

Monterey Bay Zen Center News

Winter 2019

DOGEN SETS THE RECORD STRAIGHT

Master Eihei Dogen said to his monks: “There are foolish monks who make a vow never to look at a woman. Is this vow based on the teachings of the buddhas, or on the teachings of the non-Buddhists, or on the teachings of Mara?”

“What are the inherent faults of women, and what are the inherent virtues of men? There are unwholesome men, and there are unwholesome women. Hoping to hear the Dharma and leave the household does not depend on being female or male.

“Before becoming free from delusion, men and women are equally not free from delusion. At the time of being free from delusion and realizing the truth, there is no difference between men and women.

“If you vow never to look at a woman, must you then abandon women when you chant, ‘Beings are numberless, I vow to save them?’ If you do so, you are not a bodhisattva. How can you call it the Buddha’s compassion.”

Sobun Katherine Thanas’ Reflection

This passage is from “Raihai Tokuzui (Getting the marrow by Doing Obeisance),” which is part of the *Shobogenzo*, a major work by the thirteenth-century Japanese Zen master Eihei Dogen. “Raihai Tokuzui” is a radical celebration of women’s strengths and equality as Zen practitioners and teachers, and a condemnation of the misogynist views of Dogen’s contemporaries.

As I was considering this passage, I found a line from Rumi: “There is man and woman and a third thing, too, in us.” Maybe that sums up my exploration of this koan about men and women and their prospects for liberation in this life.

Some years ago a student transgendered in our Sangha. When she told me about her decision to do this, I did not know what was entailed, but I found resistance inside myself as she started the hormonal changes that made possible her transformation into a man’s body. What does it mean to be a woman? A man? Is it an inner or outer thing? I felt grief when my student initially told me about her plans and realized how deeply I had bonded with her as a woman. Although she told me she wasn’t going away, I didn’t know what might be the outcome of this profound change. Maybe she didn’t know either.

She educated me with written material and told me that not infrequently doctors decide which gender to assign to a newborn infant

when the genitalia were unclear. This was interesting information at the theoretical level, but still found myself using *her* instead of *him*, *she* instead of *he*. This felt unintentional, but looking back I wonder if inside I wanted to continue to relate to the woman I had known, not the man she was turning into.

As time passed, she took her place as male in our community and began to express himself straightforwardly in a clear voice, instead of remaining mostly quiet, as she had been before.



Even though I found that his essence remained the same regardless of his outer form, the question of gender continued to feel immutable for me, an essential characteristic. I saw how important the distinction between male and female was for me, and I acknowledged that I engage with male and female students differently, have different expectations of myself with each and different expectations of them as Sangha members.

I see how completely Dogen identified the mind of discrimination and exclusion when it comes to Buddhist practice. In the “Raihai Tokuzui” he makes clear that women are equal to men in their capacity for awakening. Perhaps surprisingly, that wasn’t an issue for me in my early years at San Francisco Zen Center, especially since Trudy Dixon, one of Suzuki Roshi’s first disciples, was deeply recognized by him, and the legacy of her practice in San Francisco was well established by the time I arrived at Bush Street. About half of Suzuki Roshi’s

students were women.

But for years after Suzuki Roshi’s death, the teachers of SFZC were all men. As I think back over my own experience there, I begin to remember what it was like to study and practice under only male teachers. I wanted to please my teachers and found myself acting with caution around them. Working with women felt freer, less bound by need for approval. It surprises me how persistent this conditioning has been.

I have learned a great deal from my transgendering student. He experienced the process as one continuous transition, discovering how changes in his body and energy brought changes in his relationship with himself as well as with men and women. His masculine and feminine sensibilities merged smoothly and I began to understand that “in transition” was in itself the most meaningful enduring condition for him.

As we are experimenting with gender roles in the twenty-first century, we are finding that opposites include each other: yes includes no and no includes yes, males and females include each other, psychologically,

emotionally, and sometimes physically as well. I am learning that the single term male or female is inadequate to express the complexity of our physical, emotional, and behavioral characteristics. As long as we are alive, we are all in transition.

Several women have told me how grateful they are to Dogen for his openness to women's practice in his time. My own gratitude is for the depth and subtlety of his exploration into our unexamined mind. And for his warm encouragement.

Reprinted from The Hidden Lamp, Stories from Twenty-Five Centuries of Awakened Women, by permission of the publisher, Wisdom Publications.

ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION SUCCESS

On October 27th, 2018, Monterey Bay Zen Center held its 30-Year Anniversary Celebration. Old friends and new from far and wide gathered at the Carl Cherry Center, for fun, friendship and fond remembrance. Highlights included live music provided by Michael Beck on the Japanese flute and western music by Mike and Melinda McCurdy and Paul Hersh; delicious tiki bar "mocktails" expertly mixed by Mark Orrisch; tasty refreshments and a silent auction that included a beautiful handmade and



painted scroll of Tassajara created by Joan Larkey, one of the original founders of MBZC. MBZC gives bows of appreciation for the many wonderful donated items for the auction. Special thanks also to Sara Hunsaker who decorated the walls with an unforgettable display of many enlarged archival photographs from MBZC's 30 year history and to Robert Reese who created an amazing ink painting and poem for the display. It was a perfect afternoon and we thank all the many volunteers and everyone who attended for such a memorable celebration of this milestone anniversary.

WINTER PRACTICE PERIOD

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

Please join us for the Winter Practice Period 2019. Practice period is a time to deepen our commitment to practice and engage with it daily. As such, all participants are encouraged to have their own daily zazen practice. If you already sit daily, then you could make your sits longer than usual.

Beyond our time on the cushion, as well as on it, we will be practicing with the seminal teaching of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness

(*Satipatthana* in Pali). A copy of the Sutta will be provided in English for the classes and we will use several other texts to supplement the teaching and facilitate bringing the practice of mindfulness into our daily practice lives.

The supplemental texts include but need not be limited to:

Satipatthana - The Direct Path to Realization by Analayo

Transformation & Healing - Sutra on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness by Thich Nhat Hanh

The Miracle of Mindfulness by Thich Nhat Hanh

Mindfulness & Intimacy by Ben Connelly

The practice period will begin and end with one-day sits on Sundays, February 3 and March 31. The day sits will be from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm at the McGowan House Zendo in Monterey. It will also be supported by our annual meditation retreat (*sesshin*) at Villa Angelica. Practice period teas will be held Sundays from 9 to 10 am followed by classes on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness from 10 to noon on February 10, 17, 24 and March 10, 17, and 24. Classes will include sharing how the practice from the previous week went as well as discussing the current week's topic and setting up the practices for the coming week. Teas and classes will also be at McGowan House, corner of Jackson and High Street, Monterey. Practice period forms will be available at Cherry Center, McGowan House and Brown Bag Zen.

We look forward to practicing and unfolding the Dharma together!

TAMING ANXIETY

A workshop with Rev. Keiryu Lien Shutt

Saturday, February 16, 10:15 am – 4:00 pm

Lecture, Friday, February 15, 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm

Does your mind seem to "be all over the place"? Do you find yourself worrying a lot? Do you feel easily overwhelmed and filled with anxiety? Do you obsess about "shoulds" and "coulds" and, therefore, find it hard to focus?



Buddhist teachings and meditation practices have long addressed ways to be with such emotions and thoughts. In this workshop, we will gather and to learn ways in which we can work with worry and anxiety. You'll learn ways to be with these emotions and be able to practice meditations, which can foster calm and ease in body and mind. Seated and walking meditations, Dharma teachings, group discussions and experiential exercises are offered. The workshop will be held at the Cherry Center, NW corner of Guadalupe and 4th Avenue, Carmel. Please bring your own lunch. Rev. Shutt will also offer a lecture on Friday, February 15 from 6:30 - 8:30 pm at McGowan House, Franklin and High Streets, Monterey. Suggested donations are on a sliding scale: \$55 to \$75 for the workshop and \$10 to \$20 for the lecture. No one will be turned away for lack of ability



to donate. Please register for either event with Shogen Danielson at shogen.danielson@sfzc.org. Or call Mark Orrisch at 659-7138.

Rev. Keiryū Liên Shutt is a Dharma heir in the Shunryu Suzuki lineage. Drawing from her monastic practices in the U.S. and overseas, she endeavors to share ways in which the deep settledness of traditional practices can be brought into everyday life. Based at San Francisco Zen Center, Liên also teaches at East Bay Meditation Center and other Bay Area groups. To access talks, schedule a practice discussion (PD), and other retreat or workshop information, please go to AccessToZen.org.

ANNUAL SESSHIN

The annual Monterey Bay Zen Center sesshin begins Thursday evening, February 28 at 5:00 pm and continues until Sunday, March 3 ending at noon. We will gather at Villa Angelica across from Monastery Beach. A sesshin is residential period of intensive meditation and is an opportunity to deepen our practice, through periods of zazen, walking meditation, silent meals, dharma talks, practice discussions, work periods and rest.

We do not often have the opportunity to sit together for an extended length of time. The quality of the experience differs from a single period and service. It allows for a greater relaxation of our habits of thought and perhaps offers insight to our practice in the world.

Rev. Shogen Danielson and Rev. Robert Reese will be leading the sesshin. Early registration will be important. Residential space is limited. Priority will be given to residential applications for the entire schedule of sesshin. There are also opportunities for day-long non-residential practice. Scholarships are available. No one will be denied the opportunity to participate because of his or her financial situation. Villa Angelica is located south of Carmel, about 1/2 mile past Rio Rd. Sesshin applications will be available at Cherry Center, McGowan House and Brown Bag Zen.

Residential participation: Suggested donation \$90.00 per day. Day long participation: Suggested donation \$75.00 per day. For more info and registration, please contact Mark Orrisch at orrisch.markcharles@gmail.com or 659-7138.

ANOTHER STEP ON THE WAY

Tenderness and Embodied Practice

Prior to the mid-term elections, I volunteered with Swing Left Monterey, to help get Democrats elected in “swing” congressional districts in California. One of the activities I volunteered for was to call registered voters in two Central Valley congressional districts. Swing Left volunteers provided training in using current technology to make the phone calls.

I took the materials home to make the phone calls. I went on line to the phone bank program and just before I started the program, I felt a brief spell of panic. This was surprising as I felt fearless beginning the training. I had a long history of making phone calls when I was a volunteer organizer of unrecognized workers (not covered under the National Labor Relations Act). My commitment to the organizing was full time, seven days a week, and began when I was twenty until I was thirty-seven. I became disillusioned with the organization and

left. I hadn’t done any political organizing or phoning until that day in October. Once the panic subsided, I started making the calls and got into the routine.

That sense of panic poked at my curiosity. It felt out of the blue or maybe from the shadow side of consciousness. During this time, I was participating in a discussion group on *The Way of Tenderness: Awakening through Race, Sexuality and Gender* by Zenju Earthlyn Manuel. Her book resonated with my sense of curiosity and helped me develop an insight into that moment. Those moments, impulses, thoughts that arise can trouble us but can also help liberate us from continued suffering.



We must come through the fire of our lives to experience awakening. We are all tender no matter where we fall on the continua within race, sexuality and gender. We are tender in a raw sense, and not necessarily in a soft and gentle way. This tenderness is of a wounded nature. We are all sore from the hatred. Our tenderness is our aching, sensitivity and ultimately our vulnerability. This raw feeling is not only experienced by those who have been oppressed, abused and discriminated against. Experiences of hatred, whether giving or receiving it, have no boundaries. The abuser or oppressor also experiences a wounded tenderness. One cannot hate without knowing the experience of it. After all, aren't those who are perceived to be dominant in our society hated too? Can we be tender in the raw sense and still actively walk the path of liberation?

(*The Way of Tenderness*, pages 15-16)

I had an intellectual understanding that emotions arise beyond thinking. I knew that I had traumas related to my experience as an organizer but I didn’t think about them much. The self that was a committed organizer was now an older, married, Zen Buddhist man, or so the story goes. The physical act of pushing the buttons to make a phone call with a phone pitch in front of me called forth the memory of trauma. It was in the body. Without my zazen practice, an embodied practice, the memory of panic that arose would probably have just been buried again. Instead I became curious. I could investigate that memory. I had the confidence to investigate those memories that I feared. Could I be tender in the raw sense and still walk the path of liberation?

I realized that each of us has these experiences that can create suffering. They don’t exist separate from the body/mind nor separate really from each other. Our insight to this deep connection allows compassion to arise. I work to be more patient especially with anger. I often find that generosity arises. A step on the path of liberation.

Mark Orrisch

Editor's Note: We hope that Another Step on the Way will be a regular feature of MBZC newsletter. The article above was developed from a talk given at Brown Bag Zen which meets on Fridays from noon to 1:00 pm. We would welcome articles from all Sangha members about their experiences and insights. Please submit articles to orrisch.markcharles@gmail.com.



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MONTEREY BAY ZEN CENTER

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WEEKLY SCHEDULE

We meet Monday mornings at the McGowan House Zendo in Monterey and Tuesday evenings and Thursday mornings at the Cherry Center, 4th and Guadalupe in Carmel.

Tuesday evening schedule:

Zazen 6:30
Kinhin (walking) 7:10
Service 7:20
Lecture/discussion 7:30-8:30

Monday, Thursday mornings:

Zazen 7am
(followed by service and soji)

Zazen instruction first Tuesday of
each month at 5:30pm

Ordinary Recovery, Sats, 9-10am
Cherry Center, Carmel

Brown Bag Zen, Fridays 12:15-1:15
St. James Church, Monterey

Introduction to Zen	Sun, Jan 20	9:30-noon, McGowan House
The Way of Tenderness	Sun, Jan 27	10-noon, McGowan House
Dogen's Birthday	Tue, Jan 29	6:30-8:30pm, Cherry Center
Practice Period opening 1-day sit	Sun, Feb 3	9-4pm, McGowan House
Practice Period Tea & Class	Sun, Feb 10, 17, 24	9-noon, McGowan House
Lien Shutt Lecture	Fri, Feb 15	6:30-8:30pm, McG House
Taming Anxiety Workshop	Sat, Feb 16	10:15-4:00pm, Cherry Center
Buddha's Parinirvana	Tue, Feb 19	6:30-8:30pm, Cherry Center
Sesshin	Thur, Feb 28-Sun, Mar 3	Villa Angelica
Practice Period Tea & Class	Sun, Mar 10, 17, 24	9-noon, McGowan House
Mahapajapati Memorial	Tue, Mar 12	6:30-8:30pm, Cherry Center
Full-Moon/Equinox Ceremony	Tue, Mar 19	6:30-8:30pm, Cherry Center
Practice Period closing 1-day sit	Sun, Mar 31	9-4pm, McGowan House
Buddha's Birthday	Tue, Apr 9	6:30-8:30pm, Cherry Center