

RIGHTVIEW^QARTERLY

DHARMA IN PRACTICE

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On the cover: *This 12th century seated Buddha is considered one of the finest examples of Buddhist art from Burma (Myanmar). It is slightly over 12 inches high. The pose indicates that the Buddha has just prevailed over the temptations of Mara.*

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RIGHT EFFORT IN A NUTSHELL

Xianyang Carl Jerome's first teacher was Zenshin Philip Whalen in San Francisco. For the past seven years, Carl has been a student of Master Ji Ru at the Mid-America Buddhist Association (MABA) in St. Louis, MO and the International Buddhism Friendship Association (IBFA) in Chicago. In 2006 Master Ji Ru granted him Lay Teaching Endorsement. He teaches Buddhism classes and leads retreats. He is the editor of *Rightview Quarterly* magazine and editor and founding teacher of RightviewOnline.org

The heart of the Buddha's teaching was only concerned with two things, as it says in the Pali sutras, the truth about *dukkha* and how to end *dukkha*; two deceptively simple ideas. To aid us not only in remembering the teachings, but in knowing how to practice with them, the Buddha used a variety of what today would be called teaching strategies, such as numbered lists (a compendium of which can be found on page 14), and key phrases, like the four words that describe right effort:

ABANDON AND REFRAIN, DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN.

This is right effort in a nutshell. It is variously called the four right exertions, the four proper exertions, the four right efforts, the four great efforts, the four right endeavors, and the four right strivings. In Pali it is *sammappadhana* and in Sanskrit it is *samyakprahana*.

The practice of right effort depends on the insight that all phenomena, arisen and not arisen, are causally conditioned. That being so, our practice is to endeavor to abandon unwholesome states and the conditions we produce that allow them to arise and to develop wholesome states that have not yet arisen. Once wholesome states do arise we maintain the conditions on which they are founded. In doing so we are lessening our *dukkha*, both in the short and long term.

We can see this simple teaching in action when we meditate. Each time we let go of a grasping, of a clinging to a thought, and return to our breath, we are abandoning and refraining, developing and maintaining.

It is also the technique we use for following the eightfold noble path:

ABANDONING wrong speech, wrong action, and wrong livelihood; abandoning wrong effort, wrong mindfulness and wrong concentration; abandoning wrong effort, wrong concentration and wrong mindfulness.

REFRAINING from producing conditions that would encourage these just-abandoned states to arise.

DEVELOPING right view and right intention; right speech, action, and livelihood; and right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.

MAINTAINING the conditions that encourage these "rights" to continue arising.

This is the middle way. This is the way to end "the whole mass of suffering" in our lives, as the *Buddhadharma* teaches.

But right effort is more than just an explanation of how we meditate or how we walk the path. It is, in practice, what we do in every moment of our lives, whether or not we are aware of it. Why? Because in every moment we are doing something and so in every moment we are cultivating conditions. Either we are abandoning unwholesome actions and developing new and more beneficial ones or we are continuing with what we were doing, whether it was beneficial or not. In either case, we are doing, we are acting intentionally, so effort is exerted. The question, then, is simply "is the effort right effort?"

Articles and stories in *Rightview Quarterly*, and on our website, are centered around the core teachings of the *Buddhadharma* and are supplemented by supporting commentaries, essays, and poetry. They are selected from the teachings of all three major traditions: Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana. They are presented without judgment, and are not meant for comparison, either with each other or with your own practice. They are meant simply to shed light on the path.

We believe there is only one *Buddhadharma*, and that no one person or teacher or sect or center has a monopoly on it. There are many ways to practice virtue, many ways to explain wisdom, and many ways to meditate in Buddhism. Our aim is simply to present these teachings of the *Buddhadharma* in a way that may be of benefit to our readers. We encourage everyone to practice, in whatever tradition is most appropriate for them, for their own benefit and for the benefit of all sentient beings.

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Beings are numberless;
I vow to free them.
Delusions are inexhaustible,
I vow to end them.
Dharma gates are boundless;
I vow to enter them.
The Buddha Way is unsurpassable,
I vow to attain it.

We free all beings by freeing ourselves **Zuiko Redding** explains.

It's natural to wonder what it means to free all beings in this vast universe. This looks huge—an infinite, never-ending task. One might worry, “How did I go about saving an unending number of beings?” “Should I maybe find a religion that’s a bit more manageable?”

If we remain Buddhist, we have to ask what it means to free a being. The Japanese word that’s translated as “free” means “to cross over.” This makes things complicated because I can cross over a mountain or stream, but I can’t cross you over. I can carry you over, but you have to cross over on your own. Since all beings have to cross over on their own, doing it for them is really impossible. By now you’re probably thinking, “Maybe I can just give up and go take a nap.” Wait. There’s more.

In Buddhist thought “to cross over” refers to crossing from the shore of delusion to the shore of realization. To cross to the shore of realization means to give up our judgments and egoistic preferences and wholeheartedly be right here with the world just as it is. To free beings is to create conditions where clinging to ideas and judgments can stop. We make it possible for others just to be present with their lives, being comfortable with themselves and acting in their lives and their circumstances with wisdom and compassion. How to do this?

When Shakyamuni Buddha attained realization he said, “I and all beings together simultaneously attain realization.” Putting aside our egoistic thoughts and ideas, we free all beings by freeing ourselves. This is zazen. Our zazen expresses the Buddha’s wisdom, and it permeates our whole lives. We begin to feel awareness and peace wherever we go and whatever happens. When we find peace others find peace also, just like the Buddha said.

Our zazen expresses the Buddha's wisdom, and it permeates our whole lives.

Through our own peace we create conditions for others to cross over. For instance, from our own peace, we can resolve to be kind and respectful to others no matter what happens to us. At first, our resolution is mostly intellectual and mechanical. We have to remember on each occasion and often when we are hurried or overwhelmed we forget. We answer another person's question curtly, sending the message, "Don't bother me with such trivia." Then we remember and feel sad at our failure. Gradually, as we gain experience we remember before we speak or act and the strength of our vow guides us.

When we do this, others naturally feel peace, too. They can relax, if even for a moment, and give up their ideas and judgments. They have crossed over. We haven't told them about the Buddha, they aren't Buddhist, but our peace created the circumstances for their peace.

We can create these conditions even when our words or actions might sting. Perhaps it's necessary to tell a family member that their actions are

hurtful, or perhaps we have to tell a friend of a choice we've made that will disappoint them. When we act from our own calm center, we can do it graciously. Though the other person may feel embarrassment or anger, it dissipates quickly. They naturally see our warm heart, and can hear and consider our words with greater wisdom and openness. Dropping off pride and denial, they cross over.

These four vows are called the bodhisattva vow—vows to see that all other beings have crossed over before we ourselves cross over. To be a bodhisattva is to cultivate our practice, not as a self-help project, but because it benefits all beings. It is being aware in our lives without worrying about realization. Realization is, after all, just another of our infinite ideas. Best not to cling to ideas. Just doing the next thing simply because it's the next thing to do with no thought of crossing over creates the conditions for all beings, including ourselves, to cross over simultaneously.

Zuiko Redding is the resident teacher of Cedar Rapids Zen Center in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. She grew up in Texas where she encountered Zen as a university student, later practicing in Milwaukee with Rev. Tozen Akiyama and in Minneapolis with Dainin Katagiri Roshi. In 1992 she was ordained in Japan by Rev. Tsugen Narasaki, practicing under his direction at Zuioji Monastery and its mountain training center, Shogoji, where she received teaching transmission in 1996. She is a member of the American Zen Teachers' Association and one of Rightview Online's guiding teachers.

C H A N G E



the centerpiece of practice

In this article,

**Thanissaro
Bhikkhu**

**explains
how change
can be the
means to
achieve
longterm
happiness.**



Change is the focal point for Buddhist insight—a fact so well known that it has spawned a familiar sound bite, “Isn’t change what Buddhism is all about?” What’s less well known is that this focus has a frame, which is that change is neither where insight begins nor where it ends. Insight begins with a question that evaluates change in light of the desire for true happiness. It ends with a happiness that lies beyond change. When this frame is forgotten, people create their own contexts for the teaching and often assume that the Buddha was operating within those same contexts. Two of the contexts commonly attributed to the Buddha at present are these:

1. **Insight into change teaches us to embrace our experiences without clinging to them**—to get the most out of them in the present moment by fully appreciating their intensity, in full knowledge that we will soon have to let them go to embrace whatever comes next.

2. **Insight into change teaches us hope.** Because change is built into the nature of things, nothing is inherently fixed, not even our own identity. No matter how bad the situation, anything is possible. We can do whatever we want to do, create whatever world we want to live in, and become whatever we want to be.

The first of these interpretations offers wisdom on how to consume the pleasures of immediate, personal experience when you’d rather they not

change; the second, on how to produce change when you want it. Although sometimes presented as complementary insights, these interpretations contain a practical conflict: if experiences are so fleeting and changeable, are they worth the effort needed to produce them? How can we find genuine hope in the prospect of positive change if we can’t fully rest in the results when they arrive? Aren’t we just setting ourselves up for disappointment?

Or is this just one of the unavoidable paradoxes of life? Ancient folk wisdom from many cultures

**The Buddha was
not the sort of
person to accept
things without
question.**

would suggest so, advising us that we should approach change with cautious joy and stoic equanimity: training ourselves to not to get attached to the results of our actions, and accepting without question the need to keep on producing fleeting pleasures as best we can, for the only alternative would be inaction and despair. This advice, too, is often attributed to the Buddha.

But the Buddha was not the sort of person to accept things without question. His wisdom lay in realizing that the effort which goes into the production of happiness is worthwhile only if the processes of change can be skillfully managed to arrive at a happiness resistant to change. Otherwise, we’re lifelong prisoners in a forced labor camp, compelled to keep on producing pleasurable experiences to assuage our hunger, and yet finding them so empty of any real essence that they can never leave us full.

These realizations are implicit in the question that, according to the Buddha, lies at the beginning of insight: “What, when I do it, will lead to my long-term well-being and happiness?”

This is a heartfelt question, motivated by the desire behind all conscious action: to attain levels of pleasure worthy of the effort that goes into them. It springs from the realization that life requires effort, and that if we aren’t careful whole lifetimes can be lived in vain. This question, together with the realizations and desires behind it, provides the context for the Buddha’s perspective on change. If we examine it closely, we find the seeds for all his insights into the production and consumption of change.

The first phrase in the question “What, when I do it, will lead to....” focuses on the issues of production, and on the potential effects of human action. Prior to his awakening, the Buddha had left home and gone into the wilderness to explore precisely this issue, to see how far human action could go, and whether it could lead to a dimension beyond the reach of change. His awakening was confirmation that it could, if it were developed to the appropriate level of skillfulness. He thus taught that there are four types of action, corresponding to four levels of skill: three that produce pleasant, unpleasant, and mixed experiences within the cycles of space and time; and a fourth that leads beyond action to a level of happiness transcending the dimensions of space and time, thus eliminating the need to produce any further happiness.

Because the activities of producing and consuming require space and time, a happiness transcending space and time, by its very nature, is neither produced nor consumed. Thus, when the Buddha reached that happiness and stepped outside the modes of producing and consuming, he was able to turn back and see exactly how pervasive a role these activities play in ordinary experience, and how imprisoning they normally are. He saw that our experience of the present is an activity—something fabricated or produced, moment-to-moment, from the raw material provided by past actions. We even fabricate our identity, our sense of who we are. At the same time, we try to consume any pleasure that can be found in what we’ve produced, although in our desire to consume pleasure we often gobble down pain. With every moment, production and consumption are intertwined: we consume

experiences as we produce them, and produce them as we consume. The way we consume our pleasures or pains can produce further pleasures or pains, now and into the future, depending on how skillful we are.

The three parts of the latter phrase in the Buddha’s question—“(1) my (2) long-term (3) well-being and happiness”—provide standards for gauging the level of our skill in approaching true pleasure or happiness. We apply these standards to the experiences we consume: if they aren’t long-term, then no matter how pleasant they might be, they aren’t true happiness. If they’re not true happiness, there’s no reason to claim them as “mine.”

This insight forms the basis for the three characteristics that the Buddha taught for inducing a sense of dispassion for normal time-and-space bound experience. *Anicca*, the first of the three, is pivotal. *Anicca* applies to everything that changes. Often translated as “impermanent,” it’s actually the negative of *nicca*, which means constant or dependable. Everything that changes is inconstant. Now, the difference between “impermanent” and “inconstant” may seem semantic, but it’s crucial to the way *anicca* functions in the Buddha’s teachings. As the early texts state repeatedly, if something is *anicca* then the other two characteristics automatically follow: it’s *dukkha* (stressful) and *anatta* (not-self), i.e., not worthy to be claimed as me or mine.

If we translate *anicca* as impermanent, the connection among these three characteristics might seem debatable. But if we translate it as inconstant, and consider the three characteristics in light of the Buddha’s original question, the connection is clear. If you’re seeking a dependable basis for long-term happiness and ease, anything inconstant is obviously a stressful place to pin your hope—like trying to relax in an unstable chair whose legs are liable to break at any time. If you understand that your sense of self is something willed and fabricated, something that you chose to create, then there’s no compelling reason to keep creating a “me” or “mine” around any experience that’s inconstant and stressful. You want something better. You don’t want to make that experience the goal of your practice.

So what do you do with experiences that are inconstant and stressful? You could treat them as

What,
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?

worthless and throw them away, but that would be wasteful. After all, you went to the trouble to fabricate them in the first place; and, as it turns out, the only way you can reach the goal is by utilizing experiences of just this sort. So you can learn how to use them as means to the



goal; and the role they can play in serving that purpose is determined by the type of activity that went into producing them, the type that produces a pleasure conducive to the goal, or the type that doesn't. Those that do, the Buddha labeled the "path."

These activities include acts of generosity, acts of virtue, and the practice of mental absorption, or concentration. Even though they fall under the three characteristics, these activities produce a sense of pleasure relatively stable and secure, more deeply gratifying and nourishing than the act of producing and consuming ordinary sensual pleasures. So if you're aiming at happiness within the cycles of change, you should look to generosity, virtue, and mental absorption to produce that happiness. But if you'd rather aim for a happiness going beyond

change, these same activities can still help you by fostering the clarity of mind needed for awakening. Either way, they're worth mastering as skills. They're your basic set of tools, so you want to keep them in good shape and ready to hand. As for other pleasures and pains—such as those involved in sensual pursuits and in simply having a body and mind—these can serve as the objects you fashion with your tools, as raw materials for the discernment leading to awakening. By carefully examining them in light of their three characteristics—to see exactly how they're inconstant, stressful, and not-self—you become less inclined to keep on producing and consuming them. You see that your addictive compulsion to fabricate them comes entirely from the hunger and ignorance embodied in states of passion, aversion, and delusion. When these realizations give rise to dispassion both for fabricated experiences and for the processes of fabrication, you enter the path of the fourth kind of karma, leading to the deathless.

This path contains two important turns. The first comes when all passion and aversion for sensual pleasures and pains has been abandoned, and your only remaining

can be inclined to the deathless.

That's where the second turn occurs. When the mind encounters the deathless it can treat it as a mind-object, as a dharma, and then produce a feeling of passion and delight for it. The fabricated sense of the self that's producing and consuming this passion and delight thus gets in the way of full awakening. So at this point the logic of the three characteristics has to take a new turn. Their original logic, "Whatever is inconstant is stressful; whatever is stressful is not-self," leaves open the possibility that whatever is constant could be (1) easeful and (2) self.

The first possibility is in fact the case: whatever is constant is easeful. The deathless is actually the ultimate ease. But the second possibility isn't a skillful way of regarding what's constant, for if you latch onto what's constant as self, you're stuck on your attachment. To go beyond space and time, you have to go beyond fabricating the producing and consuming self, which is why the concluding insight of the path is that "All dharmas (constant or not) are not-self."

So what do you do with experiences that are inconstant and stressful?

attachment is to the pleasure of concentration. At this point, you turn and examine the pleasure of concentration in terms of the same three characteristics you used to contemplate sensual experiences. The difficulty here is that you've come to rely so strongly on the solidity of your concentration that you'd rather not look for its drawbacks. At the same time, the inconstancy of a concentrated mind is much more subtle than that of sensual experiences. But once you overcome your unwillingness to look for that inconstancy, the day is sure to come when you detect it. And then the mind

When this insight has done its work in overcoming any passion or delight for the deathless, full awakening occurs. And at that point, even the path is relinquished. The deathless remains, although no longer as an object of the mind. It's simply there, radically prior to and separate from the fabrication of space and time. All consuming and producing for the sake of your own happiness comes to an end, for a timeless well-being has been found. And because all mind-objects are abandoned in this happiness, questions of constant or inconstant, stress or ease, self or not-self are no longer an issue.

This, then, is the context of Buddhist insight into change: an approach that takes seriously both the potential effects of human effort and the basic human desire that effort not go to waste, that change has the potential to lead to a happiness beyond the reach of change. This insight is focused on developing the skills that lead to the production of genuine happiness. It employs the three characteristics not as abstract statements about existence, but as inducement for mastering those skills and as guidelines for measuring your progress along the way. When used in this way, the three characteristics lead to a happiness transcending the three characteristics, the activities of producing and consuming, and space and time as a whole.

When we understand this context for the three characteristics, we can clearly see the half-truths contained in the insights on the production and consumption of change that are commonly misattributed to the Buddha. With regard to production, it may be true that, with enough patience and persistence, we can produce just about anything, including an amazing array of self-identities. However, the question is: what's worth producing? We've imprisoned ourselves with our obsession for producing and consuming changeable pleasures and changeable selves, and yet there's the possibility of using change to escape from this prison to the freedom of a happiness transcending time and space. Do we want to take advantage of that possibility, or would we rather spend our spare time blowing bubbles in the sunlight coming through our prison windows and trying to derive happiness from the swirling patterns before the bubbles burst?

Getting the most out of our changing experiences doesn't mean embracing them or milking them of their intensity. It means learning to approach the pleasures and pains they offer, not as fleeting ends in themselves, but as tools for awakening. In every moment we're supplied with raw materials—some

of them attractive, some of them not. Instead of embracing them in delight or throwing them away in disgust, we can learn how to use them to produce the keys that will unlock our prison doors.

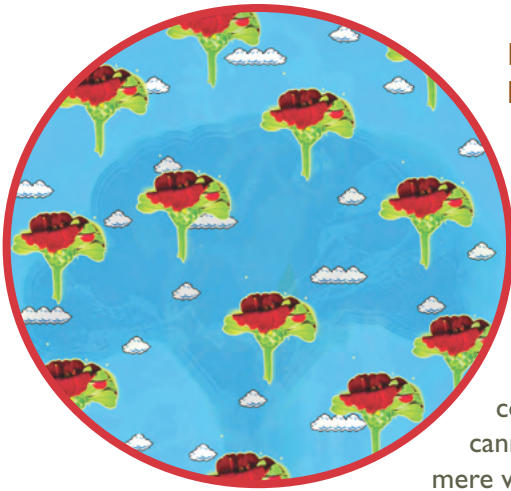
And as for the wisdom of non-attachment to the results of our actions: in the Buddha's context, this notion can make sense only if we care deeply about the results of our actions and want to master the processes of cause and effect that lead to genuine freedom. In other words, we don't demand childishly that our actions always result in immediate happiness, that everything we stick into the lock will automatically unlatch the door. If what we have done has been unskillful and led to undesirable results, we want to admit our mistakes and find out why they were mistakes so that we can learn how to correct them the next time around. Only when we have the patience to look objectively at the results of our actions will we be able to learn, and by studying the keys that don't unlock the doors, how finally to make the right keys that do.

With this attitude we can make the most of the processes of change to develop the skill that releases us from the prison of endless producing and consuming. With release, we plunge into the freedom of a happiness so true that it transcends the terms of the original question that led us there. There's nothing further we have to do. Our sense of "my" and "mine" is discarded, and even the "long-term," which implies time, is erased by the timeless. The happiness remaining lies radically beyond the range of our time- and space-bound conceptions of happiness. Totally independent of mind-objects, it's unadulterated and unalterable, unlimited and pure.



Thanissaro Bhikkhu (Geoffrey DeGraff) is an American monk of the Thai forest tradition. He studied meditation under Ajahn Fuang Jotiko in Thailand, himself a student of the late Ajahn Lee, and was ordained in 1976. In 1991 he helped establish Metta Monastery in the hills of San Diego County, California, where he is currently the abbot.

The Buddha's Flower Sermon



**From Remembering Master Xu Yun (Empty Cloud)
by Jy Din Shakya as related to Ming Zhen (Chuan Yuan)**

A good teacher is better than the most sacred books. Books contain words, and Chan cannot be transmitted by mere words. I suppose you will think, "Well, if this old man says that words are useless why does he talk so much?" Religion has many mysteries and why teachers say that words can never suffice and then talk and talk until their students' ears turn to stone is perhaps the greatest mystery of them all.

The Buddha stood beside a lake on Mount Grdhakuta and prepared to give a sermon to his disciples who were gathering there to hear him speak.

As the Holy One waited for his students to settle down, he noticed a golden lotus blooming in the muddy water nearby. He pulled the plant out of the water—flower, long stem, and root. Then he held it up high for all his students to see. For a long time he stood there, saying nothing, just holding up the lotus and looking into the blank faces of his audience.

Suddenly his disciple, Maha Kassapa, smiled. He understood!

What did Maha Kassapa understand? Everybody wants to know. For centuries everybody's been asking, "What message did the Buddha give to Maha Kassapa?"

Some people say that the root, stem, and flower represented the three worlds: underworld, earth, and sky, and that the Buddha was saying that he could hold all existence in the palm of his hand. Maybe.

Some people say he was reversing the great mantra, "*Mani padme hum*." (The jewel is in the lotus). When the Buddha held the flower in his hand, the lotus was in the jewel. Hmmm.

Some people say that the root, stem, and flower stood for the base, spine, and thousand-petaled lotus crown of the Chakra Yoga system and that by raising the plant he was advocating that discipline. Other people say it could just as easily indicate a result of that discipline, the Trinitarian fulfillment: as the Buddha was father and mother, he was also son—the Lotus Born and Lotus Holding Maitreya, Future Buddha, the Julai. That's certainly something to think about!

In Chan we're not sure of too many things. We only really know one: enlightenment doesn't come with a dictionary! The bridge to nirvana is not composed of phrases. As old Master Lao Zi wrote, "The *tao* that we can talk about is not the *tao* we mean."

So the Buddha spoke in silence, but what did he say?

Perhaps he was saying, "From out of the muck of *samsara* the lotus rises pure and undefiled. Transcend ego-consciousness! Be one with the flower!"

There! The Buddha gave a lecture and nobody had to take any notes.

NOTE: This article is reprinted here thanks to the Zen Buddhist Order of Hsu Yun. For more about this great Chinese master, please visit their website: <http://www.hsuyun.org>

WHAT THE BUDDHA SAW

Xianyang Carl Jerome

speculates about some of the conditions in Siddhartha's life that led him to the four noble truths.

The first noble truth, whether you choose to accept it axiomatically or not, is an analysis of the human condition reduced to a three-word sentence: Life is dukkha. From a Buddhist perspective, the essence of our humanity is expressed in one word, *dukkha*—and all the teachings of Buddhism can be seen to arise from the understanding of that word.

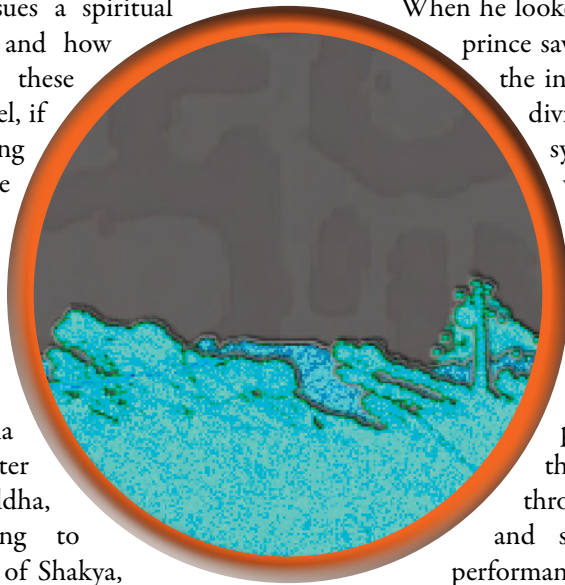
Before exploring the expansive meaning of the Pali word *dukkha*, let's consider some of the conditions around Buddha's enlightenment. What were the conditions that led the Buddha to question the religious and spiritual teachings of his time? What led him to develop a new spiritual system? What are the fundamental issues a spiritual system should address, and how does Buddhism address these issues? On a personal level, if you have or are considering a Buddhist practice, do the teachings of the Buddha address the critical issues of your life, if indeed you believe a spiritual system should do that?

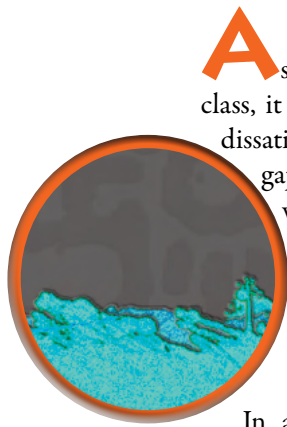
2500 years ago, Siddhartha Gotama, who would later be known as the Buddha, was—at least according to tradition—crown prince of Shakya, a small country in northern India, in what is now southern Nepal. He was raised with all the trappings of great wealth and social status, and he received an education with a breadth and depth that would rival any today. It appears from the “historical” descriptions of his life that he was an exceptionally bright critical thinker whose social conscience developed early in his educational career and was nurtured by Asita, his mentor and the person ultimately responsible for designing and administering the young prince's education.

Traditional learning for someone of Siddhartha's rank would have included a serious study of Brahmanism, the “state religion” of Shakya; of the Vedas, the sacred texts used by the Brahmins; and the six ancillary sciences: phonetics, ritual, grammar, etymology, metrics, and astronomy, as well as music, horsemanship, military tactics, and the martial arts. His studies would have included philosophy and formal logic, areas in which he obviously excelled and which he used extensively in his teachings, and, of course, a serious foundation in meditation, which later in life would serve as the basic tool used to reach enlightenment.

When he looked around, what this young prince saw, the records suggest, were the inequities of a society deeply divided by an hereditary caste system that relegated the vast majority of its citizens to a meager existence entrenched in poverty with no upward mobility possible in their current life. He saw exploitation by the Brahmin priests, priests who maintained their wealth and status through the instillation of fear and superstition, and through performance of rites and rituals for which the poor were made to pay dearly. And the poor paid dearly because it was only through the performance of these rites and rituals that one might be born into a higher rank in one's next life. Originally the rites and rituals were offerings to the god Brahma who would then grant rebirth in a higher caste in the next life. But by the time of the Buddha, it was believed that the rites and rituals themselves, if performed correctly, would produce the desired result.

The priests had, in effect, replaced the gods.





As a member of the ruling warrior (upper) class, it seems that Siddhartha felt an underlying dissatisfaction with his life of privilege, with the gap between the haves and the have-nots, and with Brahmanism. We can suppose from his future renunciation that he viewed Brahmanism as wholly unsatisfactory in addressing the *dukkha* he so deeply saw and felt.

In addition, cities were developing on the Gangic plain, where Siddhartha lived, generating a service-oriented bourgeoisie who was questioning and reshaping the traditional values of Shakyas' Brahmanic political and social structure. Wars, with and amongst neighboring states, were so frequent that they were a constant source of fear and disruption. Questions of how to establish peace and harmony, therefore, seem to have pervaded Siddhartha's upbringing.

These were the major conditions that provided the context for Siddhartha's developing social conscience and fundamental uneasiness with life. These were the conditions, we might speculate, that allowed his heterodox voice to be heard when he started teaching. This is what made it possible for him to proclaim with clarity and certainty: the truth of *dukkha*.

Having been raised in wealth and indulgence, with training in meditation and philosophy, and having practiced asceticism for a number of years, the 35-year-old Siddhartha sat himself down on a pile of leaves under a ficus tree and vowed to stay there, meditating, until he figured out the answer, as we would say today.

That answer, Siddhartha would soon realize, required him to define the problem, account for it, find a solution to it, and explain how to make the solution happen. That answer is reflected in the four noble truths.

FIRST NOBLE TRUTH: LIFE IS *DUKKHA*.

With his driving social conscience, supplemented by his education, deep meditative ability, and experiences in spiritual practice, Siddhartha quickly realized the problem: *dukkha* pervaded everything. In fact, it would seem he had understood this, in ever-increasing ways, from childhood. But now,

finally, he would clarify it and organize it and most important, find a way to relieve the *dukkha* in the "here and now."

The Buddha began his first discourse axiomatically with "Life is *dukkha*." *Dukkha* is generally translated from the Pali as "suffering." But any one English word as a translation is too simple and too specialized to adequately represent *dukkha*. Other words have been used to translate *dukkha*, such as unsatisfactoriness, disappointment, worry, dis-ease, anxiety, distress, uneasiness, pain, apprehension, discomfort, despair, frustration, irritation, anguish, disgust, stress, misery, sorrow, imperfection, unrest, and the like.

Dukkha is a far-reaching word in Pali, and is a little of all of these, all together and all at once. It is a broad philosophic concept for describing the human condition. It describes and explains "life" on its most profound level. It is equally mental and physical in its meaning, it is an analogy, it is a characterization, it is a simple sensation and it is a complex doctrine. *Dukkha* is the inadequacy inherent in the nature of everything in and of this life, and the life of all sentient beings.

Dukkha is the uneasiness that arises in us when anything good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant, happy or unhappy, painful or pleasurable, arises for us. Our spirituality, as the Buddha would observe, must be a response to this condition, a response to *dukkha*.

SECOND NOBLE TRUTH: DUKKHA RESULTS FROM CRAVING, CLINGING, ATTACHMENT

The cause of our *dukkha* is that we cling to everything, whether good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant, happy or unhappy, painful or pleasurable. And we do this both positively and negatively for both the positive and the negative.

If it's something pleasant, we want more of it and we don't want to lose what we have of it. If it's something negative, we want to get rid of it and we want not to get more of it. So everything, positive or negative, good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant, results in our clinging and causes us to live with an omnipresent and pervasive sense of unease, sometimes painfully present, at other times quite subtle, but always there because of our clinging psycho-linguistic nature.

THIRD NOBLE TRUTH: ENDING DUKKHA IS POSSIBLE

Having diagnosed the illness and found its cause, to use a popular medical model to describe the four noble truths, the Buddha now tells us that there is the possibility of a cure. Nirvana is the word we use to describe that cure for the ending of *dukkha*.

Because life unfolds in the present moment, the choice we have in each moment is whether or not to be present, seeing the moment as it really is, without the clinging, without the labeling, without the imposition of our preconceived notions onto everything, just greeting each moment with equanimity, not delusion and not attachment. When we do this, when we experience the moment directly, no clinging arises and *dukkha* ceases to be. This insight would have arisen in the Buddha fairly rapidly as a result of his lifetime of deep meditative practice and his penetrating understanding of *dukkha* and its causes.

It is important to note that nirvana is not a state we reach where *dukkha* simply ceases. This is a moment-to-moment practice. Fortunately, the more we move in this direction, the easier it is to continue moving in this direction; the closer we get to being here with things as they are in each moment, the easier it is to stay close to things as they really are in each moment.

FOURTH NOBLE TRUTH: THE SOLUTION

Having gotten this far, we can surmise the Buddha deduced that a set of everyday behaviors, that would support nirvana, were necessary—a prescription, as it were. Obviously, one would need to develop a strong meditative practice. The insight of that practice would be the source of the two major supports needed for a successful meditation practice, wisdom and ethical correctness. And that forms the framework of the fourth noble truth, the eightfold path: wisdom, ethics, and meditation.

Wisdom is reflected in the first two aspects of the path, right view and right intention.

Ethical guidelines are reflected in aspects three, four and five: right speech, right action, and right livelihood.

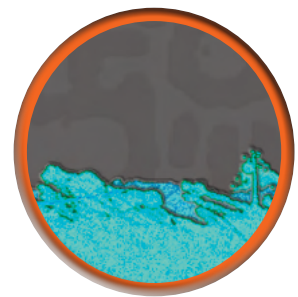
And a strong meditation practice, the core of the *Buddhadharma*, is reflected in aspects six, seven and eight: right effort and right mindfulness (six and seven) would be the *strong* and right concentration (eight) would be the *meditation*.

While it is easy to explain these by clustering them into three groups: wisdom, ethics, and meditation, in fact the interrelationships of the eight are complex, with any one producing conditions for each of the other seven to arise, with each conditioning all the others; all conditioning any one. The eightfold noble path is linked more spherically and rotationally than linearly, with meditation as the ultimate source of the teaching here.

(The factors of the eightfold noble path are charted in detail on page 42.)

CONCLUSION

The first Patriarch of Zen, Bodhidharma, a larger than life character and a man of few words, called the four noble truths “the four all-inclusive practices” and listed them pithily as the practices of “suffering injustice, adapting to conditions, seeking nothing, and practicing the dharma.” As the Buddha saw, and as Bodhidharma reminded us, when we adapt to conditions as they really are, there is no suffering.



A List of Lists

In a basically pre-literate society, such as the one in which the Buddha taught, lists were not only a skillful means, a pedagogical tool, but they were also a very useful mnemonic device. For those with a penchant for lists, 208 lists can be found in the *Numerical Discourses of the Buddha, An Anthology of Suttas from the Anguttara Nikaya*, translated and edited by Nyanaponika Thera and Bhikkhu Bodhi. And for those with a *real* penchant for lists, there is the unabridged version of the *Anguttara Nikaya*, the eleven volumes of numbered suttas, published by the Buddhist Text Society under the title *The Book of Gradual Sayings*, which contains 2344 suttas, each of which contains a list.

2 KINDS OF REALITY

1. Conditioned or relative reality/truth (*sankhata paramattha dhammas*)
2. Unconditioned or ultimate reality/truth (*asankhata paramattha dharma*)

3 MARKS OR CHARACTERISTICS OF EXISTENCE (of Conditioned Phenomena)

1. Impermanence (*anicca*)
2. Suffering (*dukkha*)
3. Not-self (*anatta*)

3 DHARMA SEALS

1. Impermanence (*anicca*)
2. Suffering (*dukkha*)
3. Tranquility/nirvana (*nibbana*)

3 ESSENTIALS OF BUDDHISM

1. Faith and determination
2. Lovingkindness and compassion
3. Wisdom

3 FOUNDATIONS OF HAPPINESS

1. Generosity (*dana*)
2. Ethical conduct (*sila*)
3. Developing skill in meditation (*bhavana*)

3 PILLARS OF DHARMA

1. Generosity (*dana*)
2. Moral restraint (*sila*)
3. Meditation (*bhavana*): Concentration (*samadhi*) and Mindfulness (*sati*)

3 PURE PRECEPTS

Traditional version

- Do no evil
- Do only good
- Save all beings.

New Version

- Refrain from creating attachment
- Make every effort to live in enlightenment
- Live for the benefit of all beings

3 ROOTS OF EVIL/POISONS (kilesas)

1. Greed (*lobha*) - mindfulness transforms this into Faith
2. Aversion/hatred (*dosa*) - mindfulness transforms this into discriminating Wisdom
3. Delusion (*moha*) - mindfulness transforms this into Equanimity

3 REFUGES (Triple Gem, Three Jewels)

1. Buddha
2. Dharma
3. Sangha

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

1. Life is *dukkha*
2. The cause of *dukkha* is attachment
3. The cessation of *dukkha* is nibbana
4. The path leading to the cessation of *dukkha* is the Noble Eightfold Path

4 HEAVENLY ABODES (*Brahma-viharas*)

1. Lovingkindness (*metta*)
2. Compassion (*karuna*)
3. Sympathetic joy (*mudita*)
4. Equanimity (*upekkha*)

4 FOUNDATIONS OF MINDFULNESS

1. Mindfulness of the body (*kaya*)
2. Mindfulness of feeling (*vedana*)
3. Mindfulness of mind/consciousness (*citta*)
4. Mindfulness of mind objects-mental events

4 RIGHT EFFORTS (*sammappadhana*)

1. *Abandon* any unwholesome/unskillful thought that has arisen
2. *Refrain* from establishing the conditions that allow those unwholesome/unskillful thoughts to continue and to arise in the future
3. *Develop* a pattern wherein wholesome/skillful thoughts arise
4. *Maintain* conditions for those wholesome/skillful thoughts to continue and to arise in the future

4 STAGES OF ENLIGHTENMENT

1. The Stream-enterer (*sotapanna*)—has eradicated the first three of the ten fetters; will be enlightened in one to seven lives
2. The Once-returner (*sakadagami*)—has eradicated the first three and weakened the fourth and fifth of the ten fetters
3. The Non-returner (*anagami*)—has eradicated the first five of the ten fetters
4. The Arahant—has eradicated all ten fetters.

5 AGGREGATES (*khandhas* or *skandhas*)

1. Form (*rupa*)
2. Feeling (*vedana*)
3. Perception (*sañña*)
4. Volitional Formations (*sankhara*)
5. Consciousness (*viññana*)

5 HINDRANCES (*nivarana*)

1. Sensual desire (*kāmacchanda*)
2. Aversion or Ill-will (*vyāpāda*)
3. Sleepiness and sluggishness – sloth (*thina*), torpor (*middha*)
4. Restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*)
5. Skeptical doubt (*vicikicchā*)

5 PRECEPTS

1. Refrain from killing
2. Refrain from stealing
3. Refrain from sexual misconduct
4. Refrain from lying (and all forms of wrong speech)
5. Refrain from taking intoxicants

6 PARAMITAS

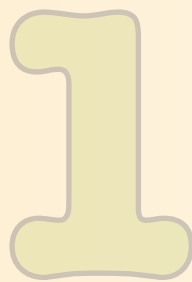
1. Generosity (*dana*)
2. Morality (*sila*)
3. Patience (*kshanti*)
4. Diligent effort (*virya*)
5. Concentration (*dhyaana*)
6. Wisdom (*prajna*)

8 CONSCIOUSNESSES

1. Eye-consciousness
2. Ear-consciousness
3. Nose-consciousness
4. Mouth-consciousness
5. Body-consciousness
6. Mind-consciousness
7. Manas (delusional) consciousness
8. Alaya (storehouse) consciousness

THE EIGHTFOLD PATH (*ariya-magga*)

1. Right view
2. Right intention
3. Right speech
4. Right action
5. Right livelihood
6. Right concentration
7. Right mindfulness
8. Wisdom



10 ARMIES OF MARA

1. Attachment to sense pleasures
2. Discontent with meditative practice
3. Physical hunger and thirst
4. Cravings
5. Sloth and torpor
6. Fear and uncertainty
7. Doubt and lack of self-confidence
8. Conceit and ingratitude
9. Undeserved praise and fame
10. Self-praise and disparaging others

10 GRAVE PRECEPTS

- Don't kill
- Don't take what is not given
- Don't lie
- Don't misuse the senses
- Don't intoxicate mind or body of self or others
- Don't slander others
- Don't praise self
- Don't be possessive of anything
- Don't harbor ill will
- Don't abuse the Three Treasures

10 FETTERS (SAMYOJANA)

Cognitive

1. Self-identity beliefs
2. Doubt
3. Clinging to rites and rituals

Emotional

4. Sensual craving
5. Ill will

Transcendental

6. Attachment to the form
7. Attachment to formless phenomena
8. Conceit (*māna*, literally measuring-as measuring oneself and comparing oneself to others—a subtle sense of self)
9. Restlessness
10. Ignorance (regarding the four noble truths)

10 PARAMITAS

1. Perfection in Generosity
2. Perfection in Moral Conduct
3. Perfection in Renunciation
4. Perfection in Wisdom
5. Perfection in Diligence
6. Perfection in Patience
7. Perfection in Truthfulness
8. Perfection in Resolution
9. Perfection in Lovingkindness
10. Perfection in Equanimity

10 WHOLESOME ACTIONS

1. Generosity (*dāna*)
2. Ethical conduct (*sīla*)
3. Renunciation (*nekkhama*)
4. Heroic effort (*virīya*)
5. Wisdom (*pañña*)
6. Patience (*khanti*)
7. Truthfulness (*sacca*)
8. Determination (*adhiṭṭhāna*)
9. Lovingkindness (*metta*)
10. Equanimity (*upekkhā*)

10 UNWHOLESOME ACTIONS

1. Killing
2. Stealing
3. Sexual misconduct
4. Lying
5. Divisive speech
6. Harsh speech
7. Gossip and small-talk
8. Covetous thoughts
9. Thoughts of ill-will
10. Wrong views

12 LINKS OF DEPENDENT ORIGATION

1. & 2. From ignorance (*avijjā*) come volitional–karmic–formations (*sankhāra*)
3. From volitional–karmic–formations comes consciousness (*viññāna*)
4. From consciousness comes name-and-form (*nāma-rūpa*)
5. From name-and-form come the six senses (*saḍyatana*)
6. From the six senses comes contact (*phassa*)
7. From contact comes feeling (*vedāna*)
8. From feeling comes craving (*tanhā*)
9. From craving comes clinging (*upādāna*)
10. From clinging comes becoming (*bhava*)
11. From becoming comes birth (*jāti*)
12. From birth comes aging and death

The 17th-century Rinzai master, **Hakuin Ekaku**, almost single-handedly revived the Rinzai tradition. However, it's also true that this Zen master he was fond of sake and a secret smoker, as we learn in this article by **Sensei Sevan Ross**, one of Hakuin's great admirers.

HAKUIN'S PIPE



On the subject of personal guiding lights, environmentalists and corporate leaders have both shown me the way. Buddhists and Baptists have opened inner doors. In valuing the wisdom of so many, status has mattered little. Herr Dr. Fries, who had three different doctorates, guided me out of the darkness of “street smarts” to help me see that I actually was able to apply the rigor of logic and scholarship. Phil the janitor, having survived only the sixth grade, reintroduced me to street smarts. Zen teachers of all ranks and stripes kept knocking me off my horse, and still do.

Reflecting upon those who have so inspired us, saved us, taught us, turned our heads, can (and usually does) lead us into a sort of selective memory, a hagiography. As these persons continue to cross our minds in unexpected ways, arising unbidden in cameo appearances linked to memories, familiar smells, perhaps a snapshot or similar trigger for *deja vu*, we tend to sanitize both our relationship with them and their lingering image.

I must try hard to remember that grandfather Dominic was a mean, domineering man as well as an incisive teacher regarding human habits and tendencies. Only the many delightful moments and assumptions of the best intentions present themselves when I first consider the boss I had in my last corporate job. While he was arguably the best people manager I ever saw, his more selfish and darker qualities must be mined out carefully by my memory in order to present a more realistic human being.

If this rather rose-colored tinting occurs with those we have actually seen, worked with, and been with in a great mix of places and circumstances, how much more dyed and air-brushed must be our inner portraits of the great Zen masters, especially those we admire the most, those who have inspired us in the important moments, those who have been our personal spiritual beacons. We clearly can create rather idealized portraits of these great practitioners, and in the process we can overlook their humanity.

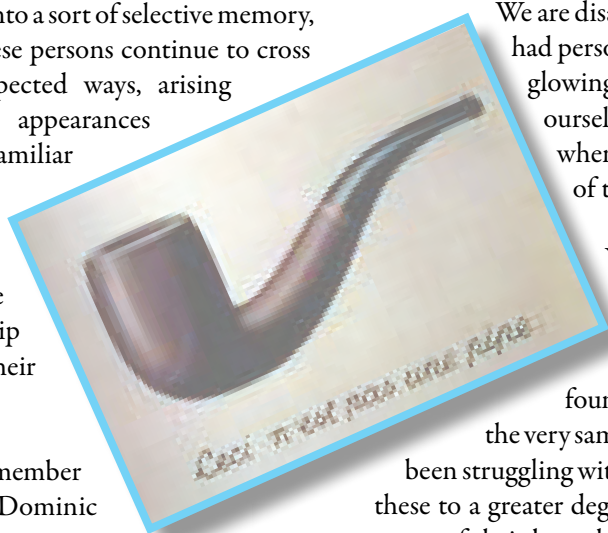
We find ourselves shocked that they may well have harbored political views that we now feel do not square with our image of a solid Buddhist position.

We are disappointed that they may have had personal habits that were less than glowing. We may even discover in ourselves some sense of rejection when we corner them acting out of their personal desires.

Yet it is possibly right there, right in their human frailty and imperfection, that their greatest gift to us may be found: they have struggled with the very same flaws that we ourselves have

been struggling with, and they have transcended these to a greater degree than we have, even if the traces of their baser humanity remain for us to see and to agonize over.

It may be safe to say that any “composite” great teacher—like a personal guide created out of the best features of all those who have helped us along the path—must include Hakuin Zenji. He was Japanese, died about the time of our American Revolution, and was renowned even in his own lifetime as the leading Zen teacher in Japan. He



rebuilt fallen down temples and revitalized the koan system. He even invented new koans that are still used today. Hakuin wrestled Zen out from under the weight of a growing Pureland influence and protected it from what he called the “do-nothing Zen” that was growing in popularity at the time. He had, he himself says, eighteen major awakenings and countless minor ones. He was a famous calligrapher, painter, and man of letters. He single-handedly turned back the downward slide of Rinzai Zen. His greatness has inspired countless practitioners—certainly this one.



I could safely say that among all the masters he has moved me the most and has burned brightest as a spiritual light. But, as another guiding light of sorts once said, “If the world were perfect, it wouldn’t be.”

Outside of Hakuin’s awakenings themselves, and his short training time spent with Master Shojū, one of the great events in his spiritual autobiography, *Wild Ivy*, is his bout with what he calls “Zen sickness,” suffered in his late twenties while he was a monk in training. This illness is

moment of crisis calmness and judgment that almost certainly could not have been present, so Hakuin the elder glosses over the younger’s ill and panicked state of mind. He not only was human and frail enough to have gotten so ill and psychologically out of sorts as a young man, but he slants the experience somewhat in his own recollections as an old man—as probably any old man might.

Hakuin also praises his root teacher, Shojū, up and down, though he spent only eight months with him. But more, Hakuin left this teacher, though he was asked to stay on, and apparently never visited him again, though Shojū lived for another thirteen years. Theories abound as to why, but this lack of contact was certainly not polite, respectful, nor the norm in Hakuin’s Japan. Was he proud? Did he think himself fully realized, fully developed, fully trained? He gives no hint, and we shall never know. There are many examples of students and teachers “splitting” permanently, and in many cases what transpired between the two will never be known. But it needs to be highlighted here that at least some of these splits were for personal reasons that

One of the great values in taking the old masters as our personal guiding lights is the realization that they wrestled with the very same human conditions that we do.

of mysterious origin and the symptoms are vague (a nervous breakdown, tuberculosis, and pleurisy have all been proposed by scholars). None of his Zen teachers could offer him comfort, so he took to the mountains and finally enlisted the help of the hermit named Hakuyu. It seems clear that Hakuin took the hermit’s advice, added some practices of his own, and finally recovered.

Hakuin’s description of all this reveals that he was scared, doubtful, distrusting, and clearly naïve during this period—and that the whole experience was necessary to his spiritual growth. Writing about this as an old man, he seems to see his younger emanation through a somewhat hagiographic lens himself. Just as one tells and retells stories of close calls—say, of an auto accident one narrowly avoided—and attributes to the person in the

might not reflect well on the parties in play, and might run against the grain of our idealistic image of even the likes of Hakuin. Again, we will never know.

Hakuin drank sake. We are told that Japanese priests of Hakuin’s era very often were fond of sake. So Hakuin was part of the culture of his time, though we are told that his disciple Torei adhered more closely to the precepts in this area. Hakuin smoked a pipe. While not explicitly forbidden in the precepts, this was not seen as a healthy or desirable personal habit for a priest or teacher of monks even in Hakuin’s Japan. Apparently, he agonized about its running counter to the precepts himself, and one day dramatically buried his pipe in the mud, poking it lower and lower in the muck with his staff.

It's the sort of scene many of us who have addictive personalities have repeated: the dramatic moment of willful, often white-knuckled, separation from a habit that we see has a grip on us. Hakuin never writes of this; his disciple Torei is left to relate the incident.

Personally, I find great inspiration in Hakuin not only through his teachings, but through his struggle with these karmic forces. I love sweets and I eat too much, and while this is karmic/genetic heritage from both the Russo and Maccedone clans (I am skinny by any measure among my relatives), I struggle with both the spiritual and health issues associated with these habits. It does my heart good to see that even someone of Hakuin's stature and depth struggled in a similar way. Scholars speculate that his death was diabetes-related; he had a famous sweet tooth.

Having Hakuin in his entirety as a guiding light, one can realize that one does not—perhaps realistically cannot—develop profound spirituality, deep insight, great humanitarian and even moral qualities, and somehow in the process just leave behind those rather mundane (if not base) human foibles we all struggle with. One of the great values in taking the old masters as our personal guiding lights is the realization that they wrestled with the very same human conditions that we do. They doubted themselves, they struggled to keep the precepts, they did stupid things. And sometimes they did all this even after deep realization.

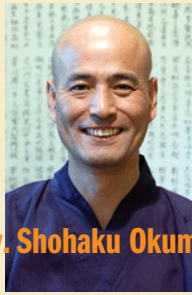
They lived in the real world and they were forced to work with it, just as we are. How does that line go in the repentance ceremony? “. . . *they were like us*, and we will in the future become Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.”

Seeing these masters as the humans they are can give us even greater hope, even deeper respect. We can admire them all the more, seeing that they, like us, struggled with their humanness, and still transcended this body and mind. May they be guiding lights for us all.

Oh... Hakuin's disciple Torei writes that Hakuin, as an older man, again took up the habit of smoking the pipe, but he couldn't bring himself to admit to his transgression publicly. Torei writes of often coming unexpectedly into Hakuin's quarters only to catch the master hurriedly hiding his still lit pipe behind his back.



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Vast Gate of Compassion

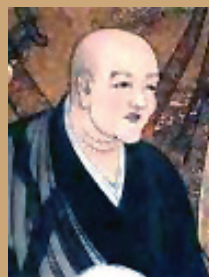
Rev. Shohaku Okumura, a Dogen scholar and translator, explores the uniqueness and universal validity of Dogen Zenji's zazen in careful detail.

Dogen Zenji's zazen is a unique practice among the many approaches to meditation found in the various Buddhist traditions. I would like to mention a few unique points of Dogen Zenji's zazen.

1. JUST SITTING WITHOUT MEDITATION TECHNIQUES

Zazen is a meditation practice, and meditation practice is one of the three basic areas of study in Buddhism. These three areas include precepts, meditation and wisdom. Therefore each and every Buddhist tradition uses some method of meditation practice. Among these traditions, Dogen Zenji's zazen is quite unique. Other Buddhist traditions include certain techniques of meditation and concentration such as using visualizations, mantras, koans, counting or watching the breath, etc. In Dogen Zenji's *shikantaza*, or just sitting, however, we don't use any such techniques. We really just sit with our entire body and mind without doing anything else. We are determined to do nothing but sit.

Some people may question whether it is true that in *shikantaza* we don't use the techniques of counting the breath or watching the breath. This is because some Soto Zen teachers teach their students to count or watch the breath as concentration techniques to prevent the mind from being distracted in zazen. However, I was taught we neither count the breath nor watch the breath in zazen. Uchiyama Roshi taught, "Once you are still, breath quietly from the tanden, an area in your belly a little below the navel. Allow long breaths to be long and short breaths to be short, rather than trying to control each one. Do not force your breathing or make noise by breathing heavily."



Eihei Dogen, the 13th century founder of the Japanese Soto Zen sect, was born in Kyoto in 1200 into a respected political family. He was expected to follow in the family "business" and become a politician, but his father died when he was only three years old and his mother died just five years later. These two events left Dogen with a profound sense of the transience of life, a sense that would propel him through the rest of his life.

At the age of 13 he decided to become a priest, dropping any pretense toward public life. He ordained at that young age as a novice, training with great determination. His questioning about the fundamental nature of practice and enlightenment led him to study under several great Japanese teachers, and finally, at the age of 23, led him to travel to China in search of answers. In China he met the great Zen master Nyojyo, under whom he realized the answer to his question (the answer is explained in the opening paragraph of his treatise on meditation, the *Fukanzazengi*) and obtained enlightenment.

He returned to Japan in 1227. As a result of his writings and practice, he soon developed enough patronage to establish Eihei-ji, a Soto Zen training monastery. Dogen died in 1253, leaving an extensive record of teachings, and leaving Eihei-ji as his legacy, a monastery that became the heart of Japanese Zen practice during Dogen's lifetime and which continues today, nearly 800 years later, as a major center of Japanese Soto Zen practice.



He emphasized that we should breathe as naturally as if we had forgotten that we are even breathing.

This teaching of Uchiyama Roshi is based on Dogen Zenji's instruction found in the *Eihei-Koroku* (Dogen's Extensive Record; vol. 5, Discourse 390) regarding breathing in zazen. Here Dogen spoke about regulating the breath and settling the mind. He said in Hinayana Buddhist teachings they use counting the breath (*susoku-kan*), and in Mahayana Buddhist teachings they watch the breath and know that one breath is long and another is short:

The breath reaches the tanden and comes up from the tanden. Although exhale and inhale differ, both of them occur depending on the tanden. Impermanence is easy to observe, and regulating the mind is easy to accomplish.

Then Dogen introduces the teaching of Tiangton [Rujing], Dogen's teacher, on this subject: "Breath enters and reaches the tanden, and yet there is no place from which it comes. Therefore it is neither long nor short. Breath emerges from the tanden, and yet there is nowhere it goes. Therefore it is neither short nor long."

Then Dogen gives his own teaching on regulating the breath: "Although it is not the great vehicle, it differs from the lesser vehicle. Although it is not the lesser vehicle, it differs from the great vehicle.... Exhalation and inhalation are neither long nor short."

Dogen does not recommend counting breath, so his way of regulating the breath is different from today's Hinayana way. He does not recommend watching the length of

the breath, so his method of regulating the breath is also different from the Mahayana. The air we breathe comes from the entire universe, and since the body is an empty collection of the five skandhas, the air we exhale goes nowhere. Since in reality there is no "inside" of the self nor "outside" of the self, we actually can not count our breath or watch the length of our breath. Because in reality there is no separation between inside and outside, we just naturally receive the air "coming in" and naturally let go of the air "going out." We leave everything to the life force and universal movement of dependent origination. We become truly one with the life force that allows our bodies to breathe and allows the air to come and go. "We" really "do nothing" but just sit and participate in this movement of the entire network of dependent origination. This is the way we put our entire being, both body and mind, on the ground of the universal life of Buddha. This is what Dogen Zenji means when he says in the *Shobogenzo Bendowa*:

When one displays the *Buddhamudra* with one's whole body and mind, sitting upright in this *samadhi* even for a short time, everything in the entire dharma world becomes *Buddhamudra* and all space in the universe completely becomes enlightenment.

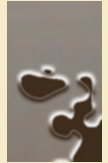
A *mudra* is like a stamp in Chinese and Japanese culture or a signature in Western culture. A stamp or a signature certifies, for example, that a painting or a work of calligraphy is the work of a certain person. In a similar way, when we exhibit the *Buddhamudra* with the whole body and mind, our sitting belongs to Buddha rather than to any individual. This sitting is not a personal effort we do to make us better people.

So from his teaching on breathing we can see that Dogen's zazen practice is unique among the various methods of meditation practice found in the many

traditions of Buddhism. Dogen himself admitted that his practice was different.

This leads us to the second unique point of Dogen's zazen, that is, the practice of zazen as the verification of *Buddhadharma*.

2. PRACTICE AND VERIFICATION ARE ONE



In the very beginning of the *Fukanzazengi* (*Universal Recommendation of Zazen*), Dogen says:

The way is originally perfect and all-pervading; how could it be contingent on practice and verification? The true vehicle is self-sufficient; what need is there for special effort? Indeed, the whole body is free from dust; who could believe in a means to brush it clean? It is never apart from this very place, what is the use of traveling around to practice?

In the *Shobogenzo Zuimonki*, Dogen says:

Sitting itself is the practice of the Buddha. Sitting itself is non-doing. It is nothing but the true form of the self. Apart from sitting, there is nothing to seek as the *Buddhadharma*.

In the *Shobogenzo Zanmai-O-zanmai* (*King of Samadhi*), Dogen says:

That which directly goes beyond the whole world is *kekkaфу* (sitting in full-lotus.) It is what is most venerable in the house of the Buddhas and ancestors. That which kicks away the heads of non-Buddhists and demons and enables us to be inhabitants of the innermost room of the house of the Buddhas and ancestors is *kekkaфу*. Only this practice transcends the pinnacle of the Buddhas and ancestors. Therefore, the Buddhas and ancestors have been practicing zazen alone, without pursuing anything else.

The zazen
I did when
I was 19
years old
and the
zazen I do
now are
exactly the
same zazen.



Our zazen practice is itself the expression of Buddha's awakening and the expression of the reality to which the Buddha awakened. The Buddha, the Buddha's awakening, and the reality the Buddha awakened to, are all one. In the same way, in zazen the body and mind and the network of dependent origination are also one. Each of us is just a single knot in Indra's net. Our practice is not a means to turn deluded people into enlightened Buddhas. Our zazen is Buddha's practice. When I first received zazen instruction, I was told that a beginner's zazen, an experienced practitioner's zazen, and even the Buddha's zazen, are all the same zazen. Zazen is not a method to improve ourselves. Since my first sitting I have been practicing zazen for almost 40 years, and I believe that what I was taught during my first zazen instruction is true. The zazen I did when I was 19 years old and the zazen I do now are exactly the same zazen. Of course, there are many differences in my physical and mental conditions between that time when I was a teenager and now when I am at the beginning of my old age. Still, zazen is zazen. It has nothing to do with such differences in my body and mind because in zazen I let all such differences go without grasping them. This is a radically different approach to meditation compared to other Buddhist traditions.

This uniqueness to Dogen Zenji's zazen makes the practice of *shikantaza* something very universal.

3. UNIVERSAL VALIDITY OF DOGEN'S ZAZEN

Dogen's unique teachings came from the essential teachings of the Buddha

Even though I said Dogen's zazen practice is unique relative to other Buddhist traditions, I believe his teaching is in accordance with the essential teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha. I would like to introduce an early Buddhist scripture in which Shakyamuni Buddha presents a teaching that is very similar to Dogen's zazen.

This is a short *sutta* entitled *Kakahavivada Sutta* (*Dispute and Contention Sutra*) from the *Sutta-nipata*, one of the oldest Buddhist scriptures in existence. I will use a Japanese translation by Hajime Nakamura and an English translation by H. Saddhatissa, and I will shorten the story somewhat.

A person asks Shakyamuni:

Whenever there are arguments and quarrels there are tears and anguish, arrogance and pride and grudges and insults to go with them. Can you explain how these things come about?

The teaching in this sutra is one of the older versions of the Buddhist teaching of dependent origination. These teachings were used to create the final version of what we now know as the twelve links of causation. The question here given to the Buddha concerns a very concrete problem that each of us in these modern times still experiences in daily life. From this question we can see that Shakyamuni Buddha's teachings were originally very concrete and down to earth. The Buddha's teachings were about suffering, about the dissatisfactory nature of our lives that is common in all ages and in all countries. He taught about the nature of this suffering and told us how we can be liberated from it. This is why Buddhism has universal validity.

The teaching of the twelve links was made several decades after the Buddha's death as a part of the effort of Buddhist monks to systematize the teachings. With the twelve links they used the teaching of dependent origination based on fundamental ignorance and the principle of karmic causality as an explanation of how reincarnation is possible without *atman*, the fixed entity or soul which is reborn and continues to transmigrate within the six realms of *samsara*. In this older version of the links, however, rebirth is not the issue, instead the issue is rather a very common difficulty that all people in all parts of the world still experience in their day-to-day lives. From this we can see that in some ways human beings have not changed much in the past twenty five hundred years.

To continue with the *sutra*, the Buddha answers:

The tears and anguish that follow arguments and quarrels, the arrogance and pride and the grudges and insults that go with them are all the result of one thing. They come from having preferences, from holding things precious and dear. Insults are born out of arguments and grudges are inseparable from quarrels.

The Buddha says that the tears and anguish that follow arguments and quarrels, as well as arrogance, pride, grudges and insults, are caused by only one thing: having preferences. Preferences in this translation is *shu* in Japanese, the ninth of the twelve links. Other English translations are 'craving' and 'attachment.' The Sanskrit word used in the twelve links is *upadana*, but in this older version, *piya* is used.

The Buddha is asked again:

But why do we have these preferences, these special things? Why do we have so much greed? And all the aspirations and achievements that we base our lives on, where do we get them from?

What is the cause of preferences that make something especially important to us? To obtain such special things we become greedy and compete with others, and once we have gained them, we become stingy in order to protect them from others. To gain material things and

to achieve our ambitions becomes the purpose of our lives. To do these things we must compete and even fight with others. Why do we have such preferences?

The Buddha answered:

The preferences, the precious things, come from the impulse of desire. So too does the greed and so too do the aspirations and achievements that make up people's lives.

Impulse of desire is *ai* in Japanese, the eighth of the twelve links. In Sanskrit it is *tanha*, and another English translation of it is "thirst." In this *sutta*, the word *chanda* is used. We have greed for things that we prefer because of 'thirst' or 'impulse of desire'. In the way that we desperately want to get water when we are extremely thirsty, we desire to obtain certain objects as if they are the most important things in our lives.

Then the person asks:

From where does this impulse of desire come? From where do we derive our theories and opinions? And what about all the other things that you have named—such as anger, dishonesty and confusion?

Where does the thirst for objects of desire come from? When we cannot obtain these objects we become angry. We may try to obtain what we desire by any means; we may even lie and deceive others to get what we want. Behaving dishonestly causes confusion and injury for us and for others. We lose a sense of trust and our lives become more and more confused. We don't know what we can believe and whom we can trust. We may lose trust even in ourselves.

The Buddha answers:

The impulse of desire arises when people think of one thing as pleasant and another as unpleasant: that is the source of desire. It is when people see that material things are subject both to becoming and to disintegration that they form their theories about the world. Anger, confusion and dishonesty arise when things are set in pairs as opposites.



...in some ways human beings have not changed much in the past twenty-five hundred years.

Pleasant and unpleasant (*sata* and *asata*) means the same as *ju* in Japanese and *vedana* in Sanskrit, the seventh of the twelve links. English translations are “sensation” and “feeling.” Because we have pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral sensations, we attach ourselves to these sensations. We chase after the pleasant objects, try to avoid or get rid of unpleasant objects, and we ignore neutral objects. This chasing after, avoiding and ignoring of objects makes our lives *samsaric*. We run after things we want to possess. We try to escape from things we don’t want. We hesitate facing reality when we want to ignore things. Unfortunately, we are most often not successful in controlling the objects in our lives, and we suffer torments like hell-dwellers or have no satisfaction like hungry ghosts. Even when, like heavenly beings, we are successful and our desires are completely fulfilled, we fear that sooner or later we will lose what we have because other people are trying to take it from us. Thus pleasant and unpleasant sensations are the cause of thirst or desire, and desire brings about the preferences or cravings that are the sole cause of tears and anguish in our lives.

Because we have the ability to think of time, to think of the past, the present, and the future, we see that things are subject to becoming and to disintegration. We see impermanence. All things, including us, are changing, and consequently we fear losing what we possess. We want to keep not only our material possessions but also things such as youth, energy, health, fame, and status. Because of the reality of impermanence, however, it is one hundred percent certain that when we die we will lose everything we possess or have achieved. When we see this, we see that life is not under our control. We feel the dissatisfactory nature of our lives even when our lives are successful. We feel it even more intensely if our lives are not so successful.

When things are set in pairs as opposites, we create dualities or dichotomies in our lives. We seek out certain things and try to avoid other things. Thus our lives become a competition with other people and with ourselves. “Who we are” and “who we want to be” become separated, and we become torn between them. We lose sight of the peaceful foundation of our lives.

Back to the *sutra*, the person questions further:

But why is it that we find some things pleasant and some unpleasant? What could we do to stop that? And this idea of becoming and disintegration, could you explain where that comes from?

What is the cause of pleasant and unpleasant sensations?

The Buddha answers:

It is the action of contact, of mental impression, that leads to the pleasant and unpleasant feelings. Without contact they would not exist. And, as I see it, the idea of becoming and disintegration also comes from this source, from the action of contact.

Contact (*phassa*) is *soku* in Japanese, the sixth of the twelve links. Because subject (self) and object (other) come into contact, we experience pleasant, unpleasant or neutral sensations. The Buddha is saying that to be liberated from continually seeking and avoiding objects, we must avoid contact with objects. Is it possible to live without coming into contact with objects? If it is possible, we can be released from the suffering caused by transmigration within the circle of the six realms of *samsara*.

The next question is:

Where does this contact come from? And the grasping habit, what’s the reason for that? Is there anything that can be done to get rid of possessiveness and anything that could be eliminated so that there would be no more contact?



There are two possible ways to avoid contact; one way is to live in a cave deep in the mountains or to live in the forest as a hermit without any contact with human society. This is not a perfect way, because even if we do not have contact with other human beings in this environment, we still have contact with different conditions that we will find either favorable or unfavorable. We will still encounter, for example, heat and cold, hunger and thirst, darkness and brightness, etc. The other way to avoid contact is to go beyond the separation between subject and object.

The Buddha's answer to the above question is:

Contact exists because the compound of mind and matter exists. The habit of grasping is based on wanting things. If there were no wanting, there would be no possessiveness. Similarly, without the element of form, of matter, there would be no contact.

"The compound of mind and matter" is a translation of *naman ca rupan ca*. This word is *myoshiki* in Japanese and appears as *nama-rupa* in the twelve links. The meaning of this word in the *Sutta-Nipata* is different from its meaning in the twelve links. In the *sutra* it refers to the objects of the six sense organs, but as a part of the twelve links, *nama-rupa* refers to a prenatal stage of growth of an embryo before the six sense-organs are formed. Therefore the English translation "psychophysical-personality" or "mentality-materiality" refers to a developmental stage of the embryo in which the mind and the body are not yet separate. However, the famous 20th-century Japanese Buddhist scholar, Hajime Nakamura, suggested that the meaning of the expression *nama-rupa* as it is used in *Sutta-Nipata* is very old. He said that this meaning was used even in the ancient Upanishad texts that were written well before the appearance of Buddhism. He believed

that the Buddhist monks who created the final version of the twelve links changed the meaning of this word.

When defined as the objects of the sense organs, *nama-rupa* is translated as "the compound of name and material." In other words, the objects of the six sense organs are a compound made up of name (*nama*) and matter (*rupa*). When we don't know the name of something, we don't even question what it is because it essentially does not exist for us. When we do have a name for something, its name indicates our relationship with the matter of the object and reinforces our habitual judgment and evaluation of the object. By naming something, we evaluate it as either important and valuable or meaningless and valueless.

The next question to the Buddha is:

What pursuit leads a person to get rid of form? And how can suffering and pleasure cease to exist? This is what I want to know about.

In other words, how can we become free from *nama-rupa*, our habitual relationship to the objects?

The Buddha's answer is:

There is a state where form ceases to exist. It is a state without ordinary perception and without disordered perception and without no perception and without any annihilation of perception. It is perception and consciousness that is the source of all the basic obstacles.

When I read this answer from the Buddha, I realized that this is an exact description of what I do in my zazen practice. In zazen, we sit in the upright posture and let go of thought. We cannot say that there is no thought. All different kinds of thoughts are constantly coming and going, even when we sit in this upright posture

and let go of thinking. We let go of these thoughts, but we don't annihilate them. And yet, we cannot say that we are thinking, either, because we are letting go of thinking. We don't interact with thoughts and we don't fight against them, chase after them, or try to eliminate them. We do nothing with them. Thoughts are coming and going but we don't think. This is a strange thing to say, but it is the reality of our zazen.



I think many of you may understand what I mean from your experiences of zazen. I often say that this is like being in a car with the engine running and putting the gear of the car into neutral. The engine is still working but the car does not move. In zazen the brain is still working, and the function of a brain is to produce thoughts. Even when we sit zazen, the heart continues to beat, the stomach is digesting, and all the different parts of the body continue to function. There is no reason that only the brain should stop functioning in zazen. In the same way that I let go in zazen and do not interfere with the functioning of my stomach, I let go and do not interfere with the functioning of my brain.

In our zazen, we determine that we will not take any action based on thoughts produced by the brain. Then all the different kinds of thoughts that arise are just empty, coming and going like clouds in the sky. When we sit, we are like the vast sky and thoughts are like clouds. In the same way the sky does not interfere the movement of clouds, we don't interfere with the functioning of the brain. We just leave it alone. All we do is keep the upright posture, keep the eyes open, breathe deeply and smoothly from the abdomen, and let go of thoughts. When we practice zazen with this attitude, we are released from the karmic sequences created in our thoughts. In the *Fukanzazengi* and the

Shobogenzo Zazenshin, Dogen Zenji expresses this point when he writes, “Think of not thinking, how is it to think of not-thinking? Beyond thinking.”

In this practice of zazen, thoughts are present but thoughts do not control us. Nothing is negated but nothing is grasped. By sitting in this way, we put our entire being on the ground of what we can call beyond thinking (*bishiryo*), the “true reality of all beings (*shobojisso*),” or the network of dependent origination. I believe that what Shakyamuni taught in the *Sutta-Nipata*, what Dogen Zenji wrote in the *Fukanzazengi*, and what we do in our zazen, are all exactly the same thing. Thus, Dogen’s teaching on zazen is unique but it comes directly from the Buddha’s teaching.

Even when the objects of our sense organs cease to exist as *nama-rupa*, they are still present, but the meaning of their being is completely different. This is what Dogen said in the very beginning of the Genjo-koan: when all *dharma*s are the *Buddhadharma*, there is delusion and realization, practice, life and death, Buddhas and living beings.

All beings cease to exist as *nama-rupa* and begin to reveal themselves as *Buddhadharma*. This is the beginning of our practice.

In the *Shobogenzo Uji* (*Being/Time*) Dogen also says:

So, it is with practice and attainment of the Way. We set our self out in array, and we see that. Such is the fundamental reason of the Way—that our self is time. Since such is its fundamental reason, we must study and learn that myriad phenomena and numberless grasses [things] exist over the entire earth, and each of the grasses and each of the forms exist as the entire earth. This coming and going is the commencement of Buddhist practice.

When we let go of *nama-rupa* (artificial, ego-centered relationships), the true reality of all beings reveals itself. In this reality everything exists as a knot in the net of dependent origination. When we awaken to this reality that exists before we process it with thinking, we cannot avoid practicing as a part of this reality.

We separate ourselves from reality by viewing ourselves as the subjects of life and other things as objects. When we grasp these objects using our “hands of thought,” they become *nama-rupa*. When we let go of *nama-rupa*, our habitual, self-centered relationship with objects, the separation between self and objects ceases to exist, and all *dharma*s are *Buddhadharma*. In this famous *waka* poem, Dogen expresses this reality in this way,

Colors of the mountain peak,
Sounds of the valley stream,
All of them as they are,
The voice and the body of
My Shakyamuni Buddha.

2. *The Vast Gate of Compassion*

In the *Bendowa* (*Talk on Wholehearted Practice of the Way*), Dogen presents 18 questions and answers. One of the questions regards the practice of lay people:

Monks quickly depart from their involvements and have no obstacles to wholeheartedly engaging in the way of zazen. But how can people who are busy with their duties in the world single-mindedly practice and be in accord with the Buddha way of non-action?

In his reply to this question Dogen says:

Certainly the Buddha ancestors with their great sympathy keep open the vast gate of compassion in order to allow all living beings to enter enlightenment. So which of the various beings would not enter?

For Dogen, zazen practice is itself the vast gate of compassion. As he indicated in the title of his manual of zazen practice, the *Fukanzazengi* (*Universal Recommendations for Zazen*), he encouraged all people, regardless of whether they were monks or lay people, rich or poor, educated or uneducated, to practice zazen. Dogen calls zazen “the dharma gate of peace and joy” (nirvana).

In the *Bendowa* Dogen said:

Also, during Shakyamuni’s stay in the world, even the worst criminals and those with harmful views gained the way. In the assemblies of ancestral teachers, even hunters and woodcutters realized satori. Needless to say, other people can do this. Just seek the guidance of a true teacher.

In the *Shobogenzo Zuimonki* Dogen said:

Without exception, everyone is a vessel of the Buddhadharma. Never think that you are not a vessel. Only if you practice according to the teaching will you gain realization without fail. Since you have a mind, you are able to distinguish good from evil. You have hands and feet, and therefore lack nothing for practicing gassho or walking. Therefore, in practicing the Buddhadharma, do not be concerned with whether you are capable or not. Living beings in the human world are all vessels of the Buddhadharma.

Even though the vast gate of compassion is always wide open, to enter is not easy. In apparent contrast to the above sayings of Dogen, in the *Shobogenzo Shohojisso* (*True Reality of All Beings*), he quotes a saying of Seppo Gison (Xuefeng Yicun; 822-908):

The entire great earth is the gate of liberation, but people are not willing to enter even though they are dragged.

Then Dogen comments:

Therefore, we should know that even though the entire earth and entire world is the gate, it is not easy to exit and enter. There aren’t many who have exited and entered. Even when they are dragged, they do not enter; they do not exit. When they are not dragged, they do not enter; they do not exit. Those who try to take forward steps and enter will make mistakes; those who try to take backward steps will stagnate. What can we do? When grabbing the people and trying to make them get in and out of the gate, they get farther and farther away. When grabbing the gate and trying to put it into the people, there is the possibility to get in and get out.

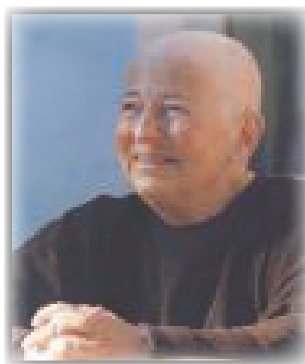
Although the entire world is itself the vast gate of compassion, still, not many people enter the gate. So how can we grab the vast gate of liberation and put it into the people? This is the question from Dogen Zenji. This is the questions we all need to ask to ourselves.



Shohaku Okumura studied Zen Buddhism at Komazawa University in Tokyo and was ordained by Kosho Uchiyama Roshi in 1970. In 1975 Okumura came to the United States. After practicing at the Pioneer Valley Zendo in Massachusetts until 1981, he returned to Japan, where he began translating Dogen Zenji’s and Uchiyama Roshi’s writings into English. He is director of the Soto Zen Buddhism International Center in San Francisco, but he lives and practices at Sanshinji in Bloomington, Indiana.

THE MEDITATIVE MIND

THROUGH MINDFULNESS, CLEAR COMPREHENSION AND CALMING THE SENSES, A MEDITATIVE MIND ARISES AND OUR PRACTICE FLOURISHES, AS **AYYA KHEMA** EXPLAINS HERE.



People are often surprised to find it is difficult to meditate. Outwardly it seems to be such a simple matter, to just sit down on a little pillow and watch one's breath. What could be hard about that? The difficulty lies in the fact that one's whole being is totally unprepared. Our mind, senses, and feelings are used to trade in the market place, namely the world we live in. But meditation cannot be done in a market place. That's impossible. There's nothing to buy or trade or arrange in meditation, but most people's attitude remains the same as usual and that just doesn't work.

We need patience with ourselves. It takes time to change to the point where meditation is actually a state of mind, available at any time because the market place is no longer important. The market place doesn't just mean going shopping. It means everything that is done in the world: all the connections, ideas, hopes and memories, all the rejections and resistances, all our reactions.

In meditation there are may be momentary glimpses of seeing that concentration is feasible, but it can't be sustained. It constantly slips again and the mind goes right back to where it came from. In order to counteract that, one has to have determination to make one's life a meditative one; it doesn't mean one has to meditate from morning to night. I don't know anyone who does. And it doesn't mean we cannot fulfill our duties and obligations, because they are necessary and primary as long as we have them. But it means that we watch ourselves carefully in all our actions and reactions to make sure that everything happens in the light of the dharma—

the truth. This applies to the smallest detail such as our food, what we listen to or talk about. Only then can the mind be ready with a meditative quality when we sit down on the pillow. It means that no matter where we find ourselves, we remain introspective. That doesn't mean we can't talk to others, but we watch the content of the discussion.

That is not easy to do and the mind often slips off. But we can become aware of the slip. If we aren't even aware that we have digressed from mindfulness and inner watchfulness, we aren't on the meditative path yet. If our mind has the dharma quality established within, then meditation has a good chance.

The more we know of the dharma, the more we can watch whether we comply with its guidelines. There is no blame attached to our inability to do so. But the least we can do is to know the guidelines and know where we're making mistakes. Then we practice to get nearer and nearer to absolute reality, until one day we will actually be the dharma.

There is this difference between one who knows and one who practices. The one who knows may understand the words and concepts but the one who practices knows only one thing, namely, to become that truth. Words are a utilitarian means not only for communication, but also to solidify ideas. That's why words can never reveal the truth, only personal experience can. We attain our experiences through realizing what's happening within and why it is as it is. This means that we combine watchfulness with inquiry as to why we're thinking, saying and reacting the way we do. Unless we

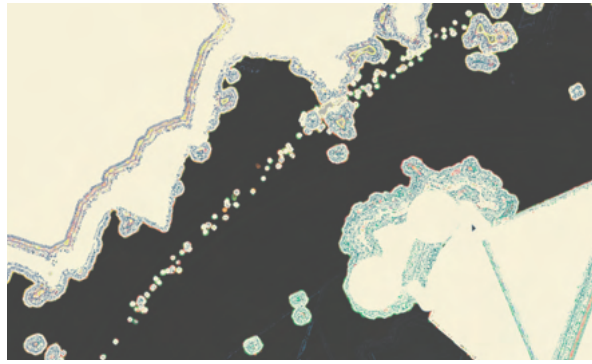
use our mind in this way, meditation will be an on-again, off-again affair and will remain difficult. When meditation doesn't bring joy, most people are quite happy to forget about it.

Without the meditative mind and experience, the dharma cannot arise in the heart, because the dharma is not in words. The Buddha was able to verbalize his inner experience for our benefit, to give us a guideline. That means we can find a direction, but we have to do the traveling ourselves.

To have a meditative mind, we need to develop some important inner qualities. We already have their seed within, otherwise we couldn't cultivate them. If we want flowers in our garden and there are no seeds, we can water and fertilize, yet nothing will grow. The watering and fertilizing of the mind is done in meditation. Weeding has to be done in daily living. Weeds always seem to grow better in any garden than the flowers do. It takes a lot of strength to uproot those weeds, but it is not so difficult to cut them down. As they get cut down again and again, they eventually become feeble and their uprooting is made easy. Cutting down and uprooting the weeds needs sufficient introspection into ourselves to know what is a weed and what is a flower. We have to be very sure, because we don't want to pull out all the flowers and leave all the weeds. A garden with many weeds isn't much of an ornament.

People's hearts and minds usually contain equal amounts of flowers and weeds. We're born with the three roots of evil: greed, hate and delusion, and the three roots of good: generosity, loving-kindness and wisdom. Doesn't it make sense to try and get rid of those three roots which are the generators of all problems, all our unpleasant experiences and reactions?

If we want to eliminate those three roots, we have to look at their outcrops. They're the roots underneath the surface, but obviously a root sprouts and shows itself above the surface. We can see that within ourselves. Caused by delusion, we manifest



greed and hate. There are different facets of greed and hate, and the simplest and most common one is "I like," "I want," "I don't like," and "I don't want." Most people think such reactions are perfectly justified, and yet that is greed and

hate. Our roots have sprouted in so many different ways that we have all sorts of weeds growing. If we look at a garden we will find possibly thirty or forty different types of weeds. We might have that many or more unwholesome thoughts and emotions. They have different appearances and power but they're all coming from the same roots. As we can't get at the roots yet, we have to deal with what is above the surface. When we cultivate the good roots, they become so mighty and strong that the weeds do not find enough nourishment any more. As long as we allow room for the weeds in our garden, we take the nutriment away from the beautiful plants, instead of cultivating those more and more. This takes place as a development in daily living, which then makes it possible to meditate as a natural outcome of our state of mind.

At this point in time we are trying to change our mind from an ordinary one to a meditative one, which is difficult if one hasn't practiced very much yet. We only have one mind and carry that around with us to every activity and also to the meditation. If we have an inkling that meditation can bring us peace and happiness, then we need to make sure we have a meditative mind already when we sit down. To change it from busyness to quiet at that moment is too difficult.

The state of mind which we need to develop for meditation is well described by the Buddha. Two aspects of importance are mindfulness and the calming of the senses. Internal mindfulness may sometimes be exchanged for external mindfulness because under some circumstances that is an essential part of practice. The world impinges upon us, which we cannot deny.

External mindfulness also means to see a tree, for instance, in a completely new way. Not with the

There is this difference between one who knows and one who practices.

usual thoughts of “that’s pretty,” or “I like this one in my garden,” but rather noticing that there are live and dead leaves, that there are growing plants, mature ones and dying ones. We can witness the growth, birth and decay all around us. We can understand craving very clearly by watching ants, mosquitoes, dogs. We need not look at them as a nuisance, but as teachers. Ants, mosquitoes and barking dogs are the kind of teachers who don’t leave us alone until the lessons are fully learned. When we see all in the light of birth, decay, death, greed, hate and delusion, we are looking in a mirror of all life around us, then we have dharma on show. All of us are proclaiming the truth of dharma constantly, only we don’t pay enough attention.

We can use mindfulness to observe that everything in existence consists of the four elements, earth, fire, water, air; and then check out what is the difference between ourselves and all else. When we take practice seriously and look at all life in such a way, then we find the truth all around as well as within us. Nothing else exists.

This gives us the ability to leave the marketplace behind where the mind flits from one thing to the next, never has a moment’s peace, is either dull and indifferent or hateful and greedy. But when we look at that which really is, we’re drawing nearer to what the Buddha taught, out of his compassion for all the beings that are roaming around in samsara from one dukkha to the next. He taught, so that people like us may awaken to the truth.

We should neither believe nor disbelieve what we hear or read, but try it out ourselves. If we give our wholehearted attention to this practice, we will find that it changes our approach to living and dying. To be whole-hearted is a necessity in anything we do. If we get married and are half-hearted about it, that cannot be very successful. Half-hearted practice of dharma results in chaotic misunderstanding. Whole-heartedness may have at its core devotion, and a mind which goes beyond everyday thoughts and activities.

Another facet which goes together with mindfulness, is clear comprehension. Mindfulness is knowing only, without any discriminating faculty. Mindfulness does not evaluate or judge but

pays full attention. Clear comprehension has four aspects to it. *First: “What is my purpose in thinking, talking or doing?”* Thought, speech and action are our three doors. *Second: “Am I using the most skillful means for my purpose?”* That needs wisdom and discrimination. *Third: “Are these means within the dharma?”* This means knowing the distinction between wholesome and unwholesome. The thought process needs our primary attention, because speech and action will follow from it. Sometimes people think that the end justifies the means. It doesn’t. Both means and end have to be within the dharma. *And fourth: “Has my purpose been accomplished, and if not, why not?”*

If we live with these steps in mind, we will slow down, which is helpful for our reactions. No inactivity is not the answer. But rather we need to cultivate the meditative quality of the mind, which watches over what we are doing. When we use mindfulness and clear comprehension, we have to give time to investigate. Checking prevents mistakes.

Our wrong thinking creates the danger of making bad kamma and takes us away from the truth into nebulous mind-states. The dharma is straightforward, simple and pure. It needs a pure mind to stay with it. Otherwise we find ourselves outside of it again and again.

External mindfulness can also extend to other people, but here we need to be very careful. Seeing and knowing others engenders negative judgment. If we practice external mindfulness towards other people, we have to realize that judging others is making bad karma. We can pay attention with compassion. People-watching is one of the most popular pastimes but usually done with the intention of finding fault. Everyone who’s not enlightened has faults; even the highly developed non-returner has yet five fetters to lose. What to say about ordinary worldlings? To use other people as our mirror is very helpful because they reflect our own being. We can only see in others what we already know about ourselves. The rest is lost to us.

If we add clear comprehension to our mindfulness and check our purpose and skillful means we will eliminate much grief and worry. We will develop an awareness which will make every day, every



moment an adventure. Most people feel bogged down and burdened. Either they have too much or too little to do; not enough money to do what they like or they frantically move about trying to occupy themselves. Everybody wants to escape from unsatisfactory conditions, but the escape mechanism that each one chooses does not provide real inner joy. However with mindfulness and clear comprehension, just watching a tree is fascinating. It brings a new dimension to our life, a buoyancy of mind, enabling us to grasp wholeness, instead of the limitations of our family, job, hopes and dreams. That way we can expand, because we're fascinated with what we see around and within us, and want to explore further. No "my" mind, "my" body, "my" tree, but just phenomena all around us, to provide us with the most fascinating, challenging schoolroom that anybody could ever find. Our interest in the schoolroom increases as mindfulness increases.

To develop a meditative mind, we also need to calm our senses. We don't have to deny our senses, that would be foolishness, but see them for what they are. Mara the tempter is not a fellow with a long tail and a flaming red tongue, but rather our senses. We hardly ever pay attention to what they do to us when they pull us from an interesting sight to a beautiful sound, and back to the sight, the touch, the idea. No Peace! Our constant endeavor is to catch a moment's pleasure.

A sense contact has to be very fleeting, because otherwise it becomes a great dukkha. Let's say we are offered a very nice meal which tastes extremely good. So we say to our host: "That's a very nice meal, I like it very much." The host replies: "I have lots of food here, please stay around and eat for another two or three hours." If we did, we would not only get sick in body but also disgusted in our mind. A meal can last twenty or at the most thirty minutes. Each taste contact can only last a second, then we have to chew and swallow. If we were to keep it in the mouth any longer, it would become very unpleasant.

Maybe we feel very hot and go to take a cold shower. We say to our friend waiting outside: "Now I feel good, that cold water is very pleasant." Our friend says: "We have plenty of cold water, you can have a shower for the next five to six hours." Nothing but absolute misery would result. We can enjoy a cold shower for ten or twenty minutes at the most.

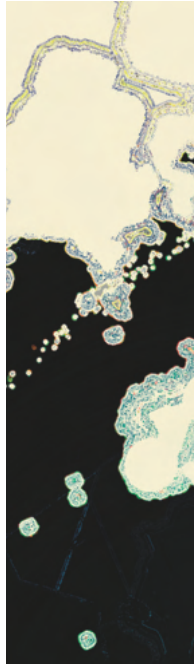
Anything that is prolonged will create dukkha. All contacts pass quickly, because that is their nature. The same goes for sight. Our eyes are continually blinking. We can't even keep sight constant for the length of time we're looking at anything. We may be looking at a beautiful painting for a little while and really like it. Someone says: "You can stay here and look at the painting for the next five hours. We're not closing the museum yet." Nobody could do that. We can't look at the same thing a long time, without feeling bored, losing all awareness, or even falling asleep. Sense contacts are not only limited because of their inability to give satisfaction. They are actually waves that come and go. If we are listening to some lovely music, after a few hours the same music becomes unbearable. Our sense contacts are mirroring a reflection of satisfaction, which has no real basis in fact. That's Mara constantly leading us astray.

There's a pertinent story of a monk in the Buddha's time which relates the ultimate in sense discipline. A married couple had a big row and the woman decided to run away. She put on several of her best saris, one over the other, wore all her gold jewelry and left. After a while the husband was sorry that he had let her go

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and followed her. He ran here and there, but couldn't find her. Finally he came across a monk who was walking along the street. He asked the monk if he'd seen a woman in a red sari with long black hair and lots of jewelry around her neck and arms. The monk said: "I saw a set of teeth going by."

The monk was not paying attention to the concepts of a woman with long black hair, a red sari, and lots of jewelry, but only to the fact that there was a human being with a set of teeth. He had calmed his senses to the point where the sight object was no longer tempting him into a reaction. An ordinary person at the sight of a beautiful woman with black hair, a red sari and lots of jewelry, running excitedly along the street, might have been tempted to follow her. A set of teeth going by is highly unlikely to create desire. That is calming the senses.

If we come upon a snake, it's not an object of dislike, or destruction, but just a sentient being that happens to be around. That's all. There's nothing to be done, nothing to react to. If we think of it as a snake that could kill us, then of course, the mind can go berserk, just as the monk's mind could have done, if he had thought, "Oh, what a beautiful woman."

If we watch our senses again and again, this becomes a habit, and is no longer difficult. Life will be much more peaceful. The world as we know it consists of so much proliferation. Everywhere are different colors, shapes, beings and nature's growth. Each species of tree has hundreds of subspecies. Nature proliferates. All of us look different. If we don't guard our senses, this proliferation in the world will keep us attracted life after life. There's too much to see, do, know and react to. Since there is no end to all of that we might as well stop and delve inside of ourselves.

A meditative mind is achieved through mindfulness, clear comprehension and calming the senses. These three aspects of practice need to be done in everyday life. Peace and harmony will result, and our meditation will flourish.

Ayya Khema (Ayya means Sister) was born in Germany in 1923. Between 1960 and 1964 she traveled with her husband and son throughout Asia, during which time she learned to meditate. In 1979 she became a Theravada nun. She was instrumental in the establishment of two Theravada monasteries, one outside Sydney, Australia, and the other in Germany, as well as a Buddhist women's center in Sri Lanka and Buddha-Haus in Germany. She authored 25 books on meditation and Buddhism, written in English and German, and translated into seven languages. She died in 1997.

WHERE DO WE GO WHEN WE DIE?

And Who is This / Who Dies?

We have to learn how to die in every moment in order to be fully alive. This teaching on the middle way is the cream of Buddha's teaching.

—Thich Nhat Hanh



**In this
personal essay,
Sara Jenkins
of Cloud Cottage
Sangha
in North Carolina
challenges
us to look at
who we
really aren't.**

Anonymity, or annihilation of the self, is a prerequisite to fulfillment and happiness said writers and publishers Walter Lowenfels and Michael Fraenkel in Paris in 1929. They might as well have been quoting the Buddha.

The first time I heard the idea of dying to one's ego, or dying into the moment, I was reading about Fraenkel and Lowenfels' now obscure publication project in the Paris of the twenties. Those were heady times.

The two men wanted no less than to remodel the world. They would do so by publishing great writers and great literature anonymously, under their Carrefour imprint. Artists, they declared, would merge their creative consciousness into the collective consciousness, and thereby restore everyone's imagination, wonder and joy.

Snuffing out their egos by choosing to remain anonymous, authors would theoretically "die" to their ego, not just once, but many times over, so they could live with integrity and honesty, unburdened by ambition. Brilliant! I thought. The year was 1988, just before I became a student of Thich Nhat Hanh. I became so caught up in the "anonymous" idea that I began my own project, cutting my name off pages and pages of anti-war poems, folding them into neat little packages. I "published" them in hollow trees, under potted plants on neighbor's porches and among the fortune cookies at the grocer.

A poet friend and I secretly hid our anonymous poems inside St. Patrick's Cathedral and among the statuary at Rockefeller Park in New York City. I even went to a drive-in bank window and made a drive-by poetry deposit. Breaking the law, I placed unaddressed poems in the US mails. I put a poem in a ziplock bag and tossed it into the Delaware River like a message in a bottle. Determined to transcend self-consciousness, I would expel the pain and fear of ambition, and survive as pure poetry.

Walter Lowenfels (1897-1976) was an American poet and writer whose liberal political thinking not only influenced his writing and editing, but also kept him at the forefront of 20th-century American political artistic movements. In 1930 he and Michael Fraenkel founded the Carrefour Press and published the pamphlet *Anonymous: The Need for Anonymity*, a manifesto in which they declared that anonymous publication was the only way to avoid artistic competition and alienation.

Ironically, the anonymous movement of the twenties imploded as the first arts movement ever to sue itself to death—over copyright claims. My own anonymous movement of the eighties, taken to several major East Coast cities, also ended ignominiously. With no feedback about my work, I felt I was shouting into the void.

Fast forward to Magnolia Village Practice Center in Batesville, Mississippi, June, 2007, where I have been asked to give a dharma talk, “Where Do We Go When We Die?” We are in the midst of a weekend retreat in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh, with about 25 retreatants. I had planned to base my talk on Thich Nhat Hanh’s translation of *The Five Remembrances*, from the Anguttara Nikaya, Section 102:



I am of the nature to grow old. There is no way to escape growing old. I am of the nature to have ill-health. There is no way to escape ill-health. I am of the nature to die. There is no way to escape death. All that is dear to me and everyone I love are of the nature to change. There is no way to escape being separated from them. My actions are my only true belongings. I cannot escape the consequences of my actions. My actions are the ground on which I stand. (From the Plum Village Chanting and Recitation Book)

The huge dharma hall is hushed and redolent with incense. The seven-foot-high Amida Buddha sits on his lotus throne in perfect serenity. The afternoon air shimmers in sunlight. What happens next astonishes me. The founding Vietnamese family leaders of Magnolia Village, wearing grey practice robes, enter the room with fifteen kids and quietly sit them down for my dharma talk. How am I to explain the five remembrances to children who range wildly in age from

about six to sixteen? How am I to speak to them of death? Knowing it would not be a skillful means to go ahead with my planned talk, I must think of a way to switch gears fast.

I smile at them. “Today we are going to talk about how things are always changing in our lives. According to Buddha, change is something we can count on.

We are all growing older. Can anyone tell me what is happening right now in your lives that is different from how it used to be? Perhaps, for instance, some of you may have moved to a new house, or you will have a new teacher in school next year.” I was reaching for I knew not what.

Billy, about ten years old, raised his hand. I nodded to him. “Our height,” he said.

Everyone laughed and smiled. Billy had come up with a universal children’s metaphor for impermanence!

The ice was broken; I was able to speak with the kids about mindfulness and the pants that no longer fit—how to accept the sibling who goes from baby to bothersome toddler in one year, how to cope with the stress of the pop quiz at school through calming the body/mind. They seemed to enjoy the interactive chat. Then they were excused by their parents to go outdoors and play. They bowed and left the room. I continued my talk, having survived another round of my plans-gone-awry, or impermanence.

Perhaps the operative question about death and impermanence is: Who is this I who dies? One of Thich Nhat Hanh’s students in Vietnam approached the Zen master with his palms joined. “Dear Thay,” (Thay is the Vietnamese word for Master or Teacher,) he said, “When you die, I aspire to build a great stupa

in your honor. We will bury your ashes in the stupa. On it, I will place a plaque with the words, ‘Here lies my beloved teacher.’”

Thich Nhat Hanh replied, “I want the plaque to say, ‘Nobody Is Here.’” The teacher makes this reply not to be disingenuous, but to point out our inherent emptiness. Of what, then, are we empty? Even a glass must be empty of something—water, apple juice, milk. The Buddha tells us something amazing—we are empty of a separate self.

Right now in our back yard on the garden arbor, hosts of heavenly blue morning glories hold their faces up to the sun. Each has a secret five-pointed white star radiating from a bright yellow center. At night they furl themselves into soft cradles, and sleep. After only a few days of life, each tender bloom dies and falls onto our meditation path, where it is welcomed back to earth to make compost and feed the grass.

If I pick a morning glory and float it in a bowl and look into its face, I can see the sun, the sky, the cloud, the rain and diverse non-flower elements that compose the flower. I can see the distant greenhouse morning glories, her parents, from whose seeds she sprung. I can see the gardener, the packager, the trucker who drove her seed to my store, the store keeper, the stocker of shelves, and the peaceful energy of our sangha who crossed her path as she grew from seed to sprout to vine to flower.

We human beings are morning glories. The secret star at our center is this: we are not really born and do not die.

Thus our birth date could be called a continuation, and our death date could be called a continuation, too. This insight is known as nirvana, the extinction of all theories, the true snuffing out of the ego or the self.

If we do not realize this truth, we become scared, especially if we think we will van-

ish at death. As a child of about seven or eight, when I first thought of death, I saw an endless long corridor with endless doors. I imagined myself walking down the narrow hall, entering each door only to encounter another long hallway ending in a door. Each door closed with a thud. And there were always more. Was this eternity? I was terrified.

This is why it is important to relieve children, and those who are dying, from their fear. When the layman Anathapindika, a disciple of the Buddha, was dying, the Venerables Ananda and Sariputra went to his home and asked about his pain. Anathapindika said his pain was getting worse. It was clear he was dying. So Ananda and Sariputra set about to allay any fears of death by reminding him:

*These eyes are not me.
I am not caught in these eyes.
These ears are not me.
I am not caught in these ears.
This nose is not me.
I am not caught in this nose.
This tongue is not me.
I am not caught in this tongue.
This body is not me.
I am not caught in this body.
This mind is not me.
I am not caught in this mind.*

And likewise with the six sense objects—form, sound, smell, taste, contact and thoughts; with the six sense consciousnesses—sight, hearing, and consciousness based on the nose, tongue, body and mind; with the six elements—earth, air, water, fire, space and consciousness; with the five aggregates—form, feelings, perceptions, mental formations and consciousness; and with the three times—past, present and future.

Anathapindika was so grateful for these teachings that he cried.

Thich Nhat Hanh has put this sutra in a nutshell that we can teach even to children:

*This body is not me.
I am not limited by this body.
I am life without boundaries.
I have never been born,
And I have never died.*

When my mother was in a rehabilitation center after her hip fracture and replacement surgery, I often passed the open door of one bare room where I saw a man lay alone, unmoving. At the nurses' station, I asked if the man ever had visitors. "No," said the nurse. "He is dying and has no family." I asked if I might visit. She said yes.

Shyly, I entered the room and began speaking to the man. He was lying on his back with his mouth open, his breath labored. I pulled up a chair and sat down next to his bed. The room smelled of disinfectant and body decay. I began in the middle of the page, as if I had always known him. Describing an ice-encased branch of a maple tree in my mother's back yard, I told him of how the sun shines on the ice, making the branch sparkle. He did not respond.

Then I took his hand, and he faintly squeezed mine. I knew from his touch he had heard me and was glad. When we sit close to a person dying, we can remind them of something happy in their lives. If we do not know them, still we can share the beauty of earth and sky, our common ground.

If we diligently focus on the question of where do we go when we die, and where do we go after we die, we will lose our fear of death. Then we can ask ourselves how to help our children and fathers and brothers drop their fear of dying and how to help our mothers and sisters lose their fear of loneliness.

It is useless to proceed until we ourselves have an understanding of where we go

when we die. We cannot help by simply reciting a sutra. Reciting a sutra without understanding is sending anonymous poems down river in ziploc bags, or shouting into the void.

The great Mahatma Gandhi was approached by a young mother and her overweight son. The mother said, "Dear Mahatma, will you ask my son to stop eating sugar?"

Gandhi replied, "Come back in a month."



In a month, the mother returned with her son. "Please, dear Mahatma," she repeated, "Will you ask my son to stop eating sugar?" Gandhi turned to the boy and asked him respectfully to stop eating sugar.

The mother bowed to Gandhi. Then she asked, "Why did you make us wait for one month?"

"I had to stop eating sugar," he replied.

We cannot help others drop their fear of death until we can do so ourselves. And how do we drop our fear? We can meditate deeply on the flowers. We begin to see we are like the morning glory, both a discrete and indiscrete entity, both dependent and independent, with and without form.

When we join our palms to make a lotus bud, to bow with all our hearts to thank another, we embody this wisdom: we are not one and not two. There is no inside and no outside. Joining our palms is a kind of body prayer and an affirmation of emptiness, or no separate self. We are also saying, as in the Tibetan word *namaste*, the one who bows and the one who is bowed to are both by nature empty. Therefore the communication between them is inexpressibly perfect.

When causes and conditions are sufficient, there is a manifestation of a flower, and when conditions are no longer sufficient, the manifestation is interrupted.

After some years of living, we are sure to die. If we think this only signals the end of our life, we are wrong. We die, but we do not die. Both body and mind drop like the morning glory onto the earth to be renewed. Life and death, mind and body, are two sides of the same circle of life.

The twelfth of the twelve links of interdependent co-arising taught by the Buddha is old age and death, *jaramarana*. This word sounds gentle, melodious. It echoes the melting of the fallen morning glory back into earth. Among the aggregates—form, feeling, perceptions, mental formations and consciousness—there is nothing we could rightly call a self. In Buddhist practice, when we do not realize this truth, we say this is ignorance, *avidya*. Ignorance, the first of the twelve links, is often represented by artists as a blind woman. The last, or twelfth link of old age and death, is sometimes drawn as a man carrying a corpse on his back.

The Buddha explained we should not attach to our bodies. Nor should we attach to the desires that arise from our bodies, since attachment causes dukkha, suffering. To free ourselves from the constant round of birth and death and pain, *samsara*, we need to discover for ourselves the truth of impermanence. This is why I chose to talk with the children about the changing nature of dharmas. Their parents enjoyed contemplating impermanence, too.

The Buddha said, "Impermanent indeed are all conditioned things; they are of the nature to arise and pass away. Having come into being, they cease to exist. Hence their pacification is tranquility."

Likewise, Lowenfels and Fraenkel believed that by means of "spiritual suicide" one could destroy the self that clings, transcend self-consciousness, drop pain and fear, and survive as both themselves and something outside themselves. This they planned to achieve through literature. Their plans were thwarted, though, when, like the great tempter Mara, form and ego came into play. They began to focus more on copyrights than anonymity. They had forgotten how to "die in every moment."

Literature is one way we perpetuate ourselves. The fact is that at the same time we are dying, we are constantly perpetuating ourselves. When we practice walking meditation here at Cloud Cottage, our practice center, the cells of our bodies drop onto the path and mix with the morning glory husks to feed the new crop of grass. The peace-filled presence of the sangha also helps transform the energy of a Cherokee massacre that happened not far from here on the Trail of Tears in 1838.

Every moment of our lives is a moment of meeting and parting. We bequeath our heart, mind and practice energy to others in our family, sangha, workplace, monastery. Before, during and after our lives in this go-round, we are present in numberless beings throughout the ten directions. "There is no place you have not walked," says Thich Nhat Hanh.

So it is important to look at the five remembrances and ask ourselves while we are still alive, where do I go? If our practice is I-driven, it is based on a separate self. If it is inspired by the mutuality of interbeing, we are on the path of light, holding hands with the Buddha. In this

moment I am not only receiving the teachings, I am receiving the feelings of others—the wind through my office window, the scent of autumn, the energy of earth, all the non-self elements that compose me. As one poet put it, I am a woman in the direct path of a battery of signals.

So there is input-reception and output-sharing, as in the process of photosynthesis of the plants and trees, the interplay of sunlight, water and oxygen. We need the trees for breath itself—the oxygen of the tree. To be, we must interbe. Just as in the breath—inspiration and exhalation. All life is this dance.

Every day I take my dogs for a hike on the trails in our Southern Appalachian mountains. I do as they do—once in a while I squat to pee. I offer the roots of the tree my bodily fluids, sometimes with a one-word prayer, "Here." So whether I am cooking or hiking or peeing, all these are dharma doors. The sutras say there are 84,000 such doors. Thich Nhat Hanh has offered us this gatha: urinating in the ultimate dimension, there is a wonderful exchange.

Of course the ultimate dimension, the Pure Land, is none other than here and now. As I pee, I become the tree and the tree becomes me. This is the mutual nourishment, the unadorned miracle of the morning glory.

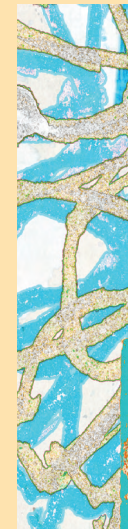
To water the morning glory, the cloud had to die to itself. If we take the cloud out of the morning glory, we won't have the flower. The flower is flying now in the autumn sky; it lives in all its causes and conditions—rain and cloud, and all that lives outside the clouds.

If we had no rainwater, we could not have the morning glory. This is Zen-seeing. Where is the morning glory in the cloud? Where do we go when we die? These are one and the same question. Standing majestically on the waves of birth and death, we are not drowned. We are able to wipe clean all anxiety and fear. I do not come from anywhere. Or, in the obverse, I come from everywhere!

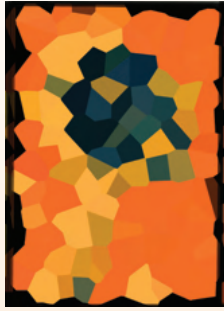
Are there 15 morning glories or one? Are they the same or different? Trying to apply these questions to our own lives, we become caught. Remember that one seed can grow a vine of many flowers. A seed is only one point of energy, expanding. The flower is not the same as a moment ago, because the wind has changed, the light of the sun has changed. Alice in Wonderland said, "I knew who I was when I woke up this morning, but I must have changed several times since then." No two moments of the bloom are the same. Yet they are not different. When causes and conditions are sufficient, there is a manifestation of a flower, and when conditions are no longer sufficient, the manifestation is interrupted. The morning glory falls. At the same time, a new manifestation appears, the new grass fed by the 'dead' flower.

The aim of our Buddhist practice is to die to the moment, to wake up to the lovely organic flow that is the nature of impermanence. The five remembrances help us do this every day. And we see that the nature of impermanence is the nature of non-self that Fraenkels and Lowenfel—and I—were reaching for. Do we come back after we die? Yes, the truth is that we already exist simultaneously in all dimensions, all directions. When we clap our hands, the stars can hear our joyful noise.

Every
moment
of our
lives
is a
moment
of
meeting
and
parting.



Sara Jenkins been a student of Zen for over twenty years. She is a writer and editor who lives in Lake Junaluska, on the edge of the Great Smoky Mountains, in North Carolina. Her most recent book is *Hello At Last, Embracing the Koan of Friendship and Meditation*, an excerpt of which appeared in an earlier issue of Rightview Quarterly.



SN 35.28

ADITTAPARIYAYA SUTTA

The Fire Sermon or The Burning

This third of the three cardinal sutras, translated here from the Pali by Nanamoli Thera, was the basis for part three of T. S. Elliot's The Waste Land, which is appended to the study section below.

Thus I heard.

On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Gaya, at Gayasisa, together with a thousand *bhikkhus*. There he addressed the *bhikkhus*.

“*Bhikkhus*, all is burning. And what is the all that is burning?

“The eye is burning, forms are burning, eye-consciousness is burning, eye-contact is burning, also whatever is felt as pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant that arises with eye-contact for its indispensable condition, that too is burning. Burning with what? Burning with the fire of lust, with the fire of hate, with the fire of delusion. I say it is burning with birth, aging and death, with sorrows, with lamentations, with pains, with griefs, with despairs.

“The ear is burning, sounds are burning...

“The nose is burning, odors are burning...

“The tongue is burning, flavors are burning...

“The body is burning, tangibles are burning...

“The mind is burning, ideas are burning, mind-consciousness is burning, mind-contact is burning, also whatever is felt as pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant that arises with mind-contact for its indispensable condition, that too is burning. Burning with what? Burning with the fire of lust, with the fire of hate, with the fire of delusion. I say it is burning with birth, aging and death, with sorrows, with lamentations, with pains, with griefs, with despairs.

“*Bhikkhus*, when a noble follower who has heard [the truth] sees thus, he finds estrangement in the eye, finds estrangement in forms, finds estrangement in eye-consciousness, finds estrangement in eye-contact, and whatever is felt as pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant that arises with eye-contact for its indispensable condition, in that too he finds estrangement.

“He finds estrangement in the ear...
in sounds...

“He finds estrangement in the nose...
in odors...

“He finds estrangement in the tongue...
in flavors...

“He finds estrangement in the body...
in tangibles...

“He finds estrangement in the mind, finds estrangement in ideas, finds estrangement in mind-consciousness, finds estrangement in mind-contact, and whatever is felt as pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant that arises with mind-contact for its indispensable condition, in that too he finds estrangement.

“When he finds estrangement, passion fades out. With the fading of passion, he is liberated. When liberated, there is knowledge that he is liberated. He understands: ‘Birth is exhausted, the holy life has been lived out, what can be done is done, of this there is no more beyond.’”

That is what the Blessed One said. The *bhikkhus* were glad, and they approved his words.

Now during his utterance, the hearts of those thousand *bhikkhus* were liberated from taints through clinging no more.

For Your Consideration

In the Buddha's time, worshipping holy fires was believed to lead to a noble, prosperous life in future existences. Fire worship was part of Vedic rituals; the worship of fire was a key feature of Brahmanic practice. Conversions of Brahman priests and their followers was relatively rare, so the conversion of the Kassapa brothers and their 1000 followers in this sutra indicates a weighty teaching.

Consider how you can use this understanding for the benefit of your own practice. What is the key concept being presented here and exactly how is it presented? Why is it presented in that way? Where do the ideas of the six consciousnesses, of six sense doors and of "feeling," meaning the making of contact between a sense and its object, fit into this teaching relative to your practice? Bhikkhu Bodhi chose to use the word "revulsion" rather than "estrangement" as a translation of the Pali *jhayati*. Why so strong a choice? Which makes more sense to you in the context of your practice? How does revulsion lead to liberation according to this sutra? Relate this to your practice by using an everyday example.



Discuss singlepointedness and right concentration in the context of this teaching.

In this sutra, the Buddha is pressing forward with his teachings on no-self. In what ways might this explanation of no-self be applied directly to your life to reduce or eliminate *dukkha*. How do you understand this teaching when it says, "all is burning"? What are the traditional Buddhist ways of cooling or dousing flames?

In this sutra, the Tathagata looks upon the bhikkhus, sees them, and addresses them. Then he says, "...the eye is burning, forms are burning, eye-consciousness is burning, eye-contact is burning, and whatever feeling arise with eye contact is burning, and what feeling arise with contact as condition—whether pleasant or painful or neither-pleasant-nor-painful—that too is burning. Burning with what? Burning with the fire of lust, with the fire of hatred, with the fire of delusion; burning with birth, aging, and death; with sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair, I say."

Does the Buddha mean to say that when he sees the *bhikkhus* he is burning? If so, explain how; if not, explain why?

From T. S. Eliot's THE WASTE LAND

Part 3 - The Fire Sermon

The river's tent is broken: the last fingers of leaf
Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind
Crosses the brown land, unheard. The nymphs are
departed.
Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.
The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,
Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends
Or other testimony of summer nights. The nymphs are
departed.
And their friends, the loitering heirs of City directors;
Departed, have left no addresses.
By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept...
Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song,
Sweet Thames, run softly, for I speak not loud or long.
But at my back in a cold blast I hear
The rattle of bones, and chuckle spread from ear to ear.

A rat crept softly through vegetation
Dragging its slimy belly on the bank
While I was fishing in the dull canal
On a winter evening round behind the gashouse
Musing upon the king my brother's wreck
And the king my father's death before him.
White bodies naked on the low damp ground
And bones cast in a little low dry garret,
Rattled by the rat's foot only, year to year.
But at my back from time to time I hear
The sound of horns and motors, which shall bring
Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the spring.
O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter
And on her daughter
They wash their feet in soda water
Et O ces voix d'enfants, chantant dans la coupole!

Twit twit twit
Jug jug jug jug jug jug
So rudely forc'd

Tereu

Unreal City
Under the brown fog of a winter noon
Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant
Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants
C.i.f. London: documents at sight,
Asked me in demotic French
To luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel
Followed by a weekend at the Metropole.

At the violet hour, when the eyes and back
Turn upward from the desk, when the human engine
waits
Like a taxi throbbing waiting,
I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives,
Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see
At the violet hour, the evening hour that strives
Homeward, and brings the sailor home from sea,
The typist home at teatime, clears her breakfast, lights
Her stove, and lays out food; in tins.
Out of the window perilously spread
Her drying combinations touched by the sun's last rays,
On the divan are piled (at night her bed)
Stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays.
I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs
Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest—
I too awaited the expected guest.
He, the young man carbuncular, arrives,
A small house agent's clerk, with one bold stare,
One of the low on whom assurance sits
As a silk hat on a Bradford millionaire.
The time is now propitious, as he guesses,
The meal is ended, she is bored and tired,
Endeavours to engage her in caresses
Which are still unproved, if undesired.
Flushed and decided, he assaults at once;
Exploring hands encounter no defence;
His vanity requires no response,



And makes a welcome of indifference.
 (And I Tiresias have foresuffered all
 Enacted on this same divan or bed;
 I who have sat by Thebes below the wall
 And walked among the lowest of the dead.)
 Bestows one final patronising kiss,
 And gropes his way, finding the stairs unlit...

She turns and looks a moment in the glass,
 Hardly aware of her departed lover;
 Her brain allows one-half formed thought to pass:
 'Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over.'
 When lovely woman stoops to folly and
 Paces about her room again, alone,
 She smooths her hair with automatic hand,
 And puts a record on the gramophone.

'This music crept by me upon the waters'
 And along the Strand, up Queen Victoria Street.
 O City city, I can sometimes hear
 Beside a public bar in Lower Thames Street,
 The pleasant whining of a mandolin
 And a clatter and a chatter from within
 Where fishmen lounge at noon: where the walls
 Of Magnus Martyr hold
 Inexplicable splendour of Ionian white and gold.

The river sweats
 Oil and tar
 The barges drift
 With the turning tide
 Red sails
 Wide
 To leeward, swing on the heavy spar.
 The barges wash
 Drifting logs
 Down Greenwich reach
 Past the Isle of Dogs.

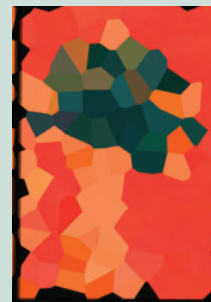
Weialala leia
 Wallala leialala
 Elizabeth and Leicester
 Beating oars
 The stern was formed
 A gilded shell
 Red and gold
 The brisk swell
 Rippled both shores
 Southwest wind
 Carried down stream
 The peal of bells
 White towers
 Weialala leia
 Wallala leialala

'Trams and dusty trees
 Highbury bore me. Richmond and Kew
 Undid me. By Richmond I raised my knees
 Supine on the floor of a narrow canoe.'

'My feet are Moorgate, and my heart
 Under my feet. After the event
 He wept. He promised "a new start".
 I made no comment. What should I resent?'
 'On Margate Sands.
 I can connect
 Nothing with nothing.
 The broken fingernails of dirty hands.
 My people humble people who expect
 Nothing.'
 la la
 To Carthage then I came

Burning burning burning burning
 O Lord Thou pluckest me out
 O Lord Thou pluckest

burning



Practice Factors For The NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH

1 RIGHT VIEW

(Right View is No View, Right View is No-Self)

Understanding suffering *First Noble Truth*

Understanding its origin *Second Noble Truth*

Understanding its cessation *Third Noble Truth*

Understanding the way leading to its cessation *Eightfold Path*

2 RIGHT INTENTION

(Right Understanding)

Intention to renounce self

Intention to do only good Intention to do no harm

3 RIGHT SPEECH

(Mindful speech; mindfulness that the speech is true, beneficial, and timely or that there is silence)

Abstaining from false speech

Abstaining from slanderous speech

Abstaining from harsh speech

Abstaining from idle chatter

4 RIGHT ACTION

(Practice the precepts, the six paramitas: giving, ethical correctness, patience, diligent effort; meditation, and wisdom)

Abstain from taking life Abstain from stealing

Abstain from sexual misconduct

Abstain from intoxicants

Practice generosity, virtue, and meditation

5 RIGHT LIVELIHOOD

Have a right livelihood

Give up a wrong livelihood

6 RIGHT EFFORT

(Abandon and refrain, develop and maintain)

The effort to abandon unwholesome actions/states

The effort to refrain from producing conditions that would allow the unwholesome to arise again

The effort to develop wholesome actions/states

The effort to maintain the conditions that allow wholesome actions/states to arise

7 RIGHT MINDFULNESS

**(Being mindful is the practice of awareness in each moment;
the four foundations of mindfulness are right mindfulness)**

Mindful contemplation of the body

Mindful contemplation of feelings

Mindful contemplation of the mind

Mindful contemplation of phenomena

8 RIGHT CONCENTRATION

(Developed by practicing *samatha* or *vipassana* meditation)

The four jhanas

The four heavenly abodes

Momentary concentration

INSTRUCTIONS

FROM TWO ANCIENT TIBETAN TEACHERS

Translations by Ken McLeod

SONG ON THE SIX PERFECTIONS by Milarepa

FOR GENEROSITY,
NOTHING TO DO,
OTHER THAN STOP
FIXATING ON SELF.



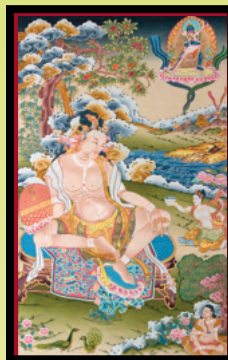
FOR MORALITY,
NOTHING TO DO,
OTHER THAN STOP BEING
DISHONEST.

FOR PATIENCE,
NOTHING TO DO,
OTHER THAN NOT FEAR WHAT IS
ULTIMATELY TRUE.

FOR EFFORT,
NOTHING TO DO,
OTHER THAN PRACTICE
CONTINUOUSLY.

FOR MEDITATIVE STABILITY,
NOTHING TO DO,
OTHER THAN REST IN PRESENCE.

FOR WISDOM,
NOTHING TO DO,
OTHER THAN KNOW DIRECTLY HOW
THINGS ARE.



SIX WORDS OF ADVICE from Tilopa

LET GO OF WHAT HAS
PASSED.

LET GO OF WHAT MAY
COME.

LET GO OF WHAT IS
HAPPENING NOW.

DON'T TRY TO FIGURE ANYTHING OUT.

DON'T TRY TO MAKE ANYTHING HAPPEN.

RELAX, RIGHT NOW, AND REST.

From Tilopa's MAHAMUDRA INSTRUCTION TO NAROPA

THE MIND'S ORIGINAL NATURE IS LIKE
SPACE;

IT PERVADES AND EMBRACES ALL
THINGS UNDER THE SUN.

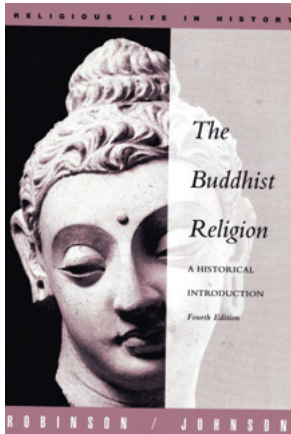
BE STILL AND STAY RELAXED IN
GENUINE EASE,

BE QUIET AND LET SOUND REVERBERATE
AS AN ECHO,

KEEP YOUR MIND SILENT AND WATCH
THE ENDING OF ALL WORLDS.

THE BUDDHIST RELIGION: A HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

by Richard H. Robinson and Willard L. Johnson



THIS IS A SERIOUS, ALMOST ENCYCLOPEDIC, INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHISM BY TWO RENOWNED BUDDHIST SCHOLARS.

The Buddhist Religion is a comprehensive overview of Buddhism. The book starts with the life and teaching of the Buddha, and then goes on to look at how Buddhism developed in India after his death. It examines the development of Mahayana Buddhism which holds that phenomena are illusory (*maya*) and empty (*sunya*). It also explores the Mahayana concept of the bodhisattvas and its cosmology of superhuman bodhisattvas and cosmic Buddhas.

The evolution of tantrism, with its magic, yoga, and devotionism, is explored here along with the disappearance of Indian Buddhism. Indian Buddhism died out gradually after the seventh century, so the authors describe how Buddhism developed in different directions in Southeast Asia, Tibet, and the Far East (China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam). This is particularly interesting considering how little is written in the West about the development of Buddhism in China.

A final chapter looks at the growth of Buddhism in the West, both in Europe and in America.

This is more a book for study and discussion than for casual reading. Although the list price of this book is \$59.95, used copies in very good to like new condition are available online for about \$10.

Richard H. Robinson (1926-1970) is the one of the co-authors of *Buddhist Religions: A Historical Introduction*, now in its fifteen edition. Professor Robinson was considered one of America's outstanding scholars of Buddhist philosophy. He was president of the Society for Asian and Comparative Philosophy and was book review editor of *Philosophy East and West*. Robinson was professor in the Department of Indian Studies at the University of Wisconsin where he established the first Ph.D. program in Buddhist studies in North America. Willard L. Johnson received his Ph.D. in Religious Studies from the University of Wisconsin and is now a professor emeritus at San Diego State University where he teaches world religions, primal religions, shamanism, Asian religions, and religious experience.



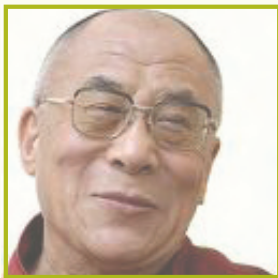
It is often thought that the Buddha's doctrine teaches us that suffering will disappear if one has meditated long enough, or if one sees everything differently. It is not that at all. Suffering isn't going to go away; the one who suffers is going to go away.

—Ayya Khema



Not knowing how close the truth is, we seek it far away -what a pity!

—Hakuin Ekaku Zenji,
Japanese Zen Priest, Poet and Painter
(1685-1768)



Meditation is the most important thing. It is essential in order to transform one's spiritual life.

—His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Renunciation isn't giving up what we have; it's realizing we don't have anything.

—Anonymous

Suiwo, the disciple of Hakuin, was a good teacher. During one summer seclusion period, a pupil came to him from a southern island of Japan. Suiwo gave him the problem: "Hear the sound of one hand." The pupil remained three years but could not pass this test. One night he came in tears to Suiwo. "I must return south in shame and embarrassment," he said, "for I cannot solve my problem." "Wait one week more and meditate constantly," advised Suiwo. Still no enlightenment came to the pupil. "Try for another week," said Suiwo. The pupil obeyed, but in vain. "Still another week." Yet this was of no avail. In despair the student begged to be released, but Suiwo requested another meditation of five days. They were without result. Then he said: "Meditate for three days longer, then if you fail to attain enlightenment, you had better kill yourself." On the second day the pupil was enlightened.



MABA

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Buddhist Association**

MABA is a Chan Buddhist monastery located on 60-acres of secluded woodland in the rolling hills of Missouri, about 45 minutes west of St. Louis. The monastery includes a meditation hall with a library and communal dining area. In addition, there is a nun's residence, a tea house, a guest residence, a Guan Yin Pavilion and Dizang Memorial Hall.

With the guidance and leadership of its abbot, Master Ji Ru, MABA has developed programs that include weekly meditation and dharma talks, as well as periodic one, three, and fourteen-day retreats. Retreats are led by Master Ji Ru or other experienced Buddhist teachers. There are also weekly classes in Buddhist studies for beginners, intermediate, and advanced students, as well as a summer program for youth. And for those seeking a private retreat, whether a weekend, a week, or more, MABA can provide accommodations and a quiet practice environment.

Rightview Quarterly and Rightview Online are important components of MABA's practice and mission.

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For more information about any of our practices or programs please e-mail **info@maba-usa.org**

For information about Rightview Quarterly or RightviewOnline please e-mail **editor@RightviewOnline.org**

Corrections: In the last issue, we incorrectly identified Venerable Sujiva as Burmese; he is Malaysian. And we incorrectly identified Venerable Jen-Chun as the abbot of Bodhi Monastery; he is the former abbot of the monastery.



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