



# Berkeley Zen Center



## February 2007 Newsletter

### **Three-Day Sesshin**

The three-day sesshin will be held on Presidents' Day weekend, February 17-19. Attendance for all three days is required. If you are new to sesshin practice, or have questions, please contact sesshin director, Leslie Bartholic, at 925-933-3486 (before 9:00 p.m.) or at [lbartholic@comcast.net](mailto:lbartholic@comcast.net)

### **Class on Dogen's Bodhisattva's Four Actions**

All BZC sangha members are invited to attend a four-week class on a fascicle from Dogen's Shobogenzo, Bodaisatta-Shishobo (The Bodhisattva's Four Embracing Actions) taught by Hozan Alan Senauke.

The class begins Thursday, February 15, from 7:15-8:45 pm in either the community room or the zendo. Sign-up on the patio bulletin board. Copies of the text are available on the bulletin board shelf. For those who don't come to BZC on a regular basis you may email class coordinator Ron Nestor @ [shoppingrk@yahoo.com](mailto:shoppingrk@yahoo.com) to register. Email must include your phone number so we can confirm your attendance in the week prior to the class. Cost for the series is \$40.00. Reduced rates are available for those in need. Speak to Ron at the first class.

The bodhisattva's four embracing actions are: giving, beneficial speech, beneficial action, and identity action. We are the bodhisattvas under

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#### **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**

### **February**

#### **Founder's Ceremony**

Thursday, 2-1, 6:20 pm

Friday, 2-2, 6:40 pm

#### **Bodhisattva Ceremony**

Saturday, 2-3, 9:30 am

#### **Half-Day Sitting**

Sunday, 2-4

#### **Three-Day Sitting**

Saturday-Monday, 2-17 to 2-19

#### **Buddha's Parinirvana**

Saturday, 2-17

#### **Kidzendo**

Saturday, 2-24

### **March**

#### **Founder's Ceremony**

Thursday, 3-1, 6:20 pm

Friday, 3-2, 6:40 am

#### **Bodhisattva Ceremony**

Saturday, 3-3, 9:30 am

#### **Half-Day Sitting**

Sunday, 3-4

#### **All Sangha Potluck**

Tuesday, 3-6, 6:30 pm

#### **Kidzendo**

Saturday, 3-17

#### **One-Day Sitting**

Sunday, 3-18

### **All Sangha Potluck**

On Tuesday, March 6, 2007, at 6:30 pm, we will come together as a sangha to hear a report from the BZC Treasurer and discuss and approve the BZC budget for 2007. Bring a dish to share (sign up on the bulletin board for food and clean up).

## Saturday Childcare

Childcare is offered free of charge on Saturdays from 9:15 to 11:15. It's helpful for planning if you can let us know that you're hoping to attend; call or email Greg Denny, 595-8162, or [greg@techsperience.org](mailto:greg@techsperience.org).



### Childcare Schedule

February 3	Childcare
February 10	Childcare
February 17	Sesshin – no program
February 24	Kidzendo * * *
March 3	Childcare
March 10	Childcare
March 17	Kidzendo
March 24	Childcare
March 31	Childcare * * *
April 7	Buddha's Birthday
April 14	Childcare
April 21	Kidzendo
April 28	Childcare

### 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.

## PEOPLE

A deep gassho to **Nancy McClellan** for shopping and cleaning as our Kitchen Keeper. We welcome rematriate **Ellen Doudna**, taking over this position.

Please welcome **Bhante Suhita Dharma** into the BZC residency. Having lived the life of a homeless monk for many many years, he'll be residing in 1933a for the next few months sharing his dharma practice with us. He works at the Buddhist Peace Fellowship in the Prison Project. Please engage him to find out more about this very important work.

### Sesshin in a Bottle

What has everything a sesshin has – zazen, kinhin, chanting, serving, eating, cleaning, listening to the dharma, cookies – and yet only lasts five hours? The Saturday program, of course! It's the effortless effort of more than twenty people actualizing our wondrous practice through leading these activities. Lately the sign up sheet for cooking, serving, dishwashing, has had some blank spaces. It's not because we moved it to the community room porch, is it?

### Men's Shelter Dinner

As we hope you know, BZC provides dinner twice a month to about 60 homeless men at the Berkeley Men's Shelter in downtown Berkeley. And when we say, "BZC", we mean. . . well YOU! There are several sangha members who sign up regularly, but we always need the infusion of energy provided by new or renewed members. Lately the sign up sheet has been. . . well. . . blank. It's not because we moved it to the community room porch, is it? Let us know.



### Dharma Study Group Opening

The dharma study group that meets at Raul Moncayo's house has one opening for a new member. The group has met for many years and is currently studying the Jewel Mirror Samadhi poem by Tozan; one that we recite on Saturday mornings during service. If you are interested in the group, call Raul at 510-526-8254.

## **"Trust in Mind" Class Offered**

Karen Sundheim and Andrea Thach will teach a class on "Trust In Mind" (Hsin Shin Ming) on four consecutive Thursday evenings beginning April 5. "Trust In Mind", a very well known Zen poem of enlightened mind from the sixth century by third ancestor Seng-Ts'an, opens with, "The supreme way is not difficult if only you do not pick and choose."

This simple line has echoed throughout the centuries. With two excellent commentaries to work with from Chinese master Sheng Yen and Korean teacher Mu Soeng, we'll call this an intro class in our four-week timeframe and jump in from class one wholeheartedly.

## **Notes from our BZC Office Manager**

**Tax Letters:** 2006 Tax Letters will be going out soon. If you receive one and your records differ from our letter please contact the office manager, John Moge, as soon as possible. You can phone (510-649-7724) or e-mail (jmoge@comcast.net).

**Checks:** You can save yourself writing, me typing, and a few trees by using one check for a number of items. Just note carefully on the memo line of the check what it is for.

## **Class on Dogen's Bodhisattva's Four Actions**

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discussion and to go with our action of JUST sitting Dogen provokes us into considering our deepest and most compassionate relations with others.

*"When we realize Identity-Action, self and others are one suchness. Harps, poetry, and wine make friends with people, with heavenly beings and with spirits. People befriend harps, poetry, and wine."*

**from Shishobo**



## **Dharma Tidbits from Japan**

About 18 Zen students from Berkeley Zen Center and the Empty Nest Zen Center in Fresno traveled to Japan in October 2006 with Grace and Peter Shireson as guides. The itinerary included visits with Abbot Hoitsu Roshi, Suzuki Roshi's son, first at Eihei-ji, where he is currently Tanto, and then at Rinso-In, his home temple. We stayed at Rinso-In for 4 days, cooking and meditating and cleaning the zendo, and traveling into the nearby town. We had the opportunity to engage in several informal dharma discussions with Hoitsu Roshi (HR), from which these bits were gleaned:

Q: Do you know what to do with your heart-mind in zazen?

HR: *"Put it in the cradle of your mudra. The mudra is a circle. Also, a circle is created by your arms and hands. Another circle is created by your legs and shoulders. The center of the mudra is the center of the whole thing."*

*"Your breath is not your own. You think it is. Your breath belongs to the whole universe. When I wake up in the morning I see the trees move. They are breathing. I feel one with them. We think we are special...better than other life...but we are not."*

Q: What it is like to be at Eihei-ji compared to Rinso-In?

HR: *"When I meet someone I just meet them, one person, then another. Same at Rinso-In as at Eihei-ji."* (He then went on to giggle and say about Eihei-ji). *"Yes it is a joyful place - the monks are very funny!"*

Q: If it is so easy to be one with the trees, to breathe with them, why is it so hard to lose one's ego?

HR: *"It is not hard. It is second by second. Moment by moment. My friend died 20 days ago of throat cancer. He couldn't speak because his throat box was removed. He had a hole in his throat. I visited him and gave him a picture -of a waterfall. I told him we are all droplets falling together, going down together. Looks like separate drops, but same waterfall. My friend couldn't respond, but I know he understood because a tear appeared in the corner of his eye."*

# Manjusri and Engaged Practice: *Model Subject (Case Record)*

## No. 35 of *The Blue Cliff Record*, By Raul Imo Moncayo

I was reminded of this case during a January one-day sitting when most participants went to a peace demonstration. Before people left, there was some discussion about how people would practice a sesshin of peace during the demonstration. We agreed that people would practice silence and avoid idle speech. One participant approached me and asked whether he



should go or stay because he could go either way. I responded he could choose to either sit and march in the zendo or march and sit in the demonstration. In practice,

we go from the motion in stillness of the zendo, to the stillness of motion within ordinary activities.

During the last zazen period in the morning, the only people remaining in the zendo were the doan (sounds the bell), the kokyo (leads the chants), and I, as the sesshin director, sitting in the front of the zendo, and the cook and servers sitting in the back. This is what reminded me of this case: three in front and three in back. There were also those practicing in the front of the peace demonstration and those left behind keeping the sesshin in the zendo.

People began coming back during the afternoon open period and expressed concerns that during the demonstration people engaged in idle speech. When Sojun Roshi arrived I was having practice discussion with Ross Blum, where we were talking about this case. Later, Sojun Roshi mentioned that when he arrived it looked like nobody was in the zendo. I said that we had kept the schedule in the zendo, and that our sitting was strong, regardless of the few or many.

### **Introductory Pointer by Engo**

To decide between a dragon and a snake, to discern or distinguish between jewel and stone, to separate the profound and the naïve, black from white, to determine one's course of action: unless you have an opened eye on your forehead, or an amulet around your arm, time and time again you will miss the point immediately. If only our vision and hearing here and now be not deceptive or obscured, then sound and color will

be pure and true. Just say (to yourself): is this black or is it white, is it crooked or is it straight, at this point how will you manage with and discriminate between the two?

### **Commentary on Introductory Pointer by Imo**

The eye on the forehead refers to the dharma eye of wisdom. The amulet around the arm is to guide our actions in the world. The arms represent action within stillness.

The bodhisattva

Avalokiteshvara has many arms to help sentient beings. Jews

put tefillin (phylacteries) on the forehead and around the arms. The right arm is the negative arm of restraint and the left arm is the positive arm of compassion.



### **Commentary on Introductory Pointer by Shaw**

Engo introducing the subject says: there are in this world dragons that assume the appearance of snakes, and snakes that assume the appearance of dragons. There are jewels that look like stones, and stones that appear to be jewels. There are people whose hearts seem to be black but are really white, and there are people whose hearts seem to be white but are really black. Everything seems to be in a muddle, so when the time comes for instant decision as to whether something is genuine or false, or whether in a person's life he/she should go forward by the positive method or keep back by following the negative method, then, at such times, we ought to have that third eye, or that wonderful amulet by which the ancient hermits of China were supposed to be able to accomplish marvelous things. If we have neither, then at critical moments, we will make terrible mistakes in our judgment. How will you suddenly decide on the spot whether you or the other at that moment is a dragon or a snake?

### **Commentary by Set-cho (the first Abbott and compiler of the Blue Cliff Record)**

Manjusri asked Wu Cho: "Where have you recently come from?"

"The South," said Wu Cho.

"How is the Buddhist teaching faring in

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## Manjusri and Engaged Practice *(continued from previous page)*

the South?" asked Manjusri.

"Monks of the Last Age have little regard for the rules of discipline," said Wu Cho.

"Are there many or few or how numerous are the congregations?" asked Manjusri.

"Some three hundred, some five hundred," replied Wu Cho.

"How does it fare in this part of the country (North)?", asked Wu Cho.

"Ordinary people and sages dwell and live together; dragons and snakes intermingle," answered Manjusri.

"Are there many or few?", asked Wu Cho.

"In front, three by (and) three, in back, three by (and) three," replied Manjusri.

### Interpretation of Core Dialogue by Shaw

During the severe persecution of Buddhism in 845 AD, the monks of North China fled to the South. Wu Cho, however, had gone to the South and now returned to the monastery at Mount Wu Tai in the Godai mountains (one of the five holy mountains in China). Here he met an old monk



who greeted him and the dialogue ensued. Manjusri was asking how things were going now that the great persecution had ceased and a restoration of the

temple life had begun. How are the monks faring? Wu Cho said the monks who remain are those that escaped the eye of the persecuting emperor.

### Interpretation of Core Dialogue by Imo

The reason for many of the persecutions was a critique of idleness. In the emperor's view, the monks were leading a parasitical existence. There are four basic needs recognized by the Buddha: food, shelter, clothing, and medicine. The layperson is to provide this for themselves and family and to support the monks. But Zen escaped persecution in China through the teaching of Pai-Chang (Hyakuyo), "One day of not working, is one day of not eating." Pai-Chang, disciple of Baso, and teacher of Isan, introduced the duty of working in the fields into the monastic system. The monks worked in the fields, whereas this was forbidden in early Buddhism when the monks had to rely exclusively on alms

begging. At Berkeley Zen Center, with the exception of Sojun Roshi, we are self-supporting monk practitioners.

The monks of the South, were also considered the monks of the last age of Buddhism. They observed the Law, more or less. They may not keep the precepts, practice zazen, or study the sutras. Nevertheless, their numbers were pretty numerous: 300 to 500. Now, Manjusri's response can be interpreted in a dual and non-dual way, as both snake and dragon, from the point of view of the oneness of duality and the duality of oneness.

From a dual perspective, Manjusri's response can be interpreted as over here things are not doing that well either. Good and bad monks are mixed together. Worldly monks live together with wise and holy monks. With regards to the numbers, since they are still afraid that another persecution will break out, they cannot settle down to practice. Thus when three come in the front gate, three go out by the back door. It is a question of three in and three out.

In Korean Zen teacher San Se Nim's commentary, he says that if you multiply 3 by 3 in front, and 3 by 3 in back, plus yourself, you get 10,000. The mountain where Manjusri dwelt was known as the mountain of 10,000 bodhisattvas. These are the 10,000 dharmas, symbolically representing the totality of phenomena, whether mental or physical. In the Genjo koan, Dogen says that if you advance the 10,000 dharmas, this is delusion, but that the 10,000 dharmas advance the self, this is enlightenment.

The case can also be interpreted from the point of view of non-duality. Three by three or the three of three is both a small and an infinite number. How will we measure it? How will we measure the merit of only three sitting in the zendo? How do we measure the merit of kitchen or serving practice? How will we measure the merit of 30 or 300,000 going to a demonstration? Is the congregation of people the one eye of Manjusri, or is it a group of monks with little

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## Manjusri and Engaged Practice

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regard for the rules of wholesome speech?

The traditional commentary also says that after the dialogue, Manjusri and Wu Cho had tea. Manjusri held up a crystal cup and said, "Do they also have this in the South?" Wu Cho said, "No." Manjusri asked, "What do they usually use to drink tea?" Wu Cho was speechless.

If you are not sitting zazen in the lotus posture, then what do you use to drink the tea of the dharma? How do you stay cool under the heat, not feel lonely and yet remain yourself in a crowd? The practice for that day was not to see the many as many, or the few as few. Even though there were many, there was only you, a single body/mind walking down Market Street; and even though there were few in the zendo, in emptiness the zendo was truly full.

### Concluding Poem by Imo

To see the world as the beautiful monastery, is to see the Imagined, the Other-dependent, and the Real together. Even though you are over there, and I am over here, in emptiness, over there and over here arise together. The Buddha-eye is the Manjusri that fills the ordinary eye. When we look, do we see Manjusri in the corner of the eye, or do we only see the blue mountain? Is Manjusri in the three or the three hundred? What is the three in the three, the One in the three and the three in One? Three vows, three bows, are all one unspeakable dharma.

Delusion and enlightenment  
two sides of a coin  
Universal and particular  
just parts of one whole  
All day I read the wordless scriptures  
All night I practice no-practice meditation  
On the riverbank, a bush warbler  
sings in the weeping willow  
In the sleeping village,  
a dog bays at the moon  
Nothing troubles the free  
flow of my feelings  
But how can this mind be passed on?  
---**Ryokan**

## On Being a Shissui

By Mary Duryee, BZC Co-Work Leader

**A**n inexplicable impulse overrode common sense when I was asked to be one of the work leaders (shissui), so I said yes. Common sense would have said: you have a punch list two pages long posted to your (unfinished) kitchen cupboard, left over from (not one but two) home remodeling projects. Why on earth would you take on a position that involved the upkeep of three residential buildings and a zendo?

I could share it with someone, with whom I expected to enjoy working, so that was something. It would be a chance to get to know sangha members, so that was another. Sojun once said, 'as a practice, when asked, just say "yes." So there was that. The job got divided: John Rubin is shissui for the work period on Saturdays, and I focus on the sesshins.

Immediately, I realized the irony that a significant part of what had driven me back to a sitting practice was the disquiet the home improvement projects had brought to my life. Whenever I walked into my house my eye saw only the raggedy unfinished places, and a profound sense of incompleteness would settle around me which would give way to a pervasive sense of inadequacy, fueled by fantasies comparing my lot to those of my friends and acquaintances. How is it other people have finished homes, clean cars, and still maintain jobs, social lives, raise children, and find time for spiritual practice? This descent into self-pity would come to a thudding stop in a pile of sludgy admonition: (how dare I complain about a mere thing such as an unfinished house? There are people who do not have homes, who do not have shelter, etc.) An extremely unpleasant cycle of a discriminating mind.

Now I found myself once again with clipboard, spreadsheets of tasks, to-do lists, and power tools in car. Right off, this was going to be one of those 'repeat the same situation over again or take the opportunity to do this differently' kind of deals.

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# On Being a Shissui

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It is wonderfully different. Sojun's first instruction: do not to worry about getting things done -- no attainment (a radical release). Develop a list of projects, make preparations, and then let go of having to see them completed feels reminis-



cent of the vows we chant ("Beings are numberless I vow to awaken with them"): identify the big (and improbable) goal,

put your whole heart into it, then let go of outcome. I have found in community there is backup; things will be tended, even when one is unable to do them oneself.

It has been a means of learning the intricacy of sesshin structure, the functions of which are so balletically intertwined it feels it must have been refined over many centuries. For a brief period - a day, three days, five days or seven -- a group of people become an island community, a tribe sustaining itself through its efforts. Someone cooks each day; people clean, serve meals, wash dishes; tend the garden, make repairs to the buildings or run errands; all the things required to keep the body-minds functioning who have come together to sit in silence.

Work assignments for the tasks that go on during the whole day are made by the sesshin director; work assignments for tasks that occur during the work period are made by the shissui. The latter assignments depend on the former, as each of the day-long positions has a different impact on a monk's availability during the work period. This is a direct lesson in interdependency: a salve to the feeling of isolation and aloneness experienced in my own home projects; a sanding down of any feelings of ownership of the task.

Baika turned me on to Dogen: Circulating throughout the temple, the work leader must protect it by keeping out burglars, and must assign and supervise various workers. All this must be managed with an attitude of serving everyone with strong effort, understanding when and knowing how each task must be carried out.

If there are major repairs or significant projects, they should be conducted after consultation and the abbot's approval, then conferring with the other temple administrators about the plan, not done only according to the work leader's viewpoint. The work leader cares for and maintains the whole temple with increasing prudence and humility, without neglecting anything. They repair and replace temple property and equipment to keep it neat and shiny. The work leader helps everyone without any personal interests. The work leader's efforts are the assembly of monks' efforts. The assembly of monks' rewards are the work leader's rewards. How could this be only something received and used as a means to get somewhere along the road?



This is a daunting prescription. The most encouraging thing is seeing everyone's practices: the incredible range of skill, and the effort and care that people bring to the sangha, made visible through the care of its place. Walking around the grounds now, the repaired gutter is a memory of a team of people who solved a thorny problem in an unexpected way; the repaired railing is a memory of watching several days of skill; the trimmed tree on the side of the zendo is a memory of a negotiation with the neighbor and grief over the tree's breakage. Everywhere one looks there are traces which were not visible before.

For my own practice, the most important thing is learning to pay attention to the ground under my own feet, and, continuing to ask, 'what is the most important thing?'

(NOTE: This is the first in a series of articles by and about BZC members who, though often unseen, work hard to maintain and sustain our beloved center)



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