



Berkeley Zen Center



October 2006 Newsletter

Aspects of Practice: Living the Bodhisattva Precepts October 22-November 18

Again this fall, BZC is entering our Aspects of Practice period. We invite you to join in four weeks of practice, study, and discussion. This is an opportunity for newer students and older members to make a reasonable commitment to practice regularly in the zendo, study our home traditions and forms, and refresh our practice. Over the last few years, Aspects of Practice has become a great way for newer students to root their practice.

This year's focus is on "Living the Bodhisattva Precepts," exploring the depths and challenges of moral life in this troubled world. The practice leaders will lecture on Saturdays, lead Monday morning discussions, and offer a four-week class. In addition, there will be informal teas and regular practice discussion. Each sangha participant is strongly encouraged to meet with a practice leader at least once during Aspects.

We will begin with a 5:00 am to 5:30 pm sitting on Sunday, October 22, and end with a closing sitting on Saturday, November 18. The Thursday evening class will be open to everyone as usual. Newer and older members are invited to take part in the whole program. Your interest, support, and encouragement can be of help to the whole sangha. For further details, please look carefully at the zendo events bulletin 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 orientation, age, and physical ability. May all beings realize their true nature.

BZC Schedule October

Founders Ceremony

Tuesday, 10-3, 6:20 pm
Wednesday, 10-4, 6:40 am

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 10-7, 9:30 am

Kanzeon Sesshin

Sunday, 10-8

All-Sangha Gathering

Thursday, 10-19, 6:30 pm

Sejiki

Saturday, 10-21

Kidzendo

Saturday, 10-21

One-Day Sesshin/ Begin Aspects of Practice

Sunday, 10-22

November

Founders Ceremony

Thursday, 11-2, 6:20 pm
Friday, 11-3, 6:40 am

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 11-4, 9:30 am

Half-Day Sesshin

Sunday, 11-5

Kidzendo

Saturday, 11-25

One-Day Sitting/ End Aspects of Practice

Saturday, 11-18

Rohatsu Sesshin

Monday-Sunday, 11-27 to 12-3

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 Senauke the Thursday before to let her know if you're hoping to attend. For more information, call Laurie at 845-2215.



SCHEDULE

October 7	Childcare
October 14	Childcare
October 21	Kidzendo
October 28	Childcare
November 4	Childcare
November 11	Childcare
November 18	Sesshin – no program
November 25	Kidzendo
December 2	Sesshin – no program
December 9	Childcare
December 16	Kidzendo
December 23	Interim – no program
December 30	Interim – no program

KIDZENDO

A talk in the zendo for young ones three and up is offered on the third Saturday of each month (or the fourth Saturday if a sesshin is scheduled on the third). We meet upstairs at the Senauke's household (1933 Russell) for a briefing on forms at about 9:45, then sojourn down to the zendo for the first 10 minutes of lecture starting at 10:10. Afterwards, children may join the regular Saturday childcare program if they wish.

Forms

After letting down the center divider in the zendo, please be mindful to insure that the hasp (metal loop) is pointed downward towards the floor. If it remains pointing towards the ceiling, we run the risk of it getting caught when returning the wall to its upright position and thus breaking. It has happened once already. Thanks for your attention.

Returning to Buddha During Oriyoki

Food for Thought

There is a custom (not a rule) whereby your oriyoki practice can be a vehicle for "returning to Buddha". Traditionally, the first bowl is considered the Buddha bowl and is symbolic of the receptacle for receiving alms. The second and third are viewed as condiments. When eating, we first take from the Buddha bowl, then we take a bit from the second. We then return to the Buddha bowl, eat a bit, and then pick up the third bowl. Then we return to the first bowl, and so on. If you leave a morsel of food in the first bowl to end your eating, one could say you began and ended your meal with Buddha. Given that the bowls descend in size, their relative capacities will facilitate this. Try it next time and see how it tastes.

Soji

If you come to Saturday morning zazen, and stay for breakfast, you should plan on staying for Soji, the short work period after. Eating and cleaning up go together as two sides of one practice.

And a related Soji request, from Sojun Roshi, on behalf of the weekly jikidos: They request that 2-3 people stay in the zendo during Soji after morning zazen during the week to brush off all the zabutons and fluff all the zafus. This will make the job a bit easier for those who come during the week to clean.

Sejiki!!!...

Sejiki (also known as Segaki) is a popular Buddhist festival for appeasing the hungry ghosts. We celebrate it annually around Halloween. This year's ceremony is scheduled for Saturday morning, October 21, 9:30 am. Children are especially encouraged to come in costume and bring noise makers for the ceremony.



On Segaki

By Roshi Kyogen Carlson

The name, Segaki, means "feeding the hungry ghosts," and the festival contains a great deal of teaching about training in Buddhism. On one hand it is a time of remembering the dead and resolving our karmic connections with those who have died, but it is also a time of resolving our own internal, karmic difficulties and for letting go of the obstacles and blockages we carry around with us. The festival is said to have begun when Moggallana, a disciple of the Buddha, was plagued by dreams of his recently departed mother suffering in a world in which she could neither eat nor drink. Food would turn to fire, and water would turn to blood or pus whenever it touched her mouth.

Moggallana went to the Buddha and told him of the dreams, which plagued him every night. The Buddha explained that Moggallana was seeing the suffering of his mother in the world of the gakis, or hungry ghosts. Gakis are usually depicted as having long skinny necks, with throats much too small for swallowing, and the bloated, bulging stomachs common with severe malnutrition. This imagery is a fantastic description of a spiritual state that can be seen every day, right here in the physical world of men and women. It is a condition which everyone has suffered from, to some degree or another, at some point in his or her life. On the most spiritual level, this is the state of someone who desperately wants to know the Truth, but who cannot accept the teaching. He knows that he is suffering and that religious practice will help, but he just cannot stop resisting and holding on to his personal opinions. He goes to drink, but his throat will not accept. Each time he rejects the teaching, it turns to fire in his mouth.

On the everyday level, this condition is that of someone who has desperate needs but, like a person with a phantom itch, can find no relief. Women who frantically cling to their children long after they are grown, and men who cannot get enough wealth and success, are everyday examples of "hungry ghosts." In examples such as these, the problem lies in trying to satisfy an inner need for peace of mind through grasping



after external things when peace is really found in all-acceptance. Too often our attempts to obtain the things we want are like this.

Moggallana's dreams were due to his deep connection with his mother, and the Buddha's advice to him was that he make an offering to her of whatever food she could most easily accept and digest. This was to be done in a ceremony, dedicated in her name, at the time when the monks conducted their regular gathering to confess their transgressions. This is where the connection between making offerings to the dead and the cleansing of karma, personal or in connection with someone who has died, becomes apparent.

Today, the tradition that started with this ceremony is continued every year in Buddhist temples by making an offering on a table far away from any statue or picture of a Buddha or Bodhisattva. For those who reject religious teaching, kindness is offered without doctrine as a truly religious act. For the Dharma to be really Dharma, it can only be offered in forms that can be accepted and truly made use of. Offerings of any type made in such a manner will naturally benefit both the recipient and the donor. This principle applies to so many situations we encounter in everyday life. Such action naturally expresses all-acceptance in a way that touches and deeply affects all concerned.

Hungry ghosts are not the only ones to be remembered at Segaki, however. It is a time to remember all those who have died, to be thankful for their having lived, and to give thanks for the teachings their lives give to us. It is a time to

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Sojun Mel Weitsman Tassajara Zendo Talk: Six Prajna Paramitas *(continued)*

The second Prajna Paramita is noble conduct, sometimes it is called morality. It includes ethics and morality. Noble conduct is Buddha's conduct, which is the basis of our precepts. We call Buddha the noble one.



Buddha's conduct is impartial, not attached to good and bad, not attached to right and wrong, not attached to love and hate. Nevertheless, good

and bad arise, right and wrong arise, love and hate arise. They are constantly arising in us. So we have precepts which are guidelines for how to conduct ourselves with each other in a correct way, and how we relate to our environment as well, in a compassionate, intelligent, wise way. Sometimes in the close quarters of practice we bump into each other, we make judgments about each other, and we get angry and have problems with each other. That's when it's important to have reconciliation of some sort.

So in order to begin that process, the best way, the easiest way, is to bring forth forgiveness, instead of dwelling in self-righteousness. We can get lost in righteousness and retaliation. I am right and you are wrong. I am doing things well, you are doing things badly. You did this to me and I will get you. So what forgiveness allows us to do is to rise above partiality. And although it involves the other person, it is basically for ourselves. Forgiveness is letting go of our mental and emotional bondage to the other. It allows us to get beyond our pain so we can have some freedom. We become bound to the other person, we become bound to the situation, and we lose our freedom. It is different than reconciliation. It has to precede reconciliation. Reconciliation may or may not be possible, but that is another matter. When we realize that my adversary and myself are one as well as two, we can free ourselves. This is prajna,

The third paramita, Prajna Paramita, is patience. Patience we usually think of as waiting patiently for something. Patience also means forbearance. Forbearance is long suffering. Katagiri

Roshi used to say that we must bear the unbearable. That was a Japanese saying which came into prominence when they lost the second World War. But patience in the sense of prajna is not simply waiting. It is just being present where we are, "Settling the self on the self," as the saying goes, without getting ahead of ourselves, or behind. To be right in this moment, at this place. Patience has to do with time and space. Time is now, and place is here, at the crossroad, at the edge.



Although you may be waiting for something, if what you are waiting for doesn't arrive, you are still okay. That's our practice. Accepting difficulty and accepting ease. Grasping, we want something and become anxious if we don't get it, and in aversion, we don't want something and get anxious about it's coming. To be settled in the composure of zazen and in our daily life, and to be free to act spontaneously, is great patience. If it comes, no problem. If it goes, let it go. That is freedom.

The fourth I like to call enthusiastic effort. It is also called zeal. When we begin to practice we usually have inspiration. Inspiration is wonderful because it gives us purpose, direction, and optimism. As beginners we put a lot of effort into our practice and our inspiration carries us, like a love affair. But after awhile whatever we do starts to wobble. So how do we keep our practice from getting old? How do we maintain that vitality? When we expect something, we may get it, but once we get it, then we need something else. We also have success and failure. When your practice "gets old" you may wonder, why you are doing this so often? What am I getting out of this seemingly repetitious activity? What is the payback? In practice there is no payback. We simply give ourselves to practice without any expectation. The goal of practice is not to get something. It is simply letting go of

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Sojun Mel Weitsman Tassajara Zendo Talk: Six Prajna Paramitas

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everything. It is just the opposite of usual ambition. To let go and not expect anything is called contentment. Contentment leads to joy and joy leads to enthusiasm, and the way becomes enthusiastic and effortless.

Even though we don't expect anything or maybe because we don't, there are benefits and blessings. But if we practice for that reason it doesn't work. We have the term effortless effort, it is not hard and it is not easy. There is riding the wave and following the wave. When you are surfing and you catch a big wave, you wait for just the right moment for the wave to crest. When you are riding the wave, you are also driving the wave. You can't tell whether you are riding or driving. It's that kind of ease. The wave and you are one. You and the horse are one. This is non-dualistic practice. Dogen calls it turning and being turned. When you are in a leading position, then you are turning the practice, and when you are in a following position you are being lead by the practice. You should know which is which. Sometimes leading and sometimes following, but when you lead you are also following, and when you are following you are also leading with perfect balance, perfect coordination, perfect harmony. When we are all practicing together in this way, prajna arises and illuminates our world.

The fifth one is called Dhyana. Dhyana as you know is a Sanskrit word meaning meditation. In China it became Channa, and in Japan it became Zenna, which means sitting in meditation, sitting in Zen, sitting in Chan, sitting in Dhyana. And the word Samadhi is synonymous with Dhyana or Zen. So what is Dhyana? What is Zen-sitting and what is Samadhi, sometimes called imperturbability? Of course it's not only immobile samadhi, it is also mobile samadhi as well. In zazen we have this seat which is very stable and very hard to turn over. That is one reason why we sit this way-it's a nice stable position. So zazen is to establish this stable position and to find the balance of total dynamic

effort with flexibility and ease. So within this total effort the whole body is cooperating, body, mind, and breath are cooperating in order to sit up straight in an un-conditioned way without grasping or aversion to whatever comes and goes, and to not be turned around by anything; to simply let go. In other words, it is an offering to the universe and a returning home.

This is what I mean by unconditional. As we grow up, our postures are formed or shaped through our conditioning. We protect ourselves in various ways from our fears and we carry various burdens, feelings, ideas, fantasies, and delusions which determine the way we carry ourselves and interact. Zazen is letting go of our conditioning and returning to our original posture. It's not so easy. It may take years of practice. But some can do it right away. In zazen there is no fear, although sometimes people feel that as well as anger. And of course we have painful legs and so forth. But pain is a part of life. It's not that we try and make life painful. To be able to accept painfulness without being attached to it is Samadhi, is stability and composure, patience, generosity, and prajna. So there is pain, and there is suffering. Pain is pain, and suffering is what I don't like about it.

The sixth one is the paramita of prajna. Prajna is non-dual and a good way to express prajna is like this: Your right hand is right and your left hand is wrong. Right hand is good and left hand is bad. Right hand is love and left hand is hate. Then you put the two palms together and bow. This is the oneness of the opposites. Everything is reconciled in this gesture. So when you put your palms together you are practicing the non-duality of prajna even if you don't understand what it is. We bow to our cushion, we bow to cats and dogs, we bow to trees and pillars. And in that moment, at the bottom of the bow, everything disappears and is reconciled. We can practice bowing all the time whether our palms are together or not. It just depends on our attitude.

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Six Prajna Paramitas

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But this is our expression and this is how we enter. We can say that the five fingers of the right hand are Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Arhats, Pratyeka Buddhas, and Devas. And the five fingers of the left hand are the heavenly realm, the hell realm, the animal realm, the fighting demon realm, and the hungry ghost realm that we migrate through, every day of our lives: our deluded states of mind. So ordinary, enlightened Buddha mind and ordinary every day illusory mind find their unity when we put our palms together in this bow.

On Segaki

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let go of those who have died, to realize that their training goes on in whatever form it now takes, and that they do not need us pulling them back to this world through our attachments. By letting go of those who are now gone, we can also resolve any painful memories that can linger on to become the nucleus of a multitude of other problems. All-acceptance is still the key, for if we completely accept those who have gone on as they were, we can understand them better and offer them what they need to go on, which is, most often, our forgiveness and blessing.

Practicing as a Fool

The Faithful Fools, a non-profit organization in San Francisco's Tenderloin District dedicated to helping the poor and disenfranchised through offerings of meditation, advocacy and accompaniment, and providing a venue for artistic expression, will be taking over BZC Newsletter printing duties. Sangha member Keith Walker has led the meditation program there for four-plus years. Recently, Sojun Roshi visited to conduct a dedication ceremony of their new meditation room. By giving the Faithful Fool the opportunity to publish our newsletter, we are helping them in a small but significant way. If you interested in Faithful Fools contact Keith at k.walker1@att.net or call him at (510) 420-0716.

PEOPLE

Beaucoup thank yous to **Raul Moncayo** for several years as our Class Coordinator, and welcome to **Ron Nestor**, stepping in to this position.

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Greg Denny is taking over as Project Manager from **Dean Bradley** – but we'll continue to see Dean around the property, sharing her skill and care.

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We're also grateful to **Marian Yu**, recently retired from years of doing our composting; **Jim Tomlinson** is taking over for her.

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Thanks to **Steven Burkhart** for Web Mastering. Taking over for him soon will be **Ko Blix**, with some transitional help from Office Manager **John Mogey**.

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New contact info: **Teresa Lesko**, 3840 Woodruff Ave., Oakland, Ca 94602, (510) 531.1072

Note: If you have well-being messages or short items of interest for the BZC newsletter "PEOPLE" column, please submit them to: ehertzog@lmi.net Deadline is the 20th of the month.

Jikidos Needed

Twice every week, the zendo is given a thorough cleaning by sangha members who sign up for a specific week. It doesn't take long, since the space is already so clean! There's plenty of room on the sign-up sheet (back porch of Community Room). Head Jikido Shelley Brock (sybrock@earthlink.net) will be thrilled to give you a quick training. This is a wonderful way to support our temple and experience the quiet peace of the zendo. You may sign up as an individual or team up, either to work together, or to split the week.

*motes cling to blue
dust broom, then shimmer, shaken over
cool morning grass*

Shelley Brock

SAVE THE DATES

Kanzeon Sitting

The next Kanzeon sitting will be Sunday, October 8, 8:45 am-4 pm. This sitting is especially designed for those who have some difficulty with the typical sesshin schedule, but it is open to anyone. Periods of zazen are shorter, so it is also a good opportunity to experiment with a more challenging posture. Attend all or part of the day. If you have particular concerns or needs, or if this will be your first day-long sitting, please contact Greg Denny, 595-8162, greg@techsperience.org. Lunch will be bag lunch. Bring your own, or purchase one from the Thai temple next door or the Berkeley Bowl. Cost is \$15 for members, \$20 for non-members. Sign up on the bulletin board.

Estates and Trust Planning Informational Gathering

In response to requests made at the Planned Giving Meeting sponsored by the BZC Board in June, the Board will be offering a follow-up meeting on Sunday, November 12 at 2 pm. A local wills and estate lawyer will join us for an educational seminar and to answer general questions, from sangha members on estate planning, wills and trusts. Refreshments will add to the enjoyment of our time together. Watch the bulletin board for details. If you have questions, contact John Rubin at 339-7068 or Andrea Thach at 420-0902.



Praying for Peace

We have begun dedicating our evening service on Wednesdays to world peace. We are chanting the Metta Prayer, which Maylie Scott wrote, and the En Mei Jukku, with an eko of dedication provided by Alan. May all beings know no one as an enemy. May no one suffer from war, hunger or indignity. May our mutual understanding heal the earth and ourselves.

All-Sangha Gathering

Our next all-sangha gathering is Thursday, October 19, 6:30 p.m., in the Community Room. We will start with a potluck dinner, then gather in a circle, giving each person a chance to briefly share whatever he or she wishes--a concern about our practice or a suggestion for improving it, or perhaps a poem or some personal news. Everyone is encouraged to take part. This is one of our rare opportunities to come together as a community and speak up about issues that concern us. The previous gatherings have been lots of fun, in addition to raising a number of interesting ideas. If you have any questions, please contact Ken Knabb -- 527-0959 / knabb@bopsecrets.org.

Board of Directors Meeting

The next BZC Board of Directors meeting is Sunday, November 12, 9:00 am, in the Community Room. All sangha members are invited to attend.

Ongoing Well-Being List Revealed

Many people wonder about the folks on the well-being list whose names are recited during service twice a week. If you placed someone on this list and would like to share information about that person with the sangha, look for the new binder entitled, "The Merit of our Well-being Services is Dedicated to," on the patio bulletin board shelf. Information, a picture, or anything else you would like to share can be left there for all to see.

**Berkeley Zen Center
1931 Russell Street
Berkeley, CA. 94703**

Aspects of Practice — October-November 2006

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
OCTOBER 22 Opening sitting Talk: Ron 5am to 5pm	23 AM: Discussion Laurie	24	25	26 Class 7:30pm: Alan	27 Tea 4:45pm: Peter	28 Lecture: Greg
29	30 AM: Discussion Greg	31	NOVEMBER 1	2 Class 7:30pm: Ron	3 Tea 4:45pm: TBA	4 Lecture: Ross
5	6 AM: Discussion Karen	7	8	9 Class 7:30pm: Ross	10 Tea 4:45pm: Doug	11 Lecture: Laurie
12	13 AM: Open Discussion	14	15	16 Class 7:30pm: Karen	17 Tea 4:45pm: Richard	18 Closing Sitting Talk: Alan 5am-5pm

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