



Berkeley Zen Center



February 2002 Newsletter

Welcome new Friends June Tanoue and Deborah Evering.



Class... The Four Noble Truths... Thursdays, 7:30-9:00pm, March 7-28

The class will be taught by Mary Mocine. Here is her description:

"The Four Noble Truths are Buddha's first and most basic teaching. The first truth is that life is unsatisfactory, that there is suffering. The second truth is that there is a reason for this suffering; it is our ignorant self-clinging. The third truth is that there is a way to relieve this suffering: by giving up this clinging and accepting what Suzuki Roshi described as, "things as it is." Finally, the fourth truth outlines the method for relieving suffering, the Eightfold Path, which includes wisdom, ethical conduct and mental discipline." The class is recommended for both beginners and more advanced students. Reading materials will be provided both in the class and beforehand in the zendo bulletin board area.



Affirmation of Welcome

Walking the path of liberation, we express our intimate connection with all beings. Welcoming diversity, here at Berkeley Zen Center the practice of zazen is available to people of every race, nationality, class, gender, sexual preference, age, and physical ability. May all beings realize their true nature.

Newsletter by e-mail!?!?!... If you are interested in getting your BZC newsletter by e-mail instead of "snail mail" (thereby possibly saving a tree as well as postal and printing expenses for BZC), please contact the editor at gdenny@probusiness.com. You will then receive your BZC newsletter each month as an e-mail attachment in Adobe Reader (.pdf) format. If you don't know about Adobe Acrobat Reader, check out www.adobe.com/products/acrobat, where you can download the application for free.



February Schedule

Men's Sesshin
Sunday, 2-3

Founders' Ceremony
Monday, 2-4, 6:20 pm
Tuesday, 2-5, 6:40 am

One-day Sitting
Saturday, 2-16, 5am to 9:20pm

Buddha's Parinirvana Ceremony
Saturday, 2-16, 9:30am

Bodhisattva Ceremony
Saturday, 2-23, 9:30 am

Gasshos... We thank one another for the financial support of our practice place and our teachers. We are grateful to all Members and Friends whose regular contributions are our very foundation. During the period August 1 through December 10, 2001, those listed below contributed additional sums above any regular commitment.

Valerie Creane
Deborah Evering
Doug & Penny Greiner
Ann Livingstone
Fulani Offutt
Maylie Scott Estate
Steve Wolf
Elizabeth Flora Jed Appelman
Catharine Lucas
Tina Schragger
Gail Ruff
Andrea Thach
Bob Hayes
Chris Ritter
Judith Stronach Fund of Vanguard Public
Foundation
Ann Kennedy
Linda Hess
Linda Galijan
Guy Micco & Wende Williams
Sue Marvin
Dolly Gattozzi
Kellie Hobbs
Shari Jones
Joe Chan
William Gordon
Agnes Kaji
Tom Dinwoodie

During the period December 11, 2001 through January 15, 2002, those listed below contributed additional sums above any regular commitment.

Gregory Andreas
Carla Antonaccio
Greg Denny
Linda Galijan
Rebecca Mayeno
Peter Parise

Andrea Pratt
Gary Artim
Linda Eby & Bob Zepernick
Ann Greenwater
Doug & Penny Greiner
Cheryl Kojina
Ann Kennedy
Susan Marvin
Nora Rosenbaum
Kalle Nemvalts & Connie Williams
Gerry Oliva
Katherine Otagiri
Bob Rosenbaum & Judith Davis
James Storey
Dennis Udall
Jake VanAkkeren & Leslie Bartholic
Misha Merrill
Perry Goodwin
John & Louise Rasmussen
Laura Schmidt
Katherine Thanas
Alan Block
Peter Carpentieri
Judy Davis
Morgan Dean
Deborah Evering
Anya Raven Hunter
Amy Hutto
Leavenworth Jackson
Anne Jennings
Sharon Jobson
Chris J.G. Jones
Eric Kaufman in memory of Maylie
A.J. Kutchins
Catharine Lucas
Howard Margolis
Michael May
John Mogey
Robert Myslik
Carol Perkins
Bob Poulson & Erica Doutch



Lecture by Sojun Roshi

June 28, 1992

Criticism in the Realm of the Absolute and Relative

During sesshin little things happen that create emotional reactions in us. Someone does something, something causes us to start laughing. Laughter in that way sometimes becomes uncontrollable. It's a way of letting off the pressure. There are lots of ways of letting off pressure. How do we keep ourselves contained and watchful, aware of the feelings that we have that sometimes catch us? We often take these feelings seriously when actually they're just like the thoughts that are continually bubbling up into consciousness. They have no real root. They pop up like weeds. We can easily create a fantasy around some thought or feeling that we take a dislike to, or when it looks like people are doing something wrong. If we go to another zendo for sesshin we often think that people are doing things wrong, because every place does something differently. When I am in Berkeley, we do things in our own way and when I go to San Francisco it's different, when I go to Tassajara it's a little different, and when I go to Green Gulch it's a little different. I have to remember everything in four different ways, and I'm really bad at remembering things anyway. [laughter] I'm continually having to make this adjustment.

When we go to another practice place, sometimes we think, "What are they doing? They are doing service all wrong." Critical comments come up and we get caught in small mind. Small mind is continually creating this kind of critical attitude and we fall for it. And then when we fall for it we lose our sense of humor and our flexibility. The other side is that it's easy for us to feel that we are doing something wrong. When we do something that's "off" someone may correct us. But we turn that into a judgment called "wrong." It's not necessarily that someone is telling us we did something wrong. But if we're doing something and someone says, "No, that's not the way to do it," then we feel criticized. During sesshin if someone corrects us, because of the pressure and focus we can feel crushed. So these are the two sides, one of them being crushed, and the other crushing. We create the problem of right and wrong. There is a way to do things wherever we are but when we start forcing the way to do things then we fall into right and wrong.

When we're sitting zazen this is the unconditioned realm, the realm of big mind, where there is no attachment to right and wrong, good and bad, where there is no judgment. Yet when we proceed to do something, there is a way to do something correctly and a way to do something incorrectly. So we're operating in these two realms. The absolute realm of big mind where there's no leaning on right or wrong, and the relative realm where there's a right way and a wrong way. This is the existential problem. In our daily life we're mostly operating in the world of differentiation, the realm of comparative values. We rarely step back and let everything be just as it is, which is resting in suchness or absolute equality. In the realm of right and wrong, either a thing is correct or it is incorrect. But in suchness, everything is just as it is, not right, not wrong, not good, not bad, simply as it is. When we sit sesshin, we're sitting in the palm of suchness even though within that suchness there is a right way and a wrong way. Both exist at the same time. But if you stick to the side of "everything is OK," the side of the absolute, then you can't do things correctly. If you stick to the side of "the thing is either right or wrong," then you lose your base, you just get caught up in right and wrong.

Just in between is where our complete activity takes place. We have to be very careful. This is reflected in the *Genjokoan*. Right here, right in this place is where our practice of *Genjokoan* arises, moment after moment. In each moment we have to deal with the fact that everything is just as it is, and at the same time, there is a right way and a wrong way, a good way and a bad way. We have to see all this without getting stuck. So what do we do? This is our koan of continuous practice, moment after

moment. Sometimes it's better to let go of our idea and let it be just as it is, to suspend judgment, so to speak. Sometimes we have to catch something and make sure that it's done right. There is a way to do things and a way to not do things. In this space I am aware of what people are doing.

I'm usually aware when we are doing something right or not. I used to be more critical, even though you may think that is not the case. Whenever I come into the zendo, I adjust the incense bowls and all the things on the altar, which can be construed as a kind of perfectionism. My intent is not to be perfect, but to create a harmonious relationship between things. When I offer incense I like the incense bowls to line up right in front of the Buddha, and when I bow, I like to have the mat right in front of the altar. I have a feeling for alignment so I adjust it that way. Secondly, I feel that this is the way I'm teaching, without saying anything. Someone may feel criticized by my doing this. Maybe I should just leave it alone. That might actually be more magnanimous, in a sense, so sometimes I just leave it alone, and adjust myself to the way it is.

Most of the time, I don't say a lot. I don't necessarily react to what I see not being done. If I reacted to everything I saw that wasn't done "correctly," I'd be constantly correcting people. So more and more, I just let things go. Even though I see something is not happening, I just don't say anything. It may not be right to let it go, but on the other hand, sometimes the feeling is better if I let it go. So sometimes I opt in favor of the feeling, rather than in favor of making it right. I don't know which is right. Sometimes one is right and sometimes the other is right. There is no formula for how to act. I have to consider every situation, and decide which way to go with it. These two exist together, and you can't forget the one or the other. You can't say which is compassionate and which is strict, because sometimes being very strict is compassionate, and sometimes letting things go is strictness.

More and more, I trust that letting go provides an opportunity for things to take care of themselves. Letting go is a kind of trust. When we hold on tightly to things, it's often because we don't trust that things will be taken care of. So we take a very tight rein, which we must do at times. But the more that we can trust a situation, the more we can let go of it. Even if things aren't going right in the small sense, in the big sense they will most likely come around or fall into place. Things have a way of cycling or circling around. Somehow when they come around again they balance themselves out, or correct themselves. More and more, I trust the big picture. There is not so much need to worry about things. And not so much need to always have so much control of them. This is the spirit of great patience, and teaching by example.



Mountains and Rivers... Dates have been set for this year's Mountains and Rivers sesshins. Mark your calendars:

Saturday and Sunday, April 27 - 28
Friday through Sunday, August 2 - 4



The Light of St. Lucy

I sought a winter poem.
In a somber year,
When the afflicted, torn,
Look East and back again,
Having seen no sign,
No special star.

Weary of plum blossoms and war,
The poets, old in exile, rest,
Their eyelids closed,
This longest night.

But Lucy, sleepless, waits,
Frailest of saints,
A candle in her hand.
What use to her this flame,
Her eyes destroyed
By angry men?

Perhaps she holds the light
For all of us,
Until from violent dreams
We nightmare sleepers
Choose to turn, and turning,
Wake.

Moffett Hall
December 21, 2001



Saturday Childcare

Childcare is offered on Saturdays from 9:15 to 11:15. The cost is \$5 per family. Note that the childcare schedule is tentative. Childcare is not offered if no one's planning to come, so please call Laurie the Thursday before to let us know if you're hoping to attend. For more information, call Laurie Senauke, 845-2215.

Feb 2	Childcare
Feb 9	Childcare
Feb 16	No program
Feb 23	Childcare
March 2	Childcare
March 9	Childcare
March 16	No program
March 23	Childcare
April 6	Childcare
April 13	Buddha's Birthday
April 20	Childcare
April 27	Childcare



Recently, Sojun received the following excerpt from BZC member Anne Macey and thought people might benefit from reading it...

So I'll tell you how I survive, but you won't like it. Every time I say anything about it, people shudder. But you couldn't get away from it, the thing I am talking about. The word is "pain." Pain is the avenue to getting a soul, getting quality from yourself. This is how you get a life that's really on the essence.

You got to go about pain the right way. You couldn't escape, so you go into it. Then it melts. You get from this the whole thing, the idea of life itself and the result is you're able to take pain in and ignore it because you're so full of living. When you learn to do this - and believe me, it took me a very long time - you get a clarification, I would say.

Now if you would like to hear a little more, I could give you an example. When I start to talk about pain it leaves me. That's why I don't like to talk so much. All that I got to say is painful, and when I tell somebody about it, then I feel better. But that's no good. It comes back at you when you are not looking, WOOSH, it jumps out from behind the stove and grabs you. So when the pain comes, I am patient. I shut up. Active silence. I bear it, wait. Even overnight. But I mean *bear* it. I don't take a tranquilizer, a sleeping pill, some schnapps or watch television. I stand before it, I call the pain out. After you go through this you discover you got choices. You become whole. This is the task of our life, so I can be alive every minute. I want to know when I'm awake, I'm altogether awake. When I'm asleep, I'm asleep.

It's not masochistic. It's not stoical. In fact, if you want to know, it's Jewish. One of our prophets said, "In quiet confidence, shall lie your strength." In this way you can make suffering something positive, because it's part of human life.

In old age, we got a chance to find out what a human being is, how we could be worthy of being human. You could find in yourself courage, and know you are vital. Then you're living on a different plane. To do this you got to use your brain, but that's not enough. The brain is combined with the soul. Do you know what I'm talking about? I don't think you could get to this understanding too young. But when you get to it, then you couldn't go before your time, because you are ready.

From Number Our Days: Interviews with the Elders at a Jewish Community Center in New York City.

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