

sangha

Newsletter of Santa Cruz Zen Center ❖ Warm Jewel Temple - Summer 2018

ACTUALIZED BY THE MYRIAD THINGS

By Rev. Cathy Toldi

I was walking in the Cottonwood Hills, in Joshua Tree National Park. As I went over and under the boulders, my muscles were stabbed by yucca, and grabbed by thorns. The guides from the course I was taking had given instructions: walk out into the world, be open and vulnerable, and let yourself be drawn to a being or a presence with which you resonate. Then sit down and offer it your attention. Have a conversation. Study its relationship with the other beings of the world.

I found myself sitting inside a carved-out space in a huge 20-foot rock. As I looked out through my rock window, I contemplated: what is the relationship with this rock and the other beings of the world? What I noticed, heard, and felt is that rock is actually defined by what has been stripped away. What makes a rock a rock is wind, erosion, the time it spent under the earth in fire. A rock is earthquake. It is mineral. Rocks are the bones of the earth. I felt this profound affinity with rock, because I know what it feels like to be eroded, and be pulled under the earth and be transformed by fire.

Later, I went to the Aravaipa Canyon, in southeastern Arizona, engaging in similar activity, but this time I was hanging out with a mighty Saguaro cactus. They are really tall, and hundreds of years old. As I attended to the relationship, listening with my heart to this being, I actually felt it as an ancestor. I asked it what ancestor it might be. And I heard: Mahapajapati.

Mahapajapati was Buddha's aunt, who suckled and raised him when his mother died. She was a great teacher, and wanted to practice in the Buddha's community, but he resisted the idea of women practicing at the same level as men. But she persisted until she prevailed.

I asked her, "What are the qualities you want me to attend to?" And I heard: Devotion. Clarity. Persistence. Not waiting for permission to preach the Dharma. Community support. Advocacy. Activism. And generosity."

Whenever I share these kinds of things from this seat, one might ask, "but aren't you just making all these things up?" Because of course, rocks and cactus don't talk, right? Well, it is true that I am making it all up. We can only perceive from the mental structure that we have. And yet. The great "and yet" of Zen! Always the two truths. This "me" that is making it all up was created by, and only exists, through relationship with the "other."

This is how we evolve. Often when we think of evolution we think of the story of the survival of the fittest, and natural selection. This is a popular and accurate story. But there are other recent stories, stories of symbiosis, that we evolved because organisms live in intricate intermeshed relationship.

One of the proponents of this biological theory, Lynn Margulis, proposed that we evolved primarily through symbiosis. UCSC professor Donna Haraway described this as "sensual, molecular curiosity, irresistible attraction toward enfolding each other, is the vital motor of living and dying on earth."

As writer David Abrams said, "the human mind is not some other-worldly essence that comes to house itself inside our physiology. Rather, it is instilled and provoked by the sensorial field itself. Induced by the tensions and participations between the human body and the animate earth. It is not a self-enclosed object, but an open, incomplete entity."

There was a term that they used in this course—participatory consciousness. This means the recognition that we are co-creating even our consciousness. As Abrams says, "We might think of the sensing body as an open circuit that completes itself only in things and in the world."

Where have I heard this before? Ah, there's this fellow called Suzuki Roshi, who said, "enlightenment comes from all things, to us. When we attain enlightenment, everything comes. This is not the same as intellectual experience in which 'I' understand some thing. In direct experience, it means, a truth came to me."

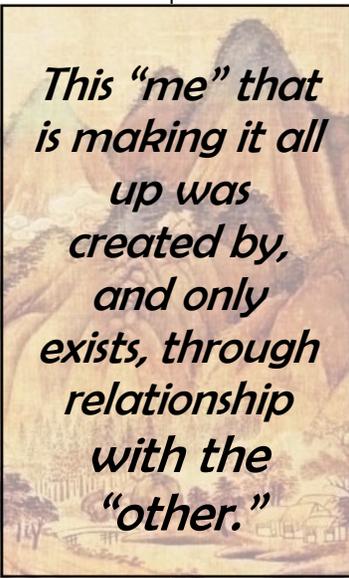
This is none other than what Dogen calls "being actualized by the myriad things." I find this to be such a helpful, specific instruction to help relieve the suffering caused by the stories inside our head in which we criticize ourselves up and judge others. I propose that when Dogen says we can be actualized by the myriad things, he's telling us that we don't have to have this kind of obsessive mental reality be how we use our minds. We can open our eyes and look around, and engage in relationship with that which is *not* the obsessive mind.

This line is nested inside of a larger teaching in the Genjo Koan. "To study the Buddha way is to study the self. To study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be actualized by the myriad things."

Yes, become intimate with the soundtrack in your head. Study your tendencies, habits, the ways you objectify self and other. Realize that you don't have to be the puppet of this mind, that you can step back and reflect, or, as Kosho Uchiyama said, "open the hand of thought."

Furthermore, we don't study this self to aggrandize it. We study it to forget it. To let it go. We study it to see that it's empty of self-existence. It's just a story. There's so much more to be perceived, and felt, and even thought, than this narrow box of self-referential mental activity.

Could the content of my life be more than my own narrative? Could it be the myriad things? So even though one could say my experience talking with the rocks and cactus was pure delusion, it's actually an amazing thing to sit and listen to a resonant other.



*This "me" that
is making it all
up was
created by,
and only
exists, through
relationship
with the
"other."*

We can do this with humans, too. Ask them a question, and then listen with curiosity, with not-knowing. Listen to understand.

“To study the Buddha way is to study the self. To study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be actualized by the myriad things. When actualized by the myriad things, body and mind of self and other drops away. No trace remains. And this no-trace continues endlessly.”

When we’re actualized by the myriad things, body and mind of self and other drops away. There is no separation. We’re in this together. I think this is why we love our Zen rituals, because we experience in our bodies this feeling of non-separation.

There is so much joy in living this way. Dongshan tells us to practice “like a fool, like an idiot.” I think of the image of the fool who is happy and free, dancing on the edge. Come out and play! Come out of your prison, if you can. Some people can’t, because they’re in real prison. But most of us are in prisons of our own making. So come on out!

Student #1: It’s good to clarify that dropping body and mind away doesn’t leave a vacuum. There is an awareness, an intelligence that can have great joy, great passion, great compassion. We’re simply allowing it to come forth. It’s something very alive. Maybe it’s a mystery, but it can laugh and be entertained and is poignant.

CT: Yes. We’re dropping our concepts, dropping our story. Dropping our separation.

Student #2: I think about Martin Buber’s “I and thou.” It’s about turning, and that’s the first thing that you did, with the cactus. Asking the question, listening, and responding. I realize how often I respond without those other steps. That’s why I really appreciate the gift of sitting, because it’s the opportunity to listen. And it unfolds in my daily life, to turn, to ask the question, and listen. And then the response feels more authentic.

CT: Beautifully said.

Student #3: We need to have time to develop patience, not be so busy with so many things. We need quality listening time.

CT: It takes time. And we have to make that time. I think we make it by being clear about what’s important. How deeply can we actually attend to each other?

Student #3: If we’re so busy that we don’t have five minutes to stop and talk to somebody, what does that say about the quality of our life?

CT: It’s a challenge we can all practice with. How do you want to live? What if you never saw that person again? And the truth is, you may never see that person again. We may walk out of here tonight and there may be somebody that we never see again. So if we really live that way, how are we going to attend to each other during tea? What if tonight was it? What if this was the last time we saw each other? What would tea be like? It’s time for tea!



Richard Salzberg was shuso (head student) during Spring Practice Focus, culminating in a Dharma Inquiry Ceremony on April 11.



NEW TEACHING AND LEADERSHIP MODEL

After lengthy and careful consideration by the Board of Trustees, last autumn the current Teachers at SCZC were asked to design a non-hierarchical model of leadership. This model reflects our collective commitment to both resilience and stability. The five Teachers—Kokyo, Patrick, Dana, Cathy and Gene—share responsibility for:

- offering dokusan (practice discussion)
- giving lectures
- offering classes, workshops, and informal study groups
- participating in formal and informal sangha activities
- offering jukai and shukke tokudo (ordination ceremonies)

Our separate duties on a Practice Leaders Council include:

- planning the calendar of events and teaching schedule
- nurturing the forms of practice
- sharing our wealth with the broader community
- tending to sangha relations

We fulfill these functional roles in service of assuring that SCZC is a place where the Dharma is accessible to everyone. This is a year of experimentation and flexibility, even while we provide stability and continuity. We will have check-in points throughout the year and at the end of the year to deeply evaluate whether the needs of the community are being met.



“Formation” by Rev. Ellen Richter



Three SC Zen Center practitioners formally took refuge in Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha and received the bodhisattva precepts from Rev. Kokyo Henkel on May 20. Andrew Porter's new name is Kaiin Enki (Ocean Mudra, Complete Vitality), Anais Schenk's new name is Gyokumon Koto (Jewel Gate, Steady Lamp), and Karen Oakley's new name is Jitei Gesshin (Compassionate Ocean, Moon Heart).

TIME AND PEONIES

by Rosie King

*I wanted to gather a few withered petals
ask some sage about them*

—Po Chu-i

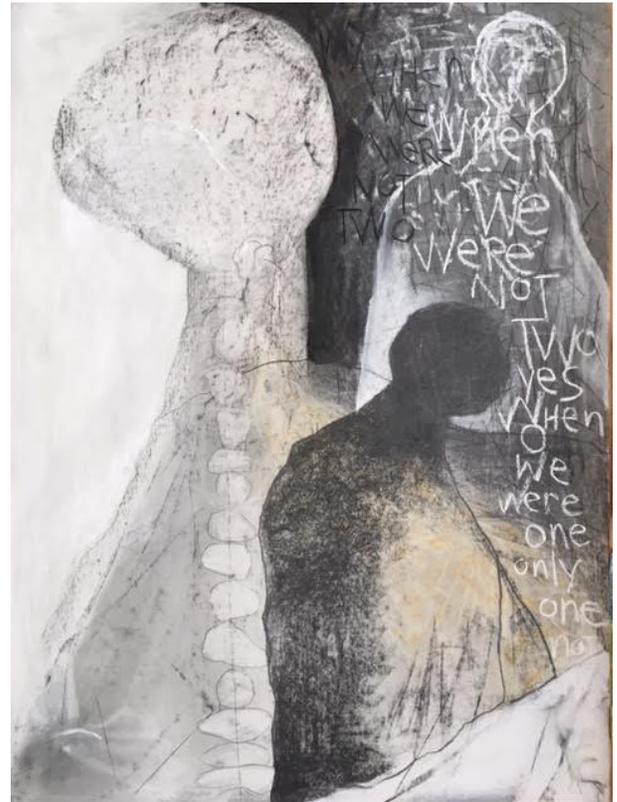
Dry heat tinged with dust and pine
pure chill of drinking after a steep climb
shade under a live-oak
the ancient poems

More each day I'm curious
how to be gentle

*how many of their blossoms are old now,
and how many still young?*

This skin . . .

I still want peonies
blush pink and white
hum of bees nuzzling into crimson
buds yet to open



Drawing by Ziggy Rendler-Bregman

AT DAITOKU-JI

by Ziggy Rendler-Bregman

Not even a hat,
from the top of the ladder
he squints,
skillfully prunes
with tweezers.
One hundred-year old Red Pine
bows.



The Truth of This Life

Zen Teachings on Loving the World as It Is

KATHERINE THANAS

Edited by NATALIE GOLDBERG and BILL ANELLI

Forewords by NORMAN FISCHER and WENDY JOHNSON

After years of selecting, transcribing, and editing Dharma talks of SCZC's late Abbot Rev. Katherine Thanas, this beautiful book was published this year, edited by Natalie Goldberg and Bill Anelli.

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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 szc.org for other weekly and monthly events including "Ordinary Recovery", Dharma study and discussion groups



SCZC is on
Facebook

2018 Sesshin and Zazenkai (Retreats and One-Day Sittings):

Jan 7 (half day) Zazenkai: Here the Way Unfolds (Eugene, Cathy, Dana, Patrice)
Feb 17-18 (2 day) Parinirvana Sesshin (Eugene Bush)
Mar 17 (half day) Sobun Katherine Thanas Memorial Zazenkai (SCZC & MBZC)
Apr 5-8 (4 day) Buddha's Birthday Sesshin (Kokyo Henkel)
May 12 (1 day) *at Tassajara Zen Mountain Center* (Cathy Toldi)
Jun 2 (half day) Eco-Sitting for the Earth (Neti Parekh)
Jun 22-24 (3 day) Genzo-e Sesshin (Dogen's 'Ten Directions') *at Jikoji* (Kokyo)
Jul 14 (1 day) Zazenkai
Aug 10-12 (3 day) Mountains and Rivers Sesshin (Cathy Toldi)
Sep 1 (1 day) Interfaith Zazenkai (Kokyo Henkel)
Oct 11-14 (4 day) Sesshin (Patrick Teverbaugh)
Nov 3 (1 day) Zazenkai (Patrick Teverbaugh)
Nov 29 - Dec 5 (7 day) Buddha's Awakening Day (Rohatsu) Sesshin (Patrick T)

2018 Practice Focuses and Practice Period:

Spring Buddha's Birthday Practice Focus: March 11 - April 8 (4 weeks)
(led by Kokyo Henkel)
Summer Mountains and Rivers Practice Focus: July 21 - August 12 (3 weeks)
(led by Cathy Toldi)
Fall Buddha's Awakening Practice Period: October 10 - December 5 (8 weeks)
(led by Patrick Teverbaugh)

2018 Class Series and Workshops:

Jan 14: Here the Way Unfolds (Eugene B, Cathy T, Dana T, Patrice M)
Mar 11- Apr 1 (4 wks): Radiant Light, Nonseparation (Dogen's 'Komyo') (Kokyo)
Mar 17: Natalie Goldberg book reading - 'Truth of This Life' by Katherine Thanas
May 13-20 (2 weeks): (Eugene Bush)
Jul 22-Aug 5 (3 weeks): Mountains and Rivers (Cathy Toldi)
Aug 19, Sep 16 (2 weeks): Living with Dignity (Eugene B, Dana T, Edie Brown)
Oct 21 - Nov 25 (6 weeks): Song of the Grass Hut (Patrick Teverbaugh)