



Ad Reinhardt, a 20th century abstract artist, studied Asian art, Taoism and Zen Buddhism. Reinhardt wanted to make visible the hidden. He completed a series of "Black Paintings" that were almost completely black canvases. These paintings expressed the balance of apparent opposites. As Jack Flam wrote in "The Brooklyn Rail," "Reinhardt's notion of emptiness that is fullness, and of darkness that is light, reads like it came directly from a sutra." I carved "Ad Reinhardt's Black Buddha" in chlorite a few years ago as a tribute to Ad.

- Michael Bashista

LAXMI'S PASSING

Lechimy Vena (a.k.a. Laxmi) died peacefully in her sleep on June 22, at the age of 78. She grew up with Buddhist parents in Vietnam, and has been devoted to Buddha since then. Her joyful spirit and devotion to practice at SCZC will be missed.

WORDS

For Katherine Thanas

What is at the back of words?
What news breathes through their letters?
What blows in the spaces between them?

Can we handle them like colored threads,
grey stones skimming blue water,
leaves suddenly turning golden?

Are they reliable?

Can they listen?

Will they sit with us in silence? - by Carolyn Burke



Red Peppers by Rev. Ellen Richter

THE APPOINTMENT BOOK

Just look at your calendar
two weeks after your death
all these marks on the paper
lead to the next blank page.

A kitchen table, an empty chair,
whispers crowd the silence,
Tasks divided, then forgotten,
visions carefully noted and filed away.

A pot of soup simmers
on an ancient stove
a bubble rises, breaks the surface
changes color—bursts and slips back.

Being separate, being important
are fading thoughts
like a fleeting flavor in the broth.
A drop falls from the spoon
leaving a spot on the page.

- by Brian Bielefeld



Moonlight Meditation, Carmel-by-the-Sea
by Rev. Shin-I Deborah Good

Santa Cruz Zen Center
113/115 School Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

NONPROFIT ORG.
 U.S. POSTAGE
 PAID
 SANTA CRUZ, CA.
 PERMIT NO. 475

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

If you would like to be removed from our mailing list, please call 831-457-0206 and leave your name and address. This will help reduce our operating costs. Thank you!

printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper

SANTA CRUZ ZEN CENTER

115 School Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95060

831-457-0206

www.sczc.org

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 and monthly events including "Ordinary Recovery", qigong, Dharma discussion groups

Genzo-e Sesshin at Jikoji	Jul 7-10	starts 6pm (3 days)
Sangha Day	Sat. Jul 16	starts 9:20am
Half-Day Sitting	Sun. Jul 17	9am-12:20pm
Precepts Renewal	Tues. Jul 19	5:45-6:30pm
Introduction to Zen	Sat. Jul 23	10am-noon
Zen and the Arts Sitting	Sun. Jul 24	8:30am-5pm
Ocean Breeze Sesshin	Aug 11-14	5am-9pm (4 days)
Precepts Renewal	Thurs. Aug 18	5:45-6:30pm
Taking Refuge 6-wk class	Aug 21-Sep 25	6:40-8pm
Introduction to Zen	Sat. Aug 27	10-noon
Bread Baking Workshop	Aug 27-28	
One-Day Sitting	Sat. Sep 10	8:30am-5pm
Liberating Life Ceremony	Sat. Sep 10	5-6pm
Precepts Renewal	Fri. Sep 16	5:45-6:30pm
Sangha Day	Sat. Sep 17	starts 9:20am
Half-Day Sitting	Sun. Sep 18	9am-1pm
Introduction to Zen	Sat. Sep 24	10-noon
Jizo Ceremony	Sun. Sep 25	
Fall Practice Period	Oct 12-Dec 7	8 weeks
Denko-e Sesshin	Oct 13-17	5am-9pm (5 days)
Precepts Renewal	Tues. Oct 18	5:45-6:30pm
Introduction to Zen	Sat. Oct 22	10-noon
BS Precepts 6-wk class	Oct 23-Nov 27	6:40-8pm
Sejiki Ceremony	Wed. Nov 2	6:30-7:30pm
One-Day Sitting	Sat. Nov 12	8:30am-5pm
Precepts Renewal	Mon. Nov 14	5:45-6:30pm
Half-Day Sitting	Sun. Nov 20	9am-1pm
Introduction to Zen	Sat. Nov 26	10-noon
Rohatsu Sesshin	Dec 1-7	5am-9pm (7 days)
Precepts Renewal	Tues. Dec 13	5:45-6:30pm
Introduction to Zen	Sat. Dec 17	10-noon



SCZC is on
 Facebook