



Berkeley Zen Center



March 2008 Newsletter

Celebrate Buddha's Birthday at BZC

This year our Buddha's birthday celebration will be on Saturday, April 5.

Buddha's Birthday is an important date on the Zen calendar, marking the birth of the Buddha and the fresh possibility of awakening in one's own life. The Saturday program will start at 9:30 am, but preparations will begin earlier in the morning. See the zendo bulletin board for the full schedule and to sign up to help prepare the temple grounds and clean up afterwards. Feel free to bring friends and families.

Children, who embody our hope for enlightened peace and the planet's future, are especially encouraged to attend. An important part of the ceremony is bathing the baby Buddha in his bower, which the sangha decorates every year. Decorating the flower bower is a fun group event, which will happen Saturday morning from 7:30-8:30 am; everyone is invited to help decorate during that time.

Please bring flowers on Friday, April 4 -- carnations, iris, daisies, ranunculus, sweet william, camellias, and lilies are especially good. Leave them on the Community Room porch before evening zazen, or bring treasures from your garden when you come Saturday morning. For more information, contact BZC Head Chiden, Anke Perkert, anke_per@yahoo.com.

BZC Schedule

March

Founder's Ceremony

Monday, 3-3, 6:20 pm

Tuesday, 3-4, 6:40 am

All Sangha Potluck

Tuesday, 3-4

Beginner's Sitting

Sunday, 3-9

Kidzendo

Saturday, 3-15

One-Day Sitting

Saturday, 3-22

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 3-22, 9:30 am

April

Founder's Ceremony

Thursday, 4-3, 6:20 pm

Friday, 4-4, 6:40 am

Buddha's Birthday Celebration

Saturday, 4-5

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 4-12, 9:30 am

Kidzendo

Saturday, 4-19

Work Day Sitting

Sunday, 4-20

Mountains And Rivers

Friday-Sunday, 4-25 to 4-27



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.

All Sangha Potluck and Budget Meeting

On Tuesday, March 4, 2008, at 6:30, we will come together to hear a report from the treasurer and discuss and approve the BZC budget for 2008. Bring a dish to share (sign up on the bulletin board for food and clean up).

PEOPLE

Many thanks to **Everett Wilson** for leading the crew on the 4th Friday at the Berkeley Men's Shelter. Everett's work schedule has changed, so we need to find a new head cook. Guaranteed to provide extreme merit! See below for details.

Thanks again to **Andrea Thach** for ready, willing, and able handling of the Zendo Manager duties. Our new zendo manager, **Leslie Bartholic**, will be assisted by **Catherine Cascade**, and it is to Catherine that we will be sending our requests for well-being and memorial services starting now:

catherinecascade@sbcglobal.net. Prior to this, Catherine had been the community room attendant; taking over for her is **Wanda Hennig**. Gasshos to both of you!

Men's Shelter Needs New Cook

Berkeley Zen Center sponsors two dinners a month at the Berkeley Men's Shelter, on the second and fourth Fridays. BZC pays for the food and sangha members help out with cooking, serving and cleaning up. We are in need of a new crew head for the fourth Fridays. This involves a few extra hours of work once a month, planning and shopping, in addition to being on hand to supervise cooking and serving the meal from 5-8 pm. At this point there is a dynamite crew of regulars who are usually there, as well as some good back up folks. Guaranteed to provide extreme merit! If you are interested in this position, please contact the coordinator, Laurie Senauke, lauries@kushiki.org.

Photo Gallery Assembling

We are in the midst of assembling a photo page for the BZC website. Nowadays many people first come into contact with BZC through our website, and we wanted to include some pictures to show what a lively and fun (and peaceful, of course) group we really are. We will be contacting the individuals in the photos for permission. For more information, contact our webmaster, Gary Artim, at gar-tim@gmail.com.

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

March 1	Childcare
March 8	Childcare
March 15	Kidzendo
March 22	Sesshin – no program
March 29	Childcare
April 5	Buddha's Birthday
April 12	Childcare
April 19	Kidzendo
April 26	Childcare
May 3	Childcare
May 10	Childcare
May 17	Kidzendo
May 24	Childcare
May 31	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.



A Talk by Sojun Roshi, February 11, 1984

It is important to have a good understanding of why we practice, and to keep reminding ourselves. Buddhists have always been concerned with seeing through the illusory quality of our life, and living in a way that is grounded in the bedrock of reality. From Buddha's strict example, come the various practices of Buddhism, but if we try to imitate Buddha's lifestyle; a person who lived in ancient India more than 2,500 years ago, we may get quite discouraged. We have to see our activity in the light of the present day, but we can't ignore the principles of Buddha's understanding. We are easily pulled around and conditioned by our changeable, unstable feelings, emotions, opinions, partiality and desires. In order to live our life in the light of non-attachment and non-partiality of practice/enlightenment, and to settle down in the bed-rock of that reality, we sit zazen.

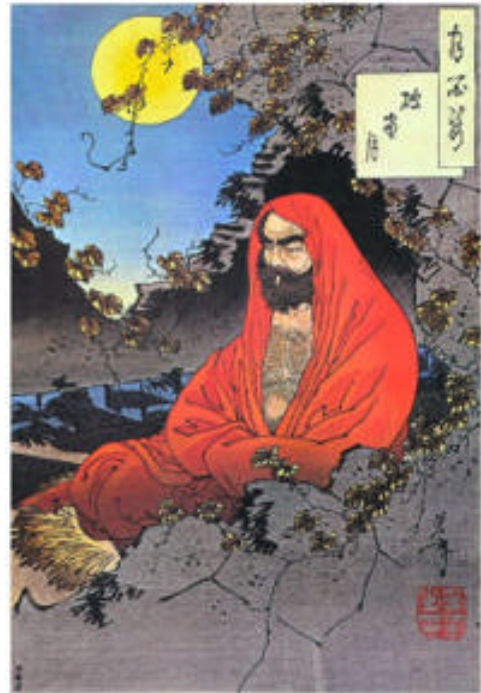
I like to think of what Master Dogen's says in his fascicle of Shobogenzo called: Sagaramudra Sammadhi, [The Ocean Mudra Sammadhi]. He says that while swimming in the waves on the surface, our feet are at the same time walking on the bottom. In the moment by moment, ever changing events of our life, our practice is to be grounded in great immobile stillness.

Sometimes we come to a difficult place in our practice where we can't see where to go; a dark place. At that point we may have to feel our way, taking one step at a time and not giving up until we come out the other side. When we can continue in that way, we gain confidence in ourselves, and can appreciate the meaning of continuous practice, what Dogen calls Gyoji, and overcome doubt. During sesshin, even though we may have difficulties and doubt, we continue to sit still in the midst of the waves, riding one wave at a time. We exist in that space, offering ourselves totally. Without the least gap of separation, we face the reality of our situation and can enjoy the difficulty.

For beginners especially, there is the temptation to run away, but with time we are able to

settle into shikantaza [just sitting].

Zazen bring forth in us a steady light which isn't subject to the ups and downs associated with grasping and aversion, craving or excitement. The light illuminates our direction so that we know what step to take next. When we question our practice we should look at the details of our life more closely. Where am I and what am I doing? What was my original inspiration, my intention? And remember to let go our gaining mind and resume our fundamental beginners mind.



*"What is nirvana?"
"Seeing one thing through to the
end," Suzuki Roshi.*

The Character of Soup and the Soup of Character: Offering hindrances to evoke Bodhisattva spirit

by Raul Moncayo, Senior Student (Part 3)

In Zen practice we work in the kitchen just for the sake of practice and without being paid for it. We don't get paid for this work that is both work and no work at the same time. We are working and resting or not doing anything at the same time.

Zen work is like the work of civil servants who are working yet not appearing to do much at all. But these two are also different because sometimes civil servants are slacking off instead of working. It is very easy for people to confuse the dual and non-dual forms of not working and working. Dual not-working is the opposite of working whereas "nonworking" includes being rested in the midst of great work. Just like Zen students are rested during work or even during getting stressed or tired at work, for many people not-working or vacations turn out to be very tiring and stressful indeed.

It is the stress in a different area that allows for the stress at work to be relieved much like being physically ill often temporarily relieves the afflictions of the mind. Just like resting in zazen is different from vacations, cooking in Zen is also different from gourmet cooking or refined cuisine.

The quality of our food does not come from using only food of the highest quality. We don't discriminate between refined and simple food just like in zazen we do not seek pleasant thoughts, nor repress bad thoughts. Good and bad thoughts are part of our environment; they are the refined and simple ingredients with which we cook our lives. In zazen thoughts and food are cooked with the fire of our breath and legs.

The Tenzo is not a Chef and the Head Server is not a Maitre'd at a French restaurant. By virtue of pouring the practice of Buddhism into ordinary cooking then very simple and ordinary ingredients become fit for a king/queen. The taste of the food comes from magnanimous

mind, from our own body-mind and this is why the food in sesshin always tastes so good. It is the taste of Buddha dharma. The taste of Buddha dharma is both not in the food and not not in the food.

In Zen we prefer to state things in the negative to avoid objectification. If we simply said the taste of Buddha dharma is in the food, the sublime taste would not last too long. If zazen is like an oven, then the mouth is the door of the oven and the legs are like the logs of the fire. We are both cooking the food/thoughts and being cooked by the food/thoughts, eating "it" and being eaten by "it."



Photo by Sue Moon

"The past is ungraspable, the present is ungraspable, the future is ungraspable," The Diamond Sutra.

SAVE THE DATE

Beginners Sesshin For Everyone

Our practice has no beginning and no end, but for people new to the forms, they can be daunting, and for people experienced in the forms, they can get stale. This sesshin is an opportunity for practitioners new and old to invigorate beginners' mind.

The beginners sesshin is on Sunday, March 9, and will run from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm. Though shorter than usual, the rhythm of sitting and practice will be similar to our regular schedule and will maintain the container of sesshin. The focus will be on the basics of our practice: zazen, kinhin, and bowing.

All Invited to One-Day Sitting

On Saturday, March 22, BZC is offering a one-day sitting. The sesshin will start at 5:00 AM and end at 9:10 PM. Alexandra Frappier will be Sesshin Director. A sign-up sheet for the Sesshin, giving more details, will be posted on the outside bulletin board at BZC on Wednesday, March 5. Note that the next one-day sitting after this isn't until Sunday, May 4, marking the opening of Practice Period.

Newsletter Online

The newsletter is available online with full color pictures 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.

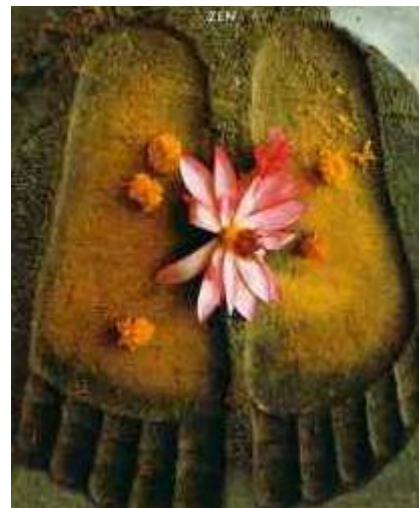
Silent illumination and Our Carbon Footprint

Did you know that the path to enlightenment includes turning off unneeded lights? Sojun Roshi asks us to please turn off unnecessary illumination. The waste of energy taxes both our budget and our planet. Some commonly overlooked culprits include:

- *the zendo and community room porch lights
- *the laundry room
- *the garden shed
- *the community room kitchen (especially when one has passed on to the community room)
- *the community room (especially early saturday & sesshin mornings after all have returned to the zendo)
- *the fans in the two bathrooms

Your awareness in this matter will illumine the ten directions when you practice this at home as well! Thank you

Submitted by Ross Blum.



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