

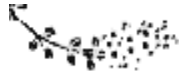


Berkeley Zen Center



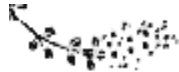
March 2005 Newsletter

Welcome to new Members Kate Gilpin, Andrew Goodwin, Ashley McNamara, and Barbara Ryken.



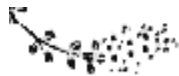
Introduction to Zen Class

Beginning **Monday, 7th March** and continuing for **4 weeks (March 7, 14, 21, and 28)**, BZC will offer an introductory class on Zen. The class will cover the roots of Zen and its development in China and Japan; it is especially geared for beginners but open to all. The class will be taught by Raul Moncayo and Laurie Senauke. The cost is \$20 for the 4 weeks; sign up on the main bulletin board.



Please Note...

Ed Herzog plans to film the April 16 sesshin for his documentary project. If you have any questions or concerns please contact Greg Denny or a member of Board.



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.

March & April Schedule

Founders Ceremony
Thursday, 3-3, 6:20pm
Friday, 3-4, 6:40am

Half-Day Sitting
Saturday, 3-5, noon to 4pm

Kanzeon Sitting
Sunday, 3-13, 8:45am to 4:30pm

Bodhisattva Ceremony
Saturday, 3-26, 9:30am

One-Day Sitting
Sunday, 3-20 5am to 5:30pm

Half-Day Sitting
Sunday, 4-3 8am to noon

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

Buddha's Birthday
Saturday, 4-9

One-Day Sitting
Saturday, 4-16 5am to 9:30pm

Bodhisattva Ceremony
Saturday, 4-23, 9:30am

Mountains and Rivers
Saturday 4-23 through Sunday, 4-24

Buddha's Birthday....This year, Buddha's Birthday will be celebrated at Berkeley Zen Center on **Saturday, 9th April**. Buddha's Birthday is one of the important dates on the Zen calendar, marking the birth of the Buddha and the fresh possibility of awakening in one's own life. Check the zendo bulletin board for the full schedule. Please feel free to bring your friends and families. Children, who embody our hope for enlightened peace and our hope for the planet's future, are especially encouraged to attend.

An important part of the ceremony is the baby Buddha's bower or arbor, which the sangha decorates every year. **The decorating of the flower bower will take place on Saturday morning between 7:30 and 8:30am!** Please bring flowers on Friday the 8th -- carnations, iris, daisies, ranunculus, sweet william, camelias, lilies are especially good – and leave them on the Community Room porch before evening zazen. Or bring treasures from your garden when you come Saturday morning. **For more information, contact BZC Head Chiden, Ann Kennedy 510.649.9432.**



Kanzeon Sitting

This special sitting, on **Sunday, March 13, from 8:45 am to 4:30 pm**, is designed for those who have difficulty with the more rigorous typical sesshin schedule, but it is open to anyone. In fact, because the periods of zazen are shorter, it is a good opportunity to experiment with a more challenging posture. **Lunch is bag lunch – please bring your own.** Sign up on the bulletin board as usual. For more information, contact Baika: 510-548-4878 Anprtt2@aol.com. Tentative sitting schedule:

8:45	Arrange seating
9:00	Zazen – Robe Chant
9:25	Kinhin
9:35	Zazen
10:00	Kinhin
10:10	Zazen OR mindful walking and stretching outside
10:35	Kinhin
10:45	Lecture/Discussion
11:45	Service
12:00	Silent bag lunch & resting
1:00	Work Meeting - Soji
1:30	Clean Up
1:45	Zazen
2:10	Kinhin
2:20	Zazen
2:45	Stretching in the zendo
3:15	Kinhin
3:25	Zazen
3:50	Kinhin
4:00	Zazen
4:25	Refuges
4:30	Clean-up/End of Day

Magic Turtle, True Dragon

By Laurie Senauke

If we exist always and only in the present, why do we have to make such an effort to be present? If the path is always right under our feet, how do we get so lost? If we're completely interconnected and interdependent with everything else in the universe, why do we feel so alone?

I was wondering about this, and some words I once read in the *I Ching* – the Chinese oracle – popped into my mind: "You let your magic turtle go, and now you look at me with the corners of your mouth drooping." We let our magic turtle go. We just keep letting our magic turtle go. Because it's actually the person who drives me nuts who's demonstrating the truth of interdependence. It's the place I veered from the path that shows me where to get back on. It's the thing that I think, "If only I could get rid of this..." or "If only I could have this, I could be present. . . ."

This is not something we can get at completely with our thinking mind. It doesn't work to decide, "Okay, I'm not going to let my magic turtle go next time, I swear." That might help, but the problem is that it happens too fast. We're actually hard-wired to let our magic turtle go. So we have to train our self. And how do we train our self? Well, *zazen*. *Zazen* teaches our body something, and our body teaches our mind whatever that is, which we can't know, but it's something like how to not let our magic turtle go. Because during *zazen*, we can't escape from our magic turtle, no matter what we do. We try to escape, but it's impossible. This is the amazing thing that the Buddha discovered – he discovered a way to get at our hard-wiring. When we sit *zazen*, we're coaching ourselves in another way of responding.

For the last few weeks, those of us in the practice period have been studying a short text by the great Japanese Zen Master Eihei Dogen, called *Fukanzazengi*. "Universal encouragement for the practice of *zazen*." And one of the themes of the *Fukanzazengi* is, How can we encourage ourselves to do *zazen* without giving rise to a gaining idea? How can I say something about *zazen* that will encourage myself and others to practice *zazen*, without saying, "sit *zazen* because it will bring such and such benefit." "If I do it, I will have a good outcome. I will stop letting my magic turtle go." Right there it's blasphemy, because I'm sponsoring a gaining idea. So this text is Dogen's way of trying to encourage us without sponsoring us a gaining idea.

And another thing about this text is that it's just chock full of references to lots of *zen* stories. The other night, Ross taught the second of our classes on the *Fukanzazengi*, and I had two almost contradictory images about this piece of writing, at the same time. One is the image of Dogen Zenji crafting, carefully crafting a beautiful piece of jewelry, placing each individual gem exactly where it belonged. And the other image was of Master Dogen opening a treasure chest and casually, from a place of incredible abundance, casting about handfuls of jewels.

One of my favorite gems in the *Fukanzazengi* comes near the end: It goes, "Please honored followers of *Zen*, long accustomed to groping for the elephant, do not be suspicious of the true dragon." This little sentence refers to two different folktales. One is quite famous – the Indian one about the eight blind men and the elephant. Each blind man touches a different part of the elephant, and then they start bickering, "It's like a rope." "No it's like a wall." "No it's like a palm leaf." We say blind men, but we're hard wired to be the blind men actually. We're hard-wired to get a piece of the truth and feel like we're seeing the whole thing. We're long accustomed to groping for the elephant.

Dogen Zenji goes on to say, do not be suspicious of the true dragon. And this is from a Chinese folk tale – I was unable to find any other place this story is referenced, after a quick *Google* search, so I don't know the origin exactly, but this story is about a man named Seiko who is a dragon *aficionado*. He has paintings of dragons, carvings of dragons, he's fashioned his home like a dragon's lair – he's a huge fan of dragons. And a real dragon hears about this and thinks, "Hey, this guy would really be able to appreciate me if I were to

drop in. It would make his day if I dropped by." So he does. And Seiko, of course, is totally and utterly freaked out; he runs out of the house and draws his sword to fight the dragon.

Suzuki Roshi gave a talk about this story, which was reprinted in the *Spring 1991 Windbell*, and I wanted to read you my own condensed and abridged version of his talk.

Most of us are practicing our way like a blind man or like Seiko. That is why we have to start our practice over and over. You think you are practicing real *zazen*, but it may not be so. Over and over, we have to start our *zazen*, because we are always liable to practice *zazen* like the blind men or like Seiko.

Each one of us practices *zazen* in his own way, with his own understanding. That is right. And we continue that kind of practice, thinking, "This is right practice." So even though we are sitting here in the *zendō*, we are involved in our own practice. In other words, we are carefully carving our own dragon, which is not real. And this is not wrong; this is all right. But we should know that there is a true dragon, which has no form or color, which is called nothingness or emptiness.

You come and practice *zazen* in this *zendō* where there should be true dragon. But the instant you think, "This is true dragon," that is a mistake. Knowing this, when you come to this *zendō*, you should practice *zazen* with the other people, forgetting all about your carving or your painting. You should practice *zazen*, in this *zendo*, with your friends, completely involved in the atmosphere we have here.

People who do not know real emptiness or true dragon may think I am forcing this way on you. You may say, "Soko-ji is a *Sōtō Zen* temple. I have been practicing *Rinzai* way." But that is not true. We are practicing the way transmitted from Buddha to us. We are the Buddha's disciples.

We are actually practicing Dogen's way day by day, but for us there is no time to figure out what he meant completely. And even though we human beings continue his way forever, we will never be able to say, this is his way. The only thing we can say is, this is the way which has no end and no beginning, and from this way we cannot escape.

The story of Seiko and the true dragon is interesting in that it indicates that there's some kind of dialogue taking place. I come to the *zendo* and I just try to join the dharma, the truth, that's unfolding right now. Of course there's no way that I can avoid being joined to the truth that's unfolding right now, but somehow I can THINK I'm separate. And even though I'm trying to let go and join what's happening, inevitably I'm solidifying my own version of what's happening. But somehow, by just sitting *zazen*, I start a dialog with my life, and my life responds, "Oh, if I appear as the full truth, she will be very pleased." Inevitably, I won't be, but still I'll try. Inevitably, my version will veer from the truth, and the truth will come along like a locomotive, and what will I do? Will I be able to switch trains?

If we're unable to switch trains, if we're unable to face the truth right away, that's okay. We just keep practicing *zazen*, and maybe we'll be able to face it tomorrow, maybe next season, maybe over a few years.

So how are you doing? Do you feel a gaining idea coming on?



Dayan Qigong Class

Bob Rosenbaum will teach a class in *Dayan* (Wild Goose) *qigong* starting **Monday, 21st March**. *Dayan qigong* is a 2000 year old Taoist mind-body practice which helps balance the distribution of *qi* to promote health and well-being. It is a wonderful complement to Zen practice. Once learned, the form can be practiced in as little as fifteen minutes a day for benefit, but it does take about eighteen sessions to learn the basic form.

The class will meet **weekly from 7 pm to 9 pm**. However, we will likely alter the schedule during practice period to accommodate participants' commitments to practice period. A sign-up sheet is on the bulletin board.

If you have questions, talk to Bob or call him at 510.849.3069.



Teatime...

Informal drop-in tea is served every Friday before zazen either on the patio or in the Community room according to the weather.

You can stop by for a chat anytime between 5:00 and 5:30. Everyone is welcome.



In Memory of a Friend

The dragon has sung farewell
At the foot of Old Plum Mountain.
White blossoms and red fruit
Will never come again.
But students of this temple
Are ripe and sweet and many.
Enough to feed the dragon.

Hozan

Ross's Rohatsu Reverie

longing for the snowflakes
of my ancestral home.
there! in the zendo window
a flurry of plum blossoms.



IRS Charitable Contributions...A

close reading of the tax code has revealed that dues payments are tax deductible if they are made to religious organizations where the benefit received is of the "intangible religious" variety. Members whose total dues and donations in 2004 were greater than \$500 should have received an acknowledgement letter. Any other members who wish to receive an acknowledgement letter for their dues and donations, please contact the BZC office manager, Laurie Senauke 510.845.2215, lauries@kushiki.org.



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.

March 5	Childcare
March 12	Childcare
March 19	Childcare
March 26	Childcare
April 2	Childcare
April 9	Buddha's Birthday
April 16	Sesshin - no childcare
April 23	Childcare
April 30	Childcare

**Berkeley Zen Center
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