



Berkeley Zen Center



September 2007 Newsletter

Enlightenment, Faith, and Practice

Sojun Talk, Sept. 30, 1995

(continued from last month)

Our religious security does not depend on what happens after death. It only depends on what's happening right now. Because it's difficult for people to realize themselves right now, we invent a kind of "what will happen hereafter", that's the important thing. The important thing is not hereafter. The important thing is right now. Here we are on the stage . . . I was thinking about that this morning. The present population of the world is acting out the life of this world on the stage at the present moment.

The reason I thought about this—I thought about it at Rinzo-in, which is Suzuki Roshi's temple in Japan. It's surrounded with cemeteries, on either side, huge cemeteries, and the people from the village, in the town, all have their family plots in these cemeteries, and the temple is right in the center. These are cities of the dead. And right in the center is this life in the world. So I realized that the life that's going on in the world right now is surrounded by uncountable ancestors. The little drama of the world is going on with the people that are in it right now, and that keeps changing all the time. All the time, it's changing. This little world's

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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

September

Two-Day Study Sitting

Saturday & Sunday, 9-1 & 9-2

Founders Ceremony

Tuesday, 9-4, 6:20 pm

Wednesday, 9-5, 6:40 am

Kidzendo

Saturday, 9-15

Half-Day Sitting

Sunday, 9-16

Women's Sitting

Sunday, 9-23

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 9-29, 9:30 am

October

Founder's Ceremony

Wednesday, 10-3, 6:20 pm

Thursday, 10-4, 6:40 am

Kanzeon Sitting

Sunday, 10-7

Kidzendo

Saturday, 10-20, Sejiki

One-Day Sitting/Open Aspects

Sunday, 10-21

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 10-27, 9:30 am

Newsletter Online

The newsletter is always available online on the BZC website. If you'd like to stop receiving a paper copy of the newsletter, you can sign up to receive an email when the latest newsletter has been posted by contacting BZC Office Manager, John Mogyey.

Sojun Talk

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drama is going on in the midst of an enormous cemetery of spirits looking at it. What are they doing now? What are we doing now? What do we rely on?



In Zen practice we don't rely on some special scripture or some special Buddha for salvation, but on our own effort. But we don't expect our effort to be perfect in

some idealistic way. This is a kind of problem. People think, well, when you come to Zen Center, all these Zen students must have some perfect practice. And then, after a while, you see their practice is not perfect, that they make all the same mistakes as other people, and then you might think, well, where are all the enlightened people that are supposed to be practicing Zen at the Zen Center? As if, when you have enlightenment, you don't have any problems, you don't make any mistakes, and you're completely transformed.

But the thing about practice is, with faith, practice, and enlightenment, you can live your life just as yourself, with all of your shortcomings, faults, and wonderful attributes. You can accept yourself completely and your life goes on, you know how to take care of yourself, you know how to relate to others, and you know how to help people. And you know that, within the imperfection is the perfection. And you have great faith in your life. Whether things are going well or not, no matter what happens to you, it doesn't shake your faith, it doesn't dim your enlightenment, and it doesn't stop your practice.

This is self-power. This is the power of practice. But it's not self-power, it's Buddha's power. Self-power is kind of egotistical sounding, so when you drop ego, then you have Buddha's power, Buddha's strength, which is just your true nature. The more you rely on Buddha's power, which is your true nature, your faith gets much stronger, and enlightenment becomes more brilliant.

Sometimes people say, well there's devotional practice and then there's Zen practice. But Zen practice is nothing more than devotion, complete devotion. When you sit in zazen you become an offering. You're completely open and offering yourself to Buddha nature without any self-protection, without holding back anything. Just completely wide open. So the practice, day after day, is total devotion, and when we have devotion to practice, it's devotion to Buddha. But it's not devotional practice in the way people have devotional practice for a deity which is separate, outside. Buddha is found right here, in the midst of our activity. We devote ourselves completely to our activity, to our integrity, and to our honesty. If you have any questions, I'd like to discuss it with you.



Q: *Is God's will the same as Buddha nature?*

A: Well, it depends on what you mean by that. What do you mean by "God's will?" It's not an unimportant thing. In a loose way, in a general way, things go the way they go, and everything has a cause, according to Buddha dharma. And everything has more than one cause. So if you say, "God's will," that means that something is happening from one cause, a single cause. It means that there's a causer, who is causing something to happen, without any other causes coming in to determine what happens.

In Buddhism there always has to be more than one cause for something. There is a primary cause . . . it's like baking bread. You have all the ingredients, but until you stir it up nothing happens, it doesn't become bread until you start to stir it up. So stirring it up is the next cause, it's the cooperating cause which creates something. In Buddhism, you have to have more than one cause. If you say, "God's will," it's an interventionist cause. So in that sense I would say it's not the same. But if you say, in a loose way, it's like destiny, "God's will," if you think of that as a complex of causes, then I would say okay.

Q. *How about God's will in the sense of dropping ego, what comes up, which almost inevitably is not your own will, is God's will?*

A. Right. You say it's Buddha. Letting go doesn't

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mean that you don't do anything. It means that this person cooperates with Buddha. There's a person, and the person is a person, and the person is also Buddha, so there's a kind of dual aspect to our nature, which is not really dual, but



for purposes of speaking about it we can say there's a person, and the person's also Buddha. So "person" is like the ego-centered person.

Then there's the Buddha-centered person. When we become Buddha-centered, ego becomes absorbed into Buddha. But that means that we cooperate with the voice of Buddha within us, rather than just our egotistical self-centered voice. So yes, in some ways, it's the same. It just depends on what you mean by the terms. There are certain aspects of ourselves that just go along, and we have nothing really to do with it, except that, by the way we live our lives, we modify it. Breathing happens without our intervention, the blood flows in the veins without our intervention, thinking comes up with and without our intervention, and the way we live our life in cooperation with this process is our life. It's like cooperation between mind and body, how we conduct ourselves with all of these forces that are independent of our actions. Although we do create new life—by our actions we are continually creating new life. The whole process of being born, aging, and dying is out of our control. We just get older, and we die, beyond our control. But in the process we modify it, interweaving and interconnection between our will and Buddha.

A. Prajna is intuitive wisdom, and we have faith in the power of prajna. So we learn to rely on intuition, and when we rely on intuition—intuition becomes directly knowing. Prajna is the wisdom of directly knowing, without an intermediary thinking about it first. And the more we rely on this intuition the closer we are to the touchstone of reality. But intuition comes first, thinking comes second, even in science. Great ideas

come from the source, and then we think about them and work them out.

Q: One of the things that really struck me is that my involvement in theistic religions (is) very useful in that, I'm very aggressive, so when success happens it feels very much about me . . . In Zen practice there isn't an idea that one can use that's as strong as the idea of God. I realize that that's kind of what I miss in not practicing in a theistic fashion.

A. When this comes up you can say, "Who is proud of this?" We can treat everything as a koan. That's your koan, "Who is it that's feeling this way?" When you practice zazen, you learn to let go of everything that hinders your freedom. When this comes up, then you have practice, "This is hindering my freedom, when I feel proud of myself, or puffed up, this is actually bondage." When you have some seasoning you realize, let go of that. Because it's actually binding you. Any kind of pride or inflated feelings should be a warning to you, so you always come back down to earth, down to simplicity. In Buddhism, the practice is just continually to let go, and if you're continually letting go, then you have a practice. And when something like that comes up, you let go of it.

Q. What's samadhi, and what does that do with your life?

A. Samadhi is to be totally present without self-centeredness from moment to moment, with what's happening. It's continually arising to this moment's occasion, moment after moment, without self-centeredness and attention. The important ingredient is, without self-centeredness. Sometimes it's described as "attentiveness," "focused attention." That's one meaning, but it has a deeper meaning than that. When you sit zazen, you let go of self-centeredness and just allow the body-mind to harmonize with the universe without interfering. That's samadhi, which of course you can have at any time. One should be, can be in samadhi, all the time, which simply means to let go of self and relate to everything moment to moment without self-centeredness. That's a simple explanation.



Caring for BZC's Treasured Library

By BZC Librarian Greta Pearson

Sometimes I think the BZC library is like one of those exposed rock faces geologists love. You can find layers and layers of individual encounters with Buddhism here: the latest shiny examples of savvy publishing, beloved texts plucked from a high shelf at Moe's years ago, and mysterious volumes printed in India on very, very thin paper. Last week I came across an inscription in one of our books. It was dated 1928 with a note at the end: "Kyoto to Yokohama--another night's sleep shot to heck." Reading that, I was struck by all that has happened since then, along with a sense of connection to that unknown person on the night train to Yokohama, through ideas, words, minds, and the tender materiality of text and hand.

Our library has some real treasures: the Jewel Mirror Translation Study comes to mind; and quite a few people have discovered the "Nothing Special" CDs. Each CD includes an audio of Suzuki Roshi delivering a lecture along with an accompanying text version. We have an interesting variety of books, including books on knife sharpening, Japanese gardens, psychology



BZC Librarian Greta Pearson

and Engaged Buddhism, not to mention the bibliography to support a really good study of Dogen. I'm interested in any good book, and I enjoy trying to pitch something unusual to Sojun; he never fails to surprise me. Sojun's main direction for building our collection is to select recent scholarly work. That makes sense to me. This is a particularly interesting moment, as American academics, many of them also practitioners in different traditions, try to go beyond "romantic Buddhism" toward a clear-eyed understanding of the teaching and the forms it has taken in different historical and cultural contexts.

When I first came to BZC I avoided reading for a while (something quite out of character for me), and I suppose some people could get away with reading nothing more than the pages between 67 and 71 of "Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind." But I like it when people use the library, so if you have suggestions, please feel free to leave me a note, or catch me at tea and talk books.

Pre-Teen Group to Meet

The BZC Pre-Teen Dharma Group will be resuming its monthly meeting in September, and is open to adding interested kids between the ages of 12 and 13. Contact Marie Hopper (510)595-8162 for more information.

Qigong at BZ

Dayan Qigong is a 2000-year old Taoist tradition consisting of a series of 64 movements designed to open up and promote healthy functioning of the acupuncture meridians. According to legend, it was invented by Bodhidharma at a Shaolin temple to help Zen meditation. In addition to the movements, Dayan Qigong includes warm-up exercises, acupressure massage, meditation, and dietary recommendations.

Bob Rosenbaum will be offering weekly Dayan Qigong starting in September. It is tentatively scheduled to meet Thursday evenings (with a break or alternate times during practice period classes); however, depending on peoples' schedules, we may decide on Monday or Tuesday evenings instead. If interested, please sign up on the bulletin board and indicate your preference. Contact Bob if you have any questions or want more information.



All invited to BZC's 40th Anniversary Celebration

Honoring our Abbot Sojun Mel Weitsman
Saturday, October 6, 2007 5:00-9:00 pm
Greek Orthodox Church,
4700 Lincoln Ave, Oakland

(For more information visit our website at
www.berkeleyzencenter.org or call (510) 845-2403)

BZC Silent Auction On-Line, Open for Bidding!

As part of BZC's fundraising efforts, our first ever auction has gone live on BZC's website and is open for bidding. Featured in the auction are art created or chosen specifically for BZC's 40th anniversary, several special small group events with Sojun's dharma heirs and other luminaries, and surprise packages of donated items from small community businesses for all appetites and budgets. New items will be added through September 20.

You can bid on-line by sending an email (address and instructions are posted on the site). If you have questions about art items or special events, contact Andrea at andrea.thach@gmail.com. Questions about other items can go to either Marie or Andrea. Winners will be announced October 6 at the BZC 40th celebration or, if you can't attend, by email within 2 days of the event. Join the fun and thank you for supporting our temple!--

An Open Letter to the BZC Sangha from the Center's Board of Directors

The Board knows that some people were distressed by the invitation to our 40th Anniversary Celebration & Fundraiser. In our enthusiasm to ensure future support for BZC, we overlooked other considerations which are also important to us. We goofed up.

What's up?

BZC is in the midst of a period of change. Our property is growing old and needs repairs and maintenance. At the same time, we are in the midst of a transition in the abbacy, which means that for awhile we would like to support both of our teachers. The property maintenance issues are most easily defined. The projects we think will need to be done in the next 3 years are:

1933 Russell: Original water supply pipes need to be replaced due to corrosion, have already burst in one place already, **\$20,000**; 80% of the building needs to be repainted, **\$15,000**; Additional sheer paneling, **\$3,000**.

1933 1/2 Russell, additional sheer paneling, **\$3,000**.

1929 Russell: Whole building needs to be repainted, **\$20,000**; Seismic issues with support of extension of upstairs apartment and CR porch structure, **\$5,000**; Porch enclosing, cosmetic upgrading, optimizing space/storage, **\$8,000**.

Zendo: Significant reinforcement needed under zendo, **\$4,000**; Crumbling and leaking gutters need work, **\$15,000**.

Windows various, falling apart everywhere, **\$15,000**.

Other capital: Remodel of kitchen in 1933 1/2 upstairs, **\$7,000**.

Total: \$115,000

We fund some projects like these out of our

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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.

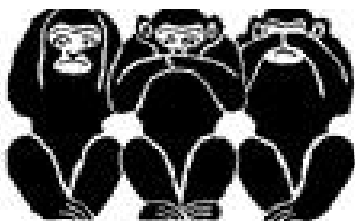


Childcare Schedule

September 1	Sesshin – No childcare
September 8	Childcare
September 15	Kidzendo
September 22	Childcare
September 29	Childcare
October 6	Childcare
October 13	Childcare
October 20	Kidzendo-Sejiki
October 27	Childcare
November 3	Childcare
November 10	Childcare
November 17	Sesshin - no childcare
November 24	Kidzendo
December 1	Childcare
December 8	Sesshin - no childcare
December 15	Kidzendo
December 22	Interim - no childcare
December 29	Interim - no 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

Beaucoup bows to the folks who spent one day of their summer at the August Work Day. Thirty-two zafus were stuffed, the zendo was cleaned including the skylights, there was major pruning and gardening, deep cleaning of kitchen, scrubbing of porches, oryoki sewing, library work!

* * *

Many thanks to **Max Erdstein** for running (and organizing) our Saturday bookstore for the past year. Stepping up to that position is **Martine Sevik**. More thanks to **Ko Blix** for mastering our website; **Gary Artim** will be taking over. Deep bows to all.

* * *

Welcome new BZC members: **Rebecca Fitzgibbon, Jesy Goldhammer, Alex Mogilner**, and returning BZC member **Patrick McMahon**. Welcome!!

* * *

The BZC Board of Directors is pleased to announce that **John Busch** has accepted an interim appointment to the Board to complete the first year of **Blake Tolbert's** term. We are grateful to both Blake and John for their contribution and willingness to serve.

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New Jikido Procedure

It has been increasingly difficult to fill the weekly jikido calendar, so we've come up with a new plan, starting in September, to keep the zendo in tip-top shape. During morning soji, Tuesday through Friday, we will assemble a small team of four to five jikidos who could stay for 15 minutes and do a portion of the weekly work.

There will be a point person for each day, and each day will have an assigned set of tasks. We're hoping each person who sits in the morning and has the time will pick one day a week to join this activity - with an opportunity to channel our dynamic Japanese Zen monk ancestors!

SAVE THE DATES

Meditation and Recovery

An 11-Step Retreat for People in Recovery

Saturday, September 15, 1:00-5:00 pm

Taught by Laura Burges

In this half-day retreat we will experience how mindfulness practice and our work with the twelve steps can support recovery. Newcomers and old-timers, both to practice and to recovery, are welcome. Comfortable clothing and slip-on shoes are recommended. \$25 donation - \$20 members and limited income. For more information or to register: lburges@sfschool.org

Laura Burges is a lay teacher in the Soto Zen tradition. She leads retreats and lectures at different practice centers in Northern California. Her column "Is That So?" appears monthly on the San Francisco Zen Center website.

October Kanzeon Sitting

The next Kanzeon sitting will be on Sunday, October 7, 8:45 am to 4 pm. This sitting is especially designed for those who have some difficulty with the typical sesshin schedule, but it is open to anyone. The periods of zazen are shorter so it is also a good opportunity to experiment with a more challenging posture. Attend for all or part of the day. If you have particular concerns, needs, or ideas, or if this will be your first day-long sitting, please contact Laurie Senauke, 845-2215, lauries@kushiki.org. Lunch will be bag lunch - bring your own, or purchase one from the Thai temple next door or the Berkeley Bowl. Cost for the day is \$15 for members, \$20 for non-members. Sign up on the bulletin board.

BZC Women's Sesshin

The BZC Annual Women's Sesshin will take place Sunday, September 23rd from 8:30 to 5:00pm. Our format may be somewhat less formal and our chanting will emphasize the influence of our female teachers. There will be a Women's Council Meeting immediately following the Sesshin in the community room. A light dinner will be provided. Please contact Karen Sundheim for more information: ksundheim@gmail.com

Open Letter to the Sangha

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annual budget, but we can't pay these costs (above) and still support our teachers.

What's going on?

The BZC Board decided to begin a fund drive with a goal of \$100,000 in the next two years to deal with capital expenses (the large response to Sojun's request has already covered repairing the roof). We combined the 40th Anniversary with a big fundraising dinner as a way to generate interest and excitement in the campaign. Now we see some folks felt surprised and hurt upon seeing these two put together. We also see that how support for our teachers is separate from this capital fund drive. We are beginning the effort to get a sense of how much we'll need to balance our budget assuming greater needs for teacher support.

What now?

We will have the 40th Anniversary Celebration and Fundraiser. We have gone too far to stop now, and we need the money. However, we want to be as inclusive as possible, and are planning to: a) provide a certain number of tickets to the Fundraising event to be made available to those who wish to come, but cannot afford the ticket price, and; b) extend the 40th Anniversary Celebration to include another party to be held here (soon, and at no cost). Please watch the bulletin board and the web site <http://berkeleyzencenter.org/> for further news. Also, at the next (September 4) and future All Sanga meetings, we hope we can discuss these plans, the capital fund drive, and ideas of how to support our teachers into the future.

A number of people at Berkeley Zen Center would like to support members who wish to attend the 40th Anniversary Dinner and Fundraiser, but cannot afford the full ticket price. For further details, please contact Ellen Doudna (edoudna@yahoo.com), or leave a message on the bulletin board.

With warmth and respect,
on behalf of the BZC Board,
Peter Overton, President



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