

THE WOBBLY POT

Summer 2009/2010



*Monks these days study hard in order to turn a fine phrase and win fame as talented poets. At Crazy Clouds hut there is no such talent, but he serves up the taste of truth as he boils rice in a wobbly old pot.
- Ikkyū*

Newsletter of the Zen Group of Western Australia

ZGWA Calendar & Contacts

About the ZGWA

The Zen Group of W.A. was formed in 1983. Today the ZGWA mails out to more than 120 members and associates & meditation retreats (sesshins) are available through the year on a regular basis.

The group is affiliated with the Diamond Sangha which was founded in Hawaii in 1959 by Robert Aitken Roshi. Aitken Roshi's book, "Taking the Path of Zen" is a wonderful introduction to Zen practice and is available for purchase at the Zendo.

Group Zazen Schedule

The ZGWA meets regularly for group sitting, dokusan and dharma talks. Please come along (if you're new, please aim to be 15 mins early or arrange for orientation) and bring all your questions!.

- Thursday Evening 7:00pm – 9:00pm
- Sunday Morning 5:30am – 7:30am, 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month.

The venue is St Paul's Church Hall, 162 Hampton Road, Beaconsfield, WA.

Orientation

Orientation for newcomers is available by arrangement. Please visit our website for up to date contact details.

Library

The ZGWA has an extensive library of Buddhist and related literature available to members.

Website: www.zgwa.org.au

Committee Members

The ZGWA council meets on a monthly basis to manage events and daily business of the group. Current members are:

- Jak Baddams
- Kevin Donohue
- Mary Heath (Membership Secretary)
- Paul Wilson (Treasurer)
- Peter Nolin
- Phil McNamara (Secretary & Librarian)

Membership & Newsletter Subscription

Enquiries about subscribing to the newsletter, or becoming a financial member may be directed to any council member at the zendo, or directly via email on our website.

Newsletter Contributions

If you would like to contribute to the newsletter, whether it be a written piece, something found or otherwise please send contributions to Jak Baddams at unporkoboe@hotmail.com

This newsletter provides a medium for members and friends of the Zen Group of Western Australia to express their views. The opinions are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect Council's views, or those of other sangha members.

2010 Sesshin Dates

- 23rd - 27th April (Autumn) : Epiphany Center
- 24th September - 1st October (Spring)

Events Calendar: January 2010

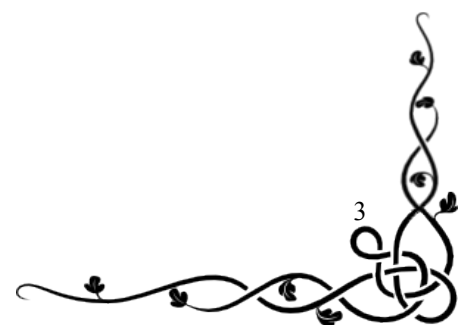
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
					1 New Years Ceremony 11am	2
3 Zazen & dokusan, 5:30-7:30am	4	5	6	7 Zazen with dharma talk 7-9pm	8	9
10	11	12	13	14 Zazen 7-9pm	15	16
17 Zazen, 5:30-7:30am	18	19	20	21 Zazen & dokusan 7-9pm	22	23
24	25	26	27	28 Zazen 7-9pm	29	30
31						

Events Calendar: February 2010

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4 Zazen with dharma talk 7-9pm	5	6
7 Zazen & dokusan, 5:30-7:30am	8	9	10	11 Zazen 7-9pm	12	13
14	15	16	17	18 Zazen & dokusan 7-9pm	19	20 Zazenkai 1pm-9pm
21 <i>Zazenkai continues 5:30am -7:30am</i>	22	23	24	25 Zazen 7-9pm	26	27
28						

Events Calendar: March 2010

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4 Zazen with dharma talk 7-9pm	5	6
7 Zazen & dokusan, 5:30-7:30am	8	9	10	11 Zazen 7-9pm	12	13
14	15	16	17	18 Zazen & dokusan 7-9pm	19	20
21 Zazen, 5:30-7:30am	22	23	24	25 Zazen 7-9pm	26	27
28	29	30	31			



Words from the Teacher

Happy New Year! I trust that you had an enjoyable and peaceful time over the festive season. Traditionally, this is a time of reflection and renewal. For the Zen student, now is an opportune time to reflect on your practice, "lacking or complete." Where do you sit with the Bodhisattva Vows? How is your commitment to saving the many Beings? What is it that motivates your practice?

As has been the way of the ZGWA sangha for the last decade, we began our year with the New Year's Day celebration. This was well attended and we continued our reading of the Samdhinirmochana Sutra. That evening, a few sangha members, partners and friends drove to Sullivan Rock to enjoy the first full moon of the decade. This was an enjoyable outing of sitting, talking and poetry reading. There are plans to do this more frequently for full moons and/or new moons for star gazing. It is a great location and an easy walk in from Albany Highway.

I encourage you to support others and feel supported by others in your practice. Daily zazen, weekly sitting with the sangha and attendance at zazenkais and sesshins are the way to deepen your practice. The Dharma talk series on the Precepts continues on the first Thursday of the month. This begins in February with a talk followed by discussion on the Fourth Grave Precept, Not Lying. Your support and contribution are most welcomed.

If you are considering taking Jukai, please discuss this with me as soon as possible.

I look forward to seeing you at the Zendo and at the sesshin venues later in the year.

Warm Regards

Ian

HELP WHEN FALLING by Phillip McNamara

The following is a conversation - of emails - sent between a Melbourne friend and I, November 17th 2009 (Tuesday). She practices Siddha Yoga and I Zen, however we offer each other reflections from our own traditions.

To: MCNAMARA Phil (...)

Subject: "Help!" cried the rabbit, as it fell through the wormhole, "where's the third way?"

Argh. A note of complaint on the final throes of quitting the second job...

god, they're making it such a drama ...

Another chance to hold myself together was lost when Melbourne's parking inspectorate delivered me a parking ticket.

Hello camel, is this the hump? I watched myself collapse in tears on the street - just hysterical release, I hold myself too tight...

Mmm, look at that, overwhelm & the habits of isolation...

I recall Gurumayi saying don't let yourself collapse and fall apart, so the onus is to negotiate my own habituated anxiety - again.

...The same stuff, another level, stretch and expand, stretch and expand...

Bugger, another spiral around the Maypole.

It's like bloody childbirth, I tell you! God, I hope this is second stage when the universe takes over and it's bloody awesome!

There must be a third way - get curious, rabbit.

Yes, I know, the meaning of life is a man falling down a well with his eyes open.

... I'm a tumblin' -

* * *

To: "Alice"

Subject: Help When Falling.

Excerpt from: **The Original Sandokai by Zen Master Sekito Kisen**

The Subtle Source is clear and bright; the tributary Streams flow through the darkness. To be attached to things is illusion; to encounter the Absolute is not yet enlightenment.

Each and all of the subjective and objective sense spheres are related, and at the same time, independent; related, yet working differently, though each keeps its own place. Sights vary in quality and form; sounds differ as to pleasing or harsh.

The Dark makes all words One. The Brightness distinguishes good and bad phrases. The four elements return to their Nature like a child to its Mother. Fire is hot, wind moves, water is wet, earth is hard.

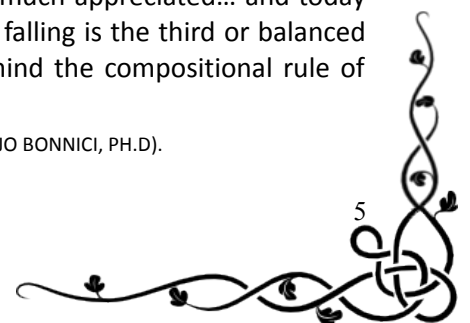
Eyes see, ears hear, nose smells, tongue tastes the salt and the sour. Each is independent of the other. Cause and effect must return to the Great Reality. The words high and low are used relatively.

Within light there is darkness, but do not try to understand that darkness. Within darkness there is light, But do not look for that light. Light and darkness are a pair, like the foot before and the foot behind in walking. ¹

Morning Friend,

Your last email was full of clarity and some very good suggestions for me... much appreciated... and today you're falling into space... but we are always falling and that is the joy. Such falling is the third or balanced "middle way". Being an artist your call for a third way also brings to my mind the compositional rule of

¹ Translation from - <http://www.meditationtherapy.com/Sandokai.html> (website of ANDREW SHUGYO DAIJO BONNICI, PH.D.)



thirds. Such a design element does not aim at equilibrium but uses the division of the design (into nine equal parts) to align the subject(s) with the intersecting points to create more tension, energy and interest in the composition; than simply centring the subject would. Perhaps we must then consider the third way as not so much about centring and stillness, but as about the reality of motion and the quality of intersections. This is encountering our sense spheres and understanding our relationship to their “well”ness.

As you suggest we learn much keeping our eyes open through our falling. Perhaps we may even start to feel like sky jumpers – parachuting – and find that the way we hold our hand or leg will glide us. Such movement may even give us the time to appreciate the view or the whistling wind singing a tune through our body and clothing.

There is no first or second or third versions of reality. Though it may feel like a birth of sorts, and though some Zen masters provide ranks for the teetering feelings or suggestions about how to pay attention to the fall, in the end their suggestions can perhaps be summarised as not getting caught up in which mode of falling is “right”. That’s not to suggest that there is not a True Reality out there. It’s just to say that whilst you are concerned about dancing or climbing the Maypole, or thinking that parking tickets or job drama is either frustrating or intriguing, you too concerned with wandering mind to appreciate the leap and fall.

Each persons version of reality has its own validity. However True Reality is not what we habitually *think* it is. Drop *that*. Free float. Let reality manifest complete each moment. Realize you are expressing Reality and appreciate that ticket; then you are not isolated. This is the “curious” you nearly embrace. This is the “curious” you abandon to take up your own drama of falling on the pavement. Melbourne has been having a heat wave, did you feel its warmth? Did your tears refresh you like rain? It seems that they showed you the irony of your self-drama. Emotions can often help us pause or gain some clarity about our inclinations and elaborations of self. But in the moment who was crying? Which who was such drama taking the pressure off? Examine how complete or incomplete your hysteria was.

My guess is that, like I found in my moments of anger when I felt justified in feeling that my hurt “caused” by another was justified, that such exploding is neither deeply personal or impersonal for it has edges which are incomplete and dishonest. That is I wanted the pain and drama and anger and frustration because it kept certain of my stories alive and kicking. I agree with Gurumayi that there can be a collapsing and falling apart which is completely self-serving and ignorant of spiritual release (or as some traditions say - purification). Now those are the spaces to fall into or explore. Those ultimately are also the reinforcing conditions of small self that one has to deepen or open up. Again you see this already. Indeed we “stretch and expand, stretch and expand” until we open. Such opening is not collapsing, nor is it resignation, in Zen terms it is airing our dissatisfactions and attachments (karma) until its limitations are seen. We may then find that opening is endless liberation. And so begins the true path.

Another way of describing it is that true falling is more grace than anxiety. Such “letting go” is the beginning of acceptance and thus healing rather than a fighting. Indeed realize that you never are lost or found, struggling or striving ... or anything... for we are simply each moment falling away. This is, in Zen terms, stepping off the hundred foot pole to discover that life flows (as the Beatles sang “Within and without” you). We then live for life itself, not for any particular reason or gain (and hence there is no need to go – as suggested in your last email - anywhere to meet anyone; though doing so can be enriching).

Just keep in mind that tossed in difficult winds or waves we can feel resentment or acceptance. However also keep in mind that whatever our feelings we are the intersection between wave or wind and service or consciousness of that elemental ore. At that intersection all “levels” are One. I think that’s why I like standing in the wind or sitting in nature. Winds rise up. Conditions change. Any equilibrium is brief, local and relative. The world is sunlight and shadows. To see clearly that there is no permanent, fixed atmosphere is wonderful insight. One then connects with every experience, every being on earth, constantly exchanging breath and energy and dancing (moment by moment with *everything* rather than a

pole where we might trip over our own or someone else's feet) . Thus if we need to cry we cry. If we need to fan ourselves we fan ourselves. If we need to eat or shit or cough we do. And so we move through each day and every day is a good day. Nothing more or less. This is, in Zen, spiritual practice. This very life.

The wind is not theoretical. Be most intimate with it. It blows and we hold out our arms, untangle a kite and get it flying, brush our hair back into place, wait for the rain, or look at the tree swaying and sway ourselves. In Zen terms this is the dharma of the myriad things. We may not have much choice as to what life brings us (the streams of many karmas running endlessly together), but we can choose how we practice and dance with whatever comes.

This is understanding the intimacy of the relative and the absolute. As Sekito Kisen says at the end of The Sandokai:

Each thing has its own intrinsic value, and is related to everything else in function and position. Ordinary life fits the Absolute as a box and its lid. The Absolute works together with the Relative, like two arrows meeting In mid-air.

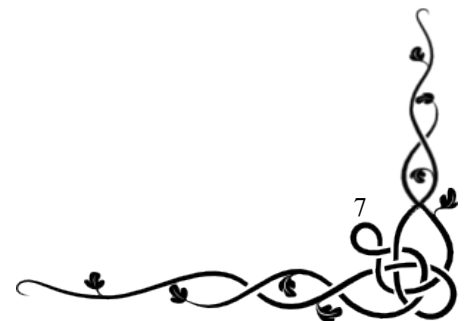
Reading these words you should grasp the Great Reality. Do not judge by any standards. If you do not see the Way, you do not see It even as you walk on It. Progress is not a matter of far or near, but if you are confused, mountains and rivers block your way.

I respectfully say to those who wish to be enlightened, do not waste your time by day or night.²

May all beings be happy.

In the end we all are!

2 Ibid.



Sermon of Zen Master Bassui

Kannon is called the Seer of the Sounds of the World because she attained enlightenment by way of sound. Just see what it is that hears this sound, whether standing or sitting, look for this; when you don't know what you're hearing anymore and your direction is ended and you are diffused and far out, even here as long as sound is being heard, when you look deeper and deeper, even this appearance of vague diffusion dies out and it is like a clear cloudless sky. Herein there is nothing that can be called self. The host who hears cannot be seen, either.

This mind is the same as universal space, yet there is no place that can be called space. At this time you think this is enlightenment, but you should doubt even more; who hears this sound? If you go on investigating without producing a single thought, the realm where it seems like nothing exists, like empty space, also dies out, there is no more taste at all; where it is dark as night, if you exert all your power to fully doubt what it is that hears this sound, then when the doubt shatters and you are like someone who has completely died coming back to life, this then is enlightenment, *satori*.



Zen Master Bassui (1326-1387) wrote a volume of sermons and letters of advice to both homeless and lay students, written in easily understood ordinary language and useful to generations of meditators. Bassui favored an intense introspective method, continually transcending conscious ideas of understanding or realization, describing a method for gaining access to enlightenment and deepening one's practice to thoroughly awaken the original mind in all activities.

Life's Journeying through late-onset depression by A. Novice

Getting off Drugs.

I've been a non-member much longer than a member of the Fremantle Zen Group, due to the position in Life I found myself in the year 2000, but were gratefully welcomed to practice meditation with the group via goodness with in managements heart.

Thus I entered Zazen again after a twenty two year break, having moved from New Zealand to Fremantle. Looking for group from which to practice meditation again. I scoured the local-rag and followed up FZG's advertisement as I had just realised depression and had gone for the Doctor for assistance with this age-old disability of the mind.

One year earlier I had entered the dark night of my soul after a home invasion incident caused some broken shoulder bones and left me lying unconscious; my Partner was nine months pregnant at the time. Finding myself unable to support my Family and with the Banks Vulture at my Door I had to put aside my pride aside and go for help to the medical profession of which I had developed no trust over the last thirty years. But I went as I knew there must be something more I could do for myself than just take prescribed chemicals; I wanted to root-out what was so disabling inside of me.

Whilst taking instructions from the Dr about this disease and what I should do, I was secretly plotting going out into the world to find a meditation comp. I knew I could beat it.

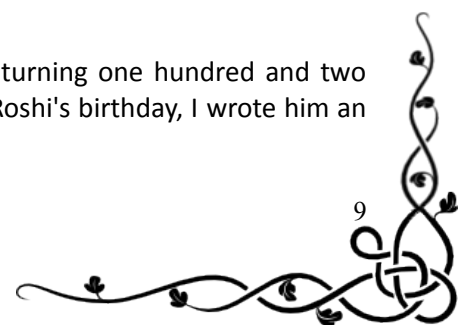
The others in the meditation group would have seen me as 'the quiet lost one with a sickly disposition' as I attended Zazen nights and alternate Sunday mornings without saying a word. Not that I had taken a vow of silence mind you, it was more to do with staying within what I thought were 'the lepers-distance'. The fact was 'being right into medication' was making me more sicker than what I was with depression, except I had my Family to care for and that was my primary goal.

I must thank the team for their support of my heavily loaded appearance and for seeing me through the many retreats where sometimes my ailments got the better of me and I gained great insights as to how to slip through from egos constraints and transcend suffering. Allow me to let you in on how I was able to finally 'get-off' the Medicines that were making me ok to be with but were creating havoc in my body.

Having reached times where I thought I no-longer needed these psychotropic chemicals, I often would begin long slow withdrawals from the drugs. These drugs that got me to function reasonably-well, yes but were also were creating severe constipation as well as a belly-swelling illness for which I allowed the medical profession to remove my Gall Bladder, as they saying mine were a Gall Stone symptom. My lack of libido had also been made nil by these same drugs and no-longer could I find that warm soft space one arrives at by making love due to having no-response to life below the belt. The chemicals I were ingesting had closed the door about the level of my navel.

With the support of my then Clinical Psychologist and the deep listening skills of the groups Roshi at interviews allowed me good understanding of where I was at, or at least 'nearly at' and time an time again I would fail withdrawal: Depression is definitely a black dog, until uncollared. Let me share the events which allowed me to drop the drugs.

Just before Easter last year, I remembered Sasaki Roshi's birthday. He was turning one hundred and two years of age and still teaching in America. On the day before Kyozan Sasaki Roshi's birthday, I wrote him an



email wishing him all the best on his 102nd birthday. I never expected a return email, I just wanted to send my loving appreciation to Him. I had met Roshi in Auckland, New Zealand when He were still travelling about the globe teaching, whilst in his eighties.

I knew absolutely nothing at all of Zen at that time in my life: He had entered a Japanese Monastery as a novice at 14 years of age.

Three nights later, I had this dream enter my awareness.

I was in hospital awaiting an operation.

The theatre nurse put me upon the trolley and then rolled me into a large white room full with many people. It appeared that I was to undergo an eye operation and were told I didn't need an anaesthetic. The Surgeon said I would be fine during the operation and wouldn't feel much at all. The nurse gave me a local and then called the others to the operating table. The Surgeon peered down at me and settled to looking into my left eye then asked for a surgical tool. I became anxious as I was concerned being awake on the operating table; my observation was alertly intent. The surgeon is handed some blunt instrument and held it up in front of me so as I could see it closely. I noticed it was about the size of a pencil except the end had been flattened like a miniature iron golf club to a the size of about 3mm thick x 6mm, rectangular in shape but with square edges.

I figure that He was going-in with this-thing as a knife, He leans closer to me and moves the knife to within half an inch of my eye ball. I stiffen, the two Nurses at my shoulders hold me down. He presses the blunt instrument firmly against my eye-ball and I can feel the indentation where he is applying pressure yet it wont cut-through. I think he has the wrong instrument. I try to tell him that 'its not sharp enough' but the nurses hold something to the popping sound of release. At that same moment, my dream view-point changes and I am taken within the Eye and am aware of the solution swirling about me tumbling over an over and I am no-longer objective: I am inside my eye!

I awoke with a fright!

Five days later, I am in deep meditation in the early hours of the morning having begun at about 5am. The form of my meditation is breath observation, usually starting off by breath counting as I had followed my natural breathing all the way inside, to where it were safe and quiet and I was toying with allowing my breath to stop-still for a time and then re-generating the breath myself with concious effort; I must have been in this space for a half hour when the thought of 'children/school/breakfast' announced that my time was up and I slowly began to rise off the stool where I was kneeling.

This unfolding of myself I do very slowly and as I was about to stand up when I felt a rush occurring and noticed a bright light appear deep in the blackness within me, coming from the south it came faster I became alarmed I might 'black-out' if I was to stand up too fast. I had had this kind of experience many years before so I bent my knees a little to re-gain my centre of gravity and by slightly leaning forwards, over my stomach and folded my arms I was able to hold-down this bright-light that had filled my interior.

Leaning forward and crossing my arms under my chest I was able to hold onto it within my torso, noticing that the initial anxiety had given-way to cellular receptivity and the brilliance began to ease its way into the tissue of my surrounding body.

I stayed with it for quite a few minutes and did so until the light had fully dispersed. Standing up straight after the happening, I was elated and full of life, charged-up in fact.

I had seen life arrive from the south and fill my entire being.

Thus I merged from the Bedroom, radiant and at ease with myself and set about quietly making tea and preparing for breakfast and the children's arising.

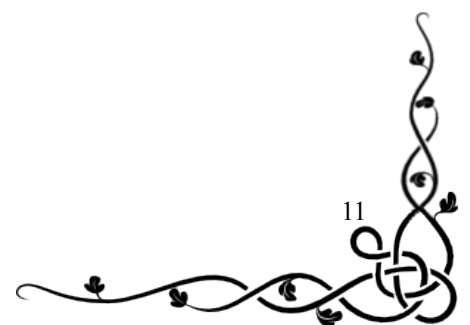
Breakfast was as usual, everyone absorbed in their early-morning antics, no body noticing anything different than usual yet when I walked my Son to high School, I noticed other adults en route the school, people on the street seemed to be watching me intently. People I had never met before came up and spoke

with me as though 'they new me' and I was like a 'long lost friend' and as My Son and I made our way to his high school, He became steadily more and more self-concious and took to walking several paces distance from me.

Returning home to my Wife, I mentioned my school-walking experience and shared with Her my morning meditation experience. As I re-called this with Her quietly listening, it gradually dawned on me that I no longer 'needed' anti-depressants, I had not only reached 'rock-bottom' in my illness over the last two years but I had also found my Life beneath that rock.

I worked on through the day with exceptional ease and with great clarity. My body felt much lighter than normal, transparent in fact and I can honestly say that although I have never ever experienced bliss before in my life I do so now know the meaning of the word!

Peace



Skeletons by Zen Master Ikkyu

Openly embracing all things through emptiness, all forms are produced. When you let go of all forms, this is called the basic ground. All forms-of plants, trees, and land-all come from emptiness, so as a temporary metaphor it is called the fundamental ground.

When you break up a cherry tree and look,
there are no flowers at all;
the flowers are brought by the spring wind.

Even though you soar boundlessly
even beyond the clouds,
just don't rely on the
the teachings of Gautama.

If, hearing the teachings spoken by Gautama over fifty years, you want to try to put the teachings into practice, what Gautama said at the end was that from the beginning to the end he had not said single word; instead, he raised a flower in his hand, whereat Kasyapa smiled faintly.

Ikkyu (1384-1481) is perhaps the best known and beloved of all Zen monks in Japan. Ikkyu was a poet, calligrapher and artist. His Skeletons, in prose and poetry, is a simple yet profound and utterly moving work.

Quotes from 'The Original Face: An Anthology of Rinzai Zen.' Translated and edited by Thomas Cleary. Copyright © Thomas Cleary. 1978 Grove Press, Inc./New York
Quotations contributed by Mary Heath 2009

Cooking the Soup - by Nonin Chowaney

The most important thing in Zen practice is to show up at our cushions every day and sit zazen.

But Zen practice is more than only zazen. The Chinese character "za" means, "to sit." The character "zen" is usually translated as "meditation," but this is not quite accurate. The character is actually made up of two separate characters. The one at the left means, "to show, or reveal." The one at the right means, "single," or "one." So actually, the character "zen" means, "to show or display oneness." Taizan Maezumi, the late abbot of Los Angeles Zen Center, translated it: "to show the oneness or to reveal ourselves as the unity of everything."

So zazen is the core of Zen practice, but Zen is involved in every aspect of our daily lives -- cleaning, cooking, work, reading, everything we do. True Zen practice reveals us moment-by-moment in our natural state, unified and complete. We not only have to "show up everyday" at our cushions, but we also have to "show up every moment" in our lives.

This takes some doing, some training, because our natural state is obstructed or obscured by delusion, which is caused by ignorance, ego-involvement, and selfishness. Buddha's Way and the Zen Path clear away these obstructions and allow us to see into and manifest our true nature. The big question, then, for all of us is: how do we train ourselves to walk the Zen Path?

Historically, in all schools of Buddhism and in all countries there have been both lay and monk practitioners of both sexes, but for various reasons that I won't get into here, the monks got most of the publicity! It's fairly clear what monastic practice is, at least in China and Japan. We have records and we also have living examples. But we don't have so many examples of day-to-day, moment-by-moment lay practice, or monk's practice outside the monastery walls either.

So, we have to do the best we can, relying on our teachers and our deepest understanding. Many people ask me how to train outside of monasteries, people who live near our temple in Omaha and those who live far away from any temple. What I tell them is that we have to carry on a consistent daily practice and we also have to "turn the burner up" under it on a regular basis. It's also important to practice under the guidance of a teacher and to have some interaction in a sangha.

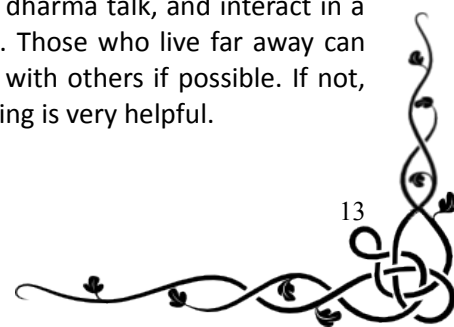
As I said before, daily sitting, preferably morning and night, is the core of our practice. It doesn't have to be for long periods, ten or fifteen minutes at the beginning is okay, as long as it's done regularly. The hard part is to sit down; the length of sitting will take care of itself if you sit alone. Choose a length of time you can handle and then sit at least that. If people try to do too much it becomes burdensome and they soon quit.

If you sit at a temple, the time is usually scheduled, so you have to do what is done. Here in Omaha, we sit one-and-a-half hours morning and evening with no formal break. Practitioners may either get up and do kinhin in the Buddha Hall or rest their legs at their place whenever they wish. They can also enter and leave the Zendo at any time.

Also, I say daily sitting, but here, we don't sit on Sunday. So I tell people that I carry on a daily zazen practice but I don't sit every day! Sometimes I'm ill, or traveling, or something comes up that I have to attend to. So be flexible and don't be hard on yourself when you have to miss a day for a good reason.

Carrying on quiet daily sitting keeps the practice soup slowly cooking, and I've found that this is the best way. But sometimes, it's good to "turn the burner up" and to do it regularly, especially in the early stages. I recommend weekly, monthly, and yearly adjustments.

Those who live near a temple can go once a week to sit with others, hear a dharma talk, and interact in a sangha. Most places schedule talks regularly and offer other special events. Those who live far away can take a morning (or evening) once a week to sit for a longer period of time, with others if possible. If not, alone. Afterwards, listening to a tape, viewing a video, or doing a special reading is very helpful.



Once a month, it's also good to do something special. Those who live near temples can avail themselves of what's offered there. For those who live far away, a drive to a neighboring temple might not be feasible every week, but once a month might be possible.

"Turning the burner up" on a yearly basis, means sesshin, or concentrated training. Everyone should be able to get away for one seven-day and one two-day sesshin a year. Take another weekend to do a study retreat, a family weekend, or another sesshin.

In our practice, it's important to interact in sangha and to study under the guidance of a teacher. This is difficult those who live in outlying areas, but we have excellent mail and phone service these days. A letter or phone call can be meaningful contact and can keep the relationship going until student and teacher can meet face-to-face.

Sometimes, we feel that if there's no teacher in our immediate area, it's not possible to have one. Or, we want a teacher to come to us, so we sit back and wait, or try to coax one to come. These are mistakes. There are many good Zen teachers now in America. What we have to do is get off our duffs and go look for one.

Finally, I once thought that practicing Zen in a monastery would be the most difficult way imaginable, something I could never do, and it is difficult, but practicing Zen outside the walls is much more difficult because you have to provide your own structure and your own support. Also, there are many, many distractions. So take some time to experience monastic life. My time in monasteries makes it easier to practice now because the Way was deeply clarified for me in that restricted, uncomplicated setting. Go for a month, three months, or longer. At one time or another, -- after the kids get older, between jobs, or after graduation -- it can be done and will be of great benefit for all beings.

When I was at Shogo-ji, deep in the mountains of Japan, isolated, with a small group of monks, I learned the value of a quiet, consistent, nothing special daily practice and the value of a simple life. But I also know the value of "turning the burner up" occasionally. I treasure sesshins and look forward to them immensely; we do them regularly here. I do so much talking and running around that it's such a relief to sit down in one place and keep my mouth shut for a few days! A while ago, a friend sent me some video tapes, two of the Dalai Lama, one of Thich Nhat Hanh, and one of Theravadan monks in Sri Lanka. What a treasure they were, and such a boost to my practice.

So although the kind of place and practice I treasure most is quiet and ordinary, daily zazen, work, moment-by-moment "showing up." I also value "turning the burner up" occasionally and getting the soup rolling. It blends the ingredients and thickens the pot.

Sourced from the website of the Nebraska Zen Centre
URL: http://www.prairiewindzen.org/cooking_the_soup.html

On Instructions for Monks in the Kitchen Hall (*Jikuin Mon*) by Dogen Kigen

Translator's Introduction: *The text of this discourse would have been placed in the kitchen for the Chief Cook and the other kitchen monks to read and refer to. When Hangyō Kōzen prepared the first published version of the Shōbōgenzō in 1690, he added this chapter, along with Discourse 1: A Discourse on Doing One's Utmost in Practicing the Way of the Buddhas (Bendōwa) and Discourse 5: On Conduct Appropriate for the Auxiliary Cloud Hall (Jūundō Shiki), to the other versions of the Shōbōgenzō that he found in Eihei-ji.*

On the sixth day of the eighth lunar month in the fourth year of the Kangen era (September 17, 1246), I expounded on the following for the assembly, "The method of training for monks who are responsible for preparing meals is to have them make reverence their underlying principle." After the Tathagata's entering parinirvana, the Dharma has been accurately Transmitted from far off India and to China, and during that time, celestial beings have made spiritual offerings to the Buddhas and Their disciples. Rulers of nations have also made alms offerings of royal food to the Buddhas and Their disciples. In addition, the households of wealthy and ordinary lay folk have respectfully made food offerings, and there have even been laborers and servants who have done the same. These alms offerings were accompanied with deep respect and cordiality. Among persons in lofty positions, as well as among ordinary folk, were those who made offerings of food and other things in a most respectful way, accompanied with highly courteous bows and with the most polite forms of speech, because of the depth of their intentions. Now, even though we are deep within remote mountains, we should personally receive the authentic Transmission of polite acts and respectful words from those who serve in the Kitchen Hall of our temple, for this is how those in lofty positions, as well as ordinary folk, have pursued their study of the Buddha's Dharma.

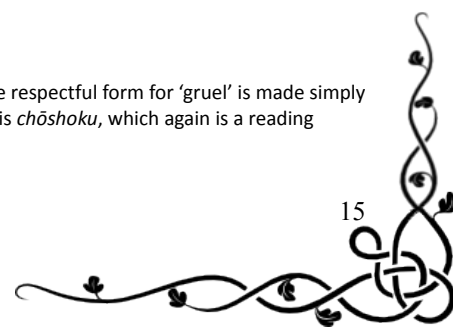
For example, when speaking of the breakfast gruel, you should take the time to say, 'our revered gruel' or 'our morning gruel', but not just 'the gruel'.³ When speaking of the midday meal, you should take the time to say 'our revered midday meal' or 'our lunchtime', but not just 'lunch'. You should take the time to say, "Would you please prepare some white rice for me?" and not just, "Pound me some rice!" As to washing rice, you should take the time to say, "Would you please wash some rice for me?" and not spend your time saying, "Wash me some rice!" You should take the time to say, "Would you please select some vegetables for our stir-fry dish?" and not, "Get me some veggies!" You should take the time to say, "Would you please prepare a nice broth for our meal?" and not, "Make us some broth!" You should take the time to say, "Would you please prepare some nice hot soup for our meal?" and not, "Make us some soup!" You should take the time to say, "The lunchtime meal—or the morning gruel—has been prepared ever so nicely."

Be sure to treat all the utensils used to prepare the midday meal and the morning gruel with similar respect. Disrespect invites calamity; it is never accompanied by anything meritorious.

While the midday meal and the breakfast gruel are being prepared, no one should breathe all over the rice and vegetables, or any other food items. Do not let the sleeve of your robe brush against even dry food items. If your hand has come in contact with your head or face, do not handle any utensils or food until you have washed it. From the time of sorting the rice until the cooking of it to make a broth, should you happen to scratch yourself, by all means you should wash your hands.

In places where the midday meal and the morning gruel are being prepared, you should recite lines from Buddhist Scriptures or passages spoken by the Ancestral Masters. Do not engage in worldly talk or use crude speech. As a principle, you should take the time to use polite word forms when speaking of such things as rice, meals, salt, and soy sauce. You should not use your time saying, "There's rice," or "There's veggies."

³'Our revered gruel' and similar phrases are somewhat heavy-handed English translations. In Japanese, the respectful form for 'gruel' is made simply by adding the prefix 'o-' to the Chinese-derived word *shoku* to form *o-shoku*. The word for 'morning gruel' is *chōshoku*, which again is a reading derived from the Chinese. Dōgen contrasts these with the colloquial Japanese word for gruel: *kayu*.



When senior monks and novices pass by the place where the midday meal or the morning gruel is being conducted, they should respectfully bow with hands in gassho.*

If there are any spilt vegetables or spilt rice, they should be made use of after the meal.⁴

To the extent that the morning or midday meals have not concluded, you should not intrude upon them.

You should take care to preserve the utensils used for preparing meals and not use them for other purposes. Do not let them be handled by lay folk who have come from home until they have washed their hands. Such foodstuffs as vegetables and fruit which have come from lay folk and which have not yet been cleansed should be rinsed, incensed, and left to dry by the fire, and then respectfully offered to the Three Treasures and to the monks of the assembly. In the mountain retreats and the temples of Great Sung China today, if lay folk bring such things as dumplings, dairy cakes, and steamed cakes, they should be reheated before being served to the monastic community. This will purify them. Do not serve them without reheating them.

These are but a few points among many. O you who are in charge of the Kitchen Hall, you need to understand their great import and put them into practice. Within all your myriad duties, do not act contrary to these standards.

These items are the lifeblood of the Buddhas and Ancestors and the Eye of patch-robed monks. Non-Buddhists know them not: celestial demons cannot endure them. Only the disciples of Buddha have been able to Transmit them. O you who are senior officers of the Kitchen Hall, discern them well and do not let them be lost!

*Displayed here by Dōgen,
the Founding Monk of this temple.*

I, as Master of Eihei-ji Temple, now address the Chief Officer: If it is already past noon when a donor makes an offering of cooked rice, you should keep it in storage until the next day. But if it is something like cakes, fruit, or some kind of gruel, or the like, even though it is already evening, serve it as a medicine meal for the assembly of the Buddhas and Ancestors.⁵ And what is more, such a meal is an excellent trace left by those in Great Sung China who realized the True Way.

The Tathagata always permitted monks living in the Himalayas to wear underclothing. We on this mountain also permit such medicine during the times of snow.

*Kigen, the Founding Monk of Eihei.*⁶

Taken from The Shobogenzo, sourced from thezensite.com

URL: http://www.thezensite.com/ZenTeachings/Dogen_Teachings/Shobogenzo_Complete.html

Translated by Rev. Hubert Nearman

⁴That is, fed to animals or used for compost.

⁵Traditionally, only two meals are served to the monastic community, one in the morning and another before noon. Because monks, particularly those who are ill or are engaged in heavy physical labor, may need more nourishment than these two meals provide, an evening meal may be offered as a form of 'medicine' to provide additional nourishment for the body.

⁶Kigen was one of Dōgen's names.



Illustration 1: The Editorial Board of the University Society Boys and Girls Bookshelf (New York: The University Society, 1920) 160

