



Plum Mountain News

Dear members and friends,

The daffodils have moved on and now the irises are at their peak. The prelude to our Spring Intensive was our Post Workshop on March 2. We had a good crowd with lots of experienced post holders and newcomers. We shared practice techniques and many questions were asked about how we do things here at Chobo-Ji.

Our Spring Sesshin, the last week of March, was well-attended with 28 participants. In addition to our Puget Sound locals, we had attendees who traveled from Oregon, Connecticut, Colorado and Eastern Washington. Our Shika (host/manager) for this sesshin was Rev. Sento Howells, and she kept us all organized by assigning the many samu (work meditation) tasks. Lynn Sogetsu Hernandez was our Dai Tenzo (chief cook), and continued her development of delicious offerings at each meal. Rev. Gendo Testa served in the post of Jikijitsu (time keeper), and kept us all very punctual. Our Densu (chant leader) for this sesshin was Rev. Seifu Singh-Molares. Slowly but surely the pace of sutra chanting increased each day. Eric Seiku Dee with assistance from Parisa Monirzad and others served as our Jishas (tea servers) and worked well together to provide us all with plenty of fluids, snacks and sweets. Sally Zenka Metcalf Sensei served as my Inji (abbot assistant) and organized the dokusan (Dharma exchange) line and oversaw our garden samu. Rinzan Osho gave a beautiful Dharma Talk on the second day and you will find a transcription in this issue. Tom Shodo DeGroot Sensei and Scott Ishin Stolnack Sensei provided constancy and strength as pillars of our sangha. It is always a joy to do the long days of sesshin with them. My Teisho from third day is also transcribed for this issue and you can find several podcasts from this sesshin at: <http://genjo.libsyn.com/>. I

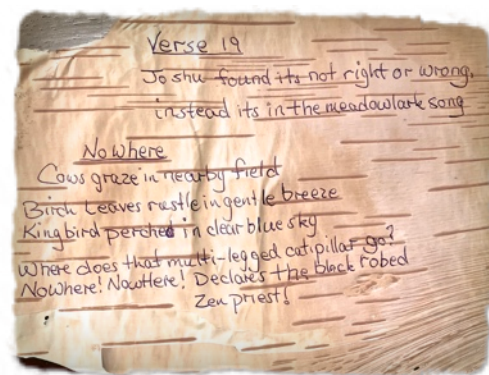


Spring Sesshin 2019

hope you enjoy the closing incense haiku, which I titled "Soaring."

Our eight-week Zen Intro Series has gone splendidly with nearly full zendo attendance each week. Our next Zen Intro Series will start October 1. As always, I give special thanks to our organizers and presenters. We had our annual Seattle University Zazenkai (one day retreat) on April 6, with Chobo-Ji students holding down the posts for S.U. students, faculty and administration guests, organized and hosted by Eddie Daichi Salazar. Our Annual Meeting was held on April 14. Some board members have finished their terms and others were voted on. You will find a report in this issue along with our annual fiscal report. We also had two days with Kathleen Macferran, April 27 & 28. Those attending these workshops were able to investigate the deeper depths of Non-Violent Communication. Zenka Sensei's report will give you a sense of our explorations. The past two weekends I've been traveling first to Walla Walla and then to San Diego. In Walla Walla I met with penitentiary inmates, Whitman students, and the wider Walla Walla sangha for a daylong zazenkai, organized

by Kathy Janaki Howard. Chris Howard wrote two poems at the zazenkai on birch bark (see below).



In San Diego I led a three-day sesshin at San Diego Aikikai, organized by Leslie Senko



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Cohen and Kathryn Zenpo Krane, with Coryl Keicho Crane offering me hospitality during my stay. We had a small, intimate, strong group with only twelve participants, that included five of the six southern CA and Southwest Chobo-Ji Jukai students.

Summer Sesshin is coming, June 21 - 28 and beginning to fill up; please see the announcement and register for some or all of our week together. I hope you find all the offerings in this issue to be good reads, lending you insight into our sangha life. Take care and I hope to see you soon in the zendo.

With gassho,

Genjo

NVC Corner

Sally Zenka Metcalf Sensei

Those who know me have heard my perpetual jokes about my fear. Funny as those quips may be, I am nonetheless afraid. It's good to be able to laugh about my fear, now. Not so long ago I couldn't. Zen has helped. I'm also very grateful for getting some serious help with fear in the January Nonviolent Communication workshops with Kathleen Macferran here at Chobo-Ji.

She took us through an unforgettable partner exercise where each asked the other to bring to mind a distressing situation along with the outstanding need we had in that situation.



Then our partner repeatedly asked us, "If you can't have that need met, what need must you have met instead?" After a moment's reflection, the fallback need was expressed. Then

the asker repeated that very challenging question. Again, an alternative need was found. Again, the question. Again, a need. Inexorably we descended through layers of need, until finally the last-ditch need passed by, unmet. "If not this need, what then?" We came to the stark realization that none of our needs were to be met.

What an awakening for how protective we all feel about our very human needs!

When we discussed our experiences after the exercise, everyone shared that it was like descending into death. Genjo Osho felt struck by how alike meeting death through this NVC process is to death on the cushion in zazen, a profound step in our Zen maturation. He felt a deep kinship between NVC and Zen at a level he'd not known was possible.

Curiously for me, on the way down through that relentless questioning — "If not this, then what?" — I kept bumping into fear. About the third bump I tumbled to the amazing realization that, while I've habitually assumed I had many fears, instead they are all one. This fear bubbles up here and there in my life from the depths, like stepping onto swampy ground. So, I fell into an ocean of fear at the bottom of that unabating question. This sounds scary but, instead, it felt familiar and calm. I suppose, for me, this is my death place. My partner very kindly tried to help me past it, but it felt like a good place to spend time. I'm floating here still, eyes open, heart open.

At my workplace, Parent Trust for Washington Children we educate parents in ACEs: Adverse Childhood Experiences. I have those from growing up with alcoholics. Research reveals that ACEs can cause life-long ill effects, one of which is a fixed fight-or-flight state in the nervous system impacting overall health.

This week, I saw a documentary about the work of nationally-known Jay Komarek, an inspired chiropractor who works with severely traumatized horses, among other creatures such as humans. His main focus is the central nervous system impacted by trauma. He worked with a young mare who, as a colt, had seen her mother and aunt



murdered with a baseball bat, and then had that bat turned on her. She barely escaped death by leaping out of the stall and running away.

Her name is Dizzy and she was adopted by a woman who takes in such horses. Dizzy let no one touch her (unless she was highly sedated) for two years. Jay worked with her over a few days until she allowed him not just to touch her, but to adjust her spine and limbs. As her central nervous system eased, she transformed. She dropped out of permanent fight/flight into relaxation, eyes half closed, head dropped, and, amazingly, into curiosity. She stopped frantically hiding behind the other horses who were her trusted pasture mates. She let her adoptive owner pet her for the first time. Tears were shed by her happy owner and by Jay, too.

I could relate to that sweet little mare — me and my crazy nervous system. I will rest in my ocean of fear for a while, listening, sensing. There is something deeply soothing about wholly being here, for the very first time.

2018 Financial Report

by Carolyn Josen Stevens Sensei

I'm happy to report that 2018 was another stable year financially for Chobo-Ji. Our total income was \$162,409 compared to \$167,849 in 2017. Our largest source of income is rent paid by building residents, followed by dues, sesshin fees, guest accommodations, and donations. We've had continued success with our guest apartment, reserving it for Zen practitioners during sesshin and renting it through Airbnb the rest of the time.

Expenses in 2018 totaled \$112,825, compared with \$106,760 in 2017. In addition to these operating expenses, we reduced our building mortgage from \$468,281 as of December 31, 2017 to \$450,019 at year-end 2018. Since year-end, our mortgage balance has dipped below \$450,000, which feels like a significant milestone.

We had our first full year of savings from our roof-top solar panels in 2018. In 2017, our electric bill for the year was \$2,227. In

2018, between lower bills and rebates, we paid \$304! Our major capital improvement in 2018 was the upgrading of the plumbing for the two apartments on the west side of building. In addition to the fine professional services of our long-time plumbing company, we are fortunate to have sangha members Seiku Eric Dee and Sam Berger helping us with building maintenance. Thank you!

Deep bows to all who support Chobo-Ji. Your steady devotion of time, love, and financial sustenance keeps our practice alive.

Chobo-Ji Annual Meeting 2019 Recap by Lynn Sogetsu Hernandez

On April 14, 2019, we had our Annual Meeting Potluck. It was a delicious spread complete with Randal's homemade sushi, Genjo's spinach bird's nests and many other vegetarian dishes. After we enjoyed the food and each other's company we sat down to elect the Chobo-Ji Board of Trustees and review 2018.

Anil (Seifu) Singh-Molares was elected to the board and Sally (Zenka) Metcalf stepped down. We thanked Seifu for making the time in his busy schedule to sit on the board and we thanked Zenka for the heartfelt contributions she has made to the Chobo-Ji board. Zenka stepped down so she could concentrate on the three programs she leads, Non-Violent Communication, 100 Meals and Restorative Processes Council.

Following is a list of Chobo-Ji's Board of Trustees.

Lynn Sogetsu Hernandez, *President*
Anne Sendo Howells, *Vice President*
Edward Daichi Salazar, *Secretary*
Chris Zenshin Jeffries
Jonathan Kaicho Swift
Polly Trout
Anil Seifu Singh-Molares
Jeff Chozen Skolnick
Genjo Osho (ex-officio member)

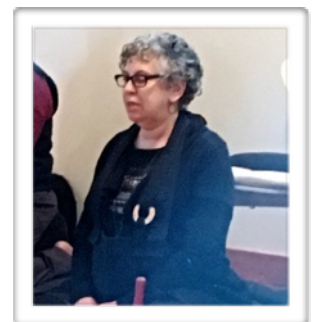
Year in review:

- **Policy Committee:** Formed an ad-hoc Policy Committee that is reviewing Chobo-Ji's scholarship policy to be more inclusive and wrote the new ethics policy. Currently, the process for a scholarship for a sesshin is to contact Genjo Osho. We will let you know in Plum Mountain News when the policy is revised and approved. The new ethics policy is on the Chobo-Ji website for anyone to review. It is split into two sections, a process for minor communication issues and a process for major ethical breaches. We tried to cover as many bases as we could in the new policy, but each new situation brings a different set of circumstances, so we look at the ethics policy as a work in progress, that will continue to be refined. You can read the policy at chobojiseattle.files.wordpress.com/2019/05/conflict-res-and-ethics-pols-2019-draft-5-1.pdf
- **Restorative Processes Council:** Formed a new Restorative Process Council to support the new ethics policy. The council consists of Edward Daichi Salazar, Sally Zenka Metcalf, Eric Seiku Dee and Genjo Osho. The Restorative Process Council will be a place where members can go with any complaints, misunderstandings and communication issues.
- **Rohatsu Venue:** Will return to Camp Gwinwood for Rohatsu.
- **Non-Violent Training (NVC):** Zenka spoke about our robust schedule of training workshops this year and what is in store for next year. Stay tuned for future training dates, including introduction workshops for those that would like to begin NVC.
- **New Residents:** We have new residents in four apartments this year, Anne Sendo Howells, Parisa Monirzad and Stephanie Morales, Trevor Heishin Youngquist and Alexandra Gobeille, Ben Bernet and Teagan Wu.
- **Financial Overview:** Carolyn/Josen gave a financial overview –Our income was \$162,000 and our expenses \$112,000.
- **Committee Review:** We reviewed the committees that were in place this year:
 - Policy (ad-hoc) – Sendo, Zenshin, Polly.
 - Program and Practice – Daichi, Genjo, Zenka, Sogetsu – oversees sangha activities and calendar.
 - Sangha Relations Committee – now temporarily dissolved, took care of membership and also oversaw neighborhood interface (emergency preparations, block watch, etc.). We will discuss at a board meeting if we want to reestablish this committee.
 - Finance committee – Josen, Zenshin, Bob Daigan Timmer.
 - Building & Grounds – Josen & Genjo – roof repairs, bathroom issues, improving each apartment as needed, especially during vacancies, new outdoor patio
 - Social Action – currently dormant, but initially authorized 100 Meals. Formalized support of Northwest Dharma Association, Faith Action Network, and Real Rent (Duwamish tribe support).

Council:

We ended the meeting with a council sharing with all that were present. The following questions were presented:

- Initially, what attracted you to Zen practice at Chobo-Ji? What keeps you practicing here?
- How were you welcomed when you started at Chobo-Ji? How can we be more welcoming and better cultivate inclusivity, community and volunteerism here.



Mumonkan

Case 12 - "Zuigan Calls Master" Rinzan Osho's Spring Dharma Talk

Koan:

Every day Master Zuigan Shigen used to call out, "Oh, Master!" and he would answer himself, "Yes?" "Are you awake?" he would ask, and would answer, "Yes, I am." "Never be deceived by others, any day, any time." "No, I will not."

Mumon's Commentary:

Old Zuigan himself sells and himself buys. He has a lot of masks of goblins and demons to play with. Why? Nii! A calling one, an answering one, an awake one, and one who will not be deceived by others. If you take these different appearances as really existing, you are altogether mistaken. If, however, you would imitate Zuigan, your understanding is that of a fox.

Mumon's Poem:

*Those who search for the Way
do not realize the Truth,
They only know their
old discriminating consciousness.
This is the cause of the endless cycles
of birth and death,
Yet ignorant people take it
for the original man.*

As I sit here on day two of sesshin, my heart is touched with gladness to have this practice, to step outside the ordinary constructs of life: the TV, the cell phone, the relationships, the job, the routine, the schedule. These are all wonderful aspects of our ordinary life, but they also create ripples that make it difficult to see into our deep nature. So to be given the opportunity to set all that aside is indeed a blessing.

And I do hope that everyone is setting all their encumbrances aside, just setting the phone and news of the world down. I cannot guarantee, but I can almost guarantee that news of the world will not be profoundly changed in one week. All the things that we worry about — the relationships, the house, the job, the e-mails that get piled up, what's happening in

politics — if we set it aside it won't make one whit of difference. The world will keep going on, and indeed our relationships, our job, our home will be more vibrant and alive when we come back, and the worries of the world while still worrisome and important, won't have the same weight that they did prior to sesshin.

We must take this opportunity to dip deeply into what's under the static of our mind, all the things that we're usually too distracted to see, all our internal defenses, the techniques we use in order to create pleasantness or to avoid negative feelings. These will all come up to the surface. And as we get exhausted and rub up against each other and we have nothing to do but sit and look, those defenses will start to fatigue and to fail, and we'll see below them into what we have been defending ourselves against. Though sometimes we can pop below psychological defenses into a realm of love and caring that seems too vast for our poor bodies to hold, more often, we must first dip down into our own internal poisons.

This a good thing, not one to be avoided or we run the risk of spiritual bypass. Our poisons must be faced, and sesshin has a way of drawing them up: our distortions, our self-hate, our own anxieties, the pain that the function of our mind causes. It draws it all to the surface: our wish to control, our wish for things to be a certain way and the frustrations we must face when things don't go our way, and we just can't run and leave. We have to face all these frustrations. We have to face these poisons.

Indeed, as sesshin moves on and we feel more and more raw and vulnerable and exposed and we start to irritate each other (even and, perhaps, especially because we are not talking to each other) and our defenses against our own anger and rage and selfishness start to fail, our poisons are provoked even more and come more and more to the surface. We start to feel poked at. We find ourselves uncharacteristically annoyed. Because the defenses have fatigued, they aren't blocking us from our deeper primitive experiences any longer. The beauty and virtue of sesshin is that we really have no choice but to go back to the cushion and see if we can combust these poisons in an honest and meaningful way — not create an easy escape (a spiritual bypass) or figure out some rationalization to

avoid what we're feeling, but sit with and combust them.

I tell you, I am a temperamental grump. So I start out sesshin just as I do each day, grumpy! And if I don't try to exit the grumpiness too quickly and I don't try to contort everyone around me to do what I want them to do so I am less grumpy (a hopeless task), the only solution is to exhaust the grumpiness and see through it.

What I have found is right below grumpiness, or any poison, is a care and a concern for myself and others around. This is not a spiritual bypass wherein I can avoid my own grumpiness, my own poisons — No — because it incorporates my grumpiness into it. What I find is a love and care for all the layers of my life: my own defenses and poisons and the way I get caught in the static of my mind, everything. It is all okay and simply tolerated inside of me the way a fussy child is tolerated by a loving parent. This does not mean I don't protect others from my poisons, but it does mean that I do not try to kill it.

From there, we can then go even deeper, past love and caring into a vast spaciousness that is nourishing and restorative and can open us up to even more resources of love and caring and help the poisons fall even more fully into the perspective of mere surface waves and not true reality.

In sesshin, we step aside from the static of our lives by engaging in the rigors of forms of practice: where to sit, where to stand, where to bow, how to move and not to move, when to speak and not to speak, how to eat, where to be at each sound of the clapper and ring of the bell. These forms are a gift and, honestly, they touch my heart in a very deep way. There is no virtue in them in and of themselves, yet if we follow them, sesshin will do its work. If we simply follow instructions, sesshin will do its job. My willfulness and my ego, though they like to get involved, don't need to, and indeed, if I were to simply follow my impulses, I'd be following the same ego demands that move me through my life outside of sesshin that help me avoid going into and past my defenses to the vastness that underlies us all.

The forms provide additional safety, in that I know that I can explore and open up to my grumpiness to combust it and see beneath it because, if I'm following the forms, I won't unleash myself on anyone. Or if my grief comes out, I know that I can settle into it and feel the heart's tenderness without worry that my pain might distress others. I don't have to modulate my pain because, if we are all following the forms, I don't have to think about how my pain, my own journey, is affecting others. As a man of my generation for whom because of cultural constraints I still find it hard to cry, I feel safer to cry, just as I can feel safer to lean into and explore my own grumpiness.

And also, the forms provoke us too because our ego mind doesn't like constraint. When people ask me if I look forward to sesshin, I say, "You know, I look forward to things like pizza and a movie ..." Those are the things my ego mind likes. It likes pleasure. Yes. Nothing wrong with that. Initially when I ate oriyoki style, I despised it. "Can't I just eat! Couldn't they just let me do one of the most basic, root and pleasurable things of life in peace and put my elbows on the table and just eat!" I have now come to love it because my ego cannot get involved, and I can simply rest without worrying about choice and desire but initially it provoked me.

There's also the good student aspect that gets provoked. "I want to do it right! Am I doing everything right? Do I look good in my Zen!" But it's inevitable that we'll do something wrong, and then the inner critic comes up. I strive to be a good Zen student and worry and fail. My ego is provoked. Is it then provoked as I master the forms and begrudge those failing at them? "Why can't they get them right?" More ego. More exposure. More provocation.

I've often described these forms as a tribal elder who holds so much wisdom, I cannot even conceive of it, yet I give myself over to this elder's arms to care for me, to shape me by provoking these aspects that poke and hurt and that I must see through, and unless I blow out and leave, there's nothing I need do but follow the forms, sit, combust and look underneath.

And what do I see underneath? A heart that opens up to the vastness and the beauty of all things.

At my very first sesshin, I was a mess going into practice and a mess going into sesshin. It was an awful time in my life. Talk about being torn up and full of pain, that was me. My tortured mind decided to attach to a person next to me at the dinner table who always stuck his thumb in the tub of butter. Every time he passed it down, he'd put his thumb in the butter, and he'd pull it out with butter on it, and because this is what concerned my mind, I'd think, "He's got butter on his thumb, and he's not



wiping it off. It's just sitting there." Then I'd look away and look back and it was gone, rubbed off on his clothes or something. I'd think, "How wrong is that! To be so unmindful!" Meal after meal I would look and hope, "Maybe this practice has woken him up and he will more mindful and not put his thumb in the butter..." but no. He'd do it every time!

And my ego took that opportunity to get annoyed! To dig in and hold my ground.

The virtue of sesshin is I couldn't say anything. I could glare at him, and I could demonstrably do it the RIGHT way, but I

couldn't just try to fix it. So he kept doing it, and I had to keep facing my poisonous mind.

For me, I don't know why, but since the age of fourteen I have had the faith in some element of this practice. Something said, "This points the way." So even as I got caught, even in this first sesshin, I wasn't wholly buying what my mind was telling me. I was thinking, "There must be some way this practice can help me with my own poison. I cannot believe that he must simply change and pull his thumb out of the butter and the world falls into proper alignment." Even as I was caught by my own irritation, I refused to fully believe it.

This is a minor thing, but we know how it is. Some minor thing burns and burns and becomes a hot coal.

I cannot remember the exact circumstances because this was a long time ago and this first sesshin was such a swirl, but it kept bothering me, and then everything this poor guy did was bothering me. It built over the hours and days until, at some point, he was walking across the room — doing something to provoke me! — and I had stewed with my poisons long enough, but not just stewed, but stewed while not fully believing in them and truly wanting to see through them, that suddenly something popped.

I had this bizarre physical sensation of energy rushing through me. My heart broke open, and I had the experience of everything being what we call "perfect." We call it "perfect," but the word, the concept does not do justice to my experience because the mind wants to qualify "perfection" as being contingent on something. Even saying something like, "Everything is perfect because it leads me here," is a qualification. What I experience was a sense of what we call "perfection" without qualification. Everything was aligned and in its place, and he was beautiful, and I was beautiful, and his thumb was beautiful, and my grump was beautiful. It was just that. This experienced popped forth and my poisons were dissolved into it.

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It happened just by sitting, looking and fundamentally not believing. Nothing else needed to be done. I just kept diving in, kept at that edge, letting those poisons draw up, and sitting with them while gazing and gazing and gazing ... beyond knowing into the intimate infinite.

Master Zuigan points to this intimacy as he calls out, "Oh master," and again, the intimacy of "'Yes?'..."

"Are you awake?"

"Yes, I am."

The beauty of koans is that they can be taken at multiple levels. At one level this is quite a lovely guidance. Moment by moment, am I awake? Am I here? Am I paying attention? Did I check out? Moment by moment ... Oops. I drifted ... Are you here? And how do I answer that? Yes!

"Never be deceived by others, any day, any time."

"No, I will not."

On one level this can be understood as: don't buy into all these little particular sub-personalities that we have floating around inside of us. It's difficult not to buy into what the grump is telling us, the anger and irritation. It creates not just a thought, but a feeling state that is so compelling that it has a quality of seeming truth. It seems like something important is going on with all my anger and irritation. When we feel into it and beyond it, however, it begins to deconstruct, and we can ask, "Where does truth lie really?"

Again when we're able to see below the rippling surface, feel below the static of our mind with its worries and thoughts and concerns, feel below our defense mechanisms and poisons, and when we can sit with those and feel into a broad spaciousness that is tender and caring, and ultimately when we open up into the intimate infinite, we can then gaze up, as from the bottom of the ocean, where there's very little to no movement, and see the sparkling waves above us, simply sitting and observing. Indeed, we can rise up and ride through all these currents and waves knowing there is refuge and space down below, amidst it all. We can dance with the grump. We can dance with the lover. We can

dance with the compassionate loving heart. We can dance with the meticulous taskmaster. We can dance with all these different aspects of who we are and who others are. All in communion, none being deceived.

We have the opportunity to pop outside the ego shell and see reality from a whole different vantage point in a way that our conceptualizations continually fail to fully embody. We have the opportunity to touch, in such a different way, as this koan is at a deeper level intimating, who and what the "master" Zuigan is calling to is .. who and what is answering, who and what is awake, who and what is never deceived by others any day, any time.

Rinzai asks us to see that true person of no rank, free of artifice, free of name, free of title (grump, lover, taskmaster, Rinzan, Mark, dad ...), and from that deep well of the infinite intimate — not that place of our everyday mind where we get caught in why is so-and-so doing this to me or why am I doing this to myself? — enjoy and be with the call and response.

Are you awake?

Yes.

Yes.

In Mumon's commentary, he says, "A calling one, an answering one, an awake one, and one who will not be deceived by others. If you take these different appearances as really existing, you are altogether mistaken. If, however, you would imitate Zuigan, your understanding is that of a fox."

We cannot imitate this. It is not something to be put on. And I know of no other way, though I'm sure there are some, but for me, there is no other way to wake up to it except to sit, go through these layers, tap in and let it happen. Gosh darn it, my ego doesn't like it. And Gosh darn it, it's so good for me and, so I've been told, good for others.

This practice is very simple, yet it takes such faith to stick with it, and I am always touched by anyone who sits with me at sesshin or, indeed, at any time. It seems to me that, as we settle in, we don't know what we are getting into. Of course, we don't, but we agree. Let's sit. Just sit. Let's spend this time in companionship sitting and sharing

and each of us endeavoring to pop out. And as our poisons provoke us, let's not be disturbed. Don't take these for really existing. Just watch them and be with them.

Then as we sit, we will at some point fall into our bodies and fall so fully into this life, that perhaps tears will fill our eyes and we will be amazed at so suddenly being fully here.

At such a time, we might say, "Hello," and ask "Where have you been?" Then too, we might hear the answer. "Here.... I've been here all along. Just here ... welcome home"

The Book of Equanimity

Case 42 - Nanyo's Washbasin Genjo's 3rd Day Spring Teisho

Preface to the Assembly

Washing bowls and filling the washbasin are both Dharma gates and Buddha's affair. Carrying wood and drawing water are nothing but marvelous activity and supernatural power. Why can't one obtain releasing effulgence in shaking the earth?

Main Case

Attention! A monk asked National Teacher Chu of Nanyo, "What is the original body of Vairocana?" The National Teacher replied, "Go and fetch me the washbasin." The monk brought the washbasin to him. The National Teacher said, "Now, go put it back." The monk asked again, "What is the original body of Vairocana?" The National Teacher remarked, "The old Buddha is long gone."

Appreciatory Verse

*A bird soaring in air,
A fish dwelling in water.
Rivers and lakes both forgotten,
he aspires to clouds and heaven.
A thread of doubting mind,
and they're facing ten thousand li apart.
How many people understand
and requite benevolence?*

.....

Washing bowls and filling the washbasin are both dharma gates and Buddha's affair. There's a very popular Zen saying, "When tired, sleep, when hungry prepare a meal." There is another Zen saying that goes, "Before enlightenment, chopping wood and carrying water, after enlightenment, chopping wood and carrying water." Our practice is really as simple as this. Zen practice helps us recover this kind of equanimity and simplicity. Through our practice we begin to realize that our everyday actions like taking a shower, washing the dishes, preparing a meal, folding the laundry, making the bed, or going to the grocery are Buddha's affair. But how often are our everyday activities actually awakened activity? I would hazard to guess not all that often, which is perhaps why we come and suffer sesshin after sesshin.

What if folding the laundry, going to the grocery, taking a shower, and chopping vegetables could really be realized as supernatural powers? These activities are, after all, supernatural powers! You think not? Please think again. Zen master Rinzai sometimes refers to our bodies as lumps of red flesh, or little bags of bone and shit. I like to say, a little more nicely, we are all little bags of stardust. Just imagine in your mind a little bag of stardust that folds laundry, takes a shower, goes to the grocery, chops wood, makes the bed, and washes bowls. Seen in this way, are these supernatural powers or not? It's incredible, that we're sitting here speaking and listening to each other! Our dialogue is a supernatural power!

It's easy to see how when we realize this much, we might get a little puffed up and fall into the traps of arrogance or self-aggrandizement. Without a doubt, when we have this kind of realization in a deep and intimate way, it does dispel all sense of separation and inferiority. With any deep realization, it's impossible to feel diminished because of our birthplace, family of origin, gender, ethnicity, birth order, sexual orientation, or lack of education or riches – none of these qualities compare to the supernatural powers of washing bowls and filling the washbasin!

Attention! A monk asked the National Teacher Chu of Nanyo, who lived in the 8th century, "What is the original body of Vairocana Buddha?" Vairocana Buddha is the cosmic Buddha, the everywhere part of the fabric of the universe Buddha. Mind, with a capital "M," has no residence in form or time; Mind is everywhere. Likewise, Vairocana Buddha is manifest everywhere. National Teacher Chu is being asked to demonstrate this truth, and he responds, "Go and fetch me the washbasin." The monk brings the washbasin. I imagine that Chu then splashed his own face, put the basin back down, and took a towel, put that back down, and then asked the monk to put it back. The monk did as requested, and then foolishly [laughter] asked again, "OK, but what about the body of Vairocana Buddha?" [laughter] The National Teacher remarked, "That old Buddha is long gone." The text doesn't say whether or not the monk had an insight – but he had at least two or three opportunities! [laughter]



I don't know if you've bumped into it yet, but by the third day of sesshin our bodies have mostly adjusted to the rigor and we hopefully have started to feel some spaciousness or expanse from our narrow egoistic perspective. On the other hand, it is also true, that the rigor, pain and fatigue of sesshin often brings our shadow, knotted-up places, or, as we say in psychology, "pockets of arrested development" to the surface. I think of these pockets of arrested development as our "baby bits." And if, in the course of sesshin, as Rinzan Osho implied in his Dharma talk yesterday, we are able to open to both our spaciousness and our knotted-up baby bits, they become not only understandable but lovable.

Probably, by the third day we haven't gotten this far. Moreover, even if we do

come to a deep realization of our seamlessness with Vairocana Buddha, or intimate, infinite, cosmic Mind, we had better not stop at loving and embracing our baby bits or unprocessed shadow. We must learn to use the spaciousness that we encounter from time to time to address our pockets of arrested development. These baby bits need our embrace and acceptance, but they also need work. If we were to leave sesshin without doing the hard work needed to heal our baby bits, then we end up doing "spiritual bypassing," where we accept our shortcomings and faults as just so many beautiful trinkets. This non-action can be quite dangerous to others and ourselves.

It's wonderful when we come to full acceptance and unconditional love for every bit of ourselves and the wider world. Nevertheless, rarely does anyone who has encountered the "intimate infinite," not try to skip over the work that is necessary to process our own karmic baggage and shortcomings. I certainly saw this in our founding abbot, Genki Takabayashi, and much worse in the case of Eido Shimano. It wasn't that either one of these men failed to encounter, and intimately become one with cosmic Buddha Mind. They did just fine at that, and this level of realization is relatively easy to come by. Yet, this degree of realization needs to be considered the beginning of deep practice, not the completion of deep practice.

After we come to complete acceptance and unconditional love, we also should see what needs work and further unfolding both personally and collectively. This is where we hope our Great Vow to care for all beings kicks in and we have both the awareness and dedication to process our wounded or undeveloped nuggets. Only through this effort can we move from "enlightenment" towards maturity. Maturity is far more important than so-called enlightenment. Hakuin tells us that enlightenment is as easy as picking up a clump of dust. In time, everyone sitting here long enough is bound to encounter their own depth and glimpse cosmic Buddha Mind. At such moments we feel, as the appreciatory verse says, "like a bird soaring in the air or a fish dwelling in water, where rivers and lakes are both forgotten."

Without question it is wonderful to experience seamless oneness and radical acceptance, to feel as free as a bird moving through the air or fish swimming in the water leaving no trace. This kind of freedom and simplicity is exactly what we're pointing at. Yet, realizing this kind of simplicity is just the beginning of deep practice. Realizing the supernatural power of chopping wood and carrying water, or the supernatural power of preparing a meal when hungry is in no way an endpoint.

Sitting here, I see most of my own dark corners and baby bits and accept and care for them. However, if I'm not careful, I can fool myself into thinking that love and acceptance are all that is needed. If I engage in spiritual bypassing by thinking that these parts of me don't need work, then I am in danger of, consciously or unconsciously putting my developmental needs onto others, which is especially dangerous in a leadership position.

Don't be disturbed if your zazen exposes these shadowy corners. That's a good thing. Don't be disturbed or upset about it, thinking: "Dang, I wish I were further along." Join the club. Go further, and, indeed, you'll come to a loving acceptance that is the ground for being able to do the real work of flowering and maturing a little further. *This* is sesshin.

Closing Incense Poem

Spring Sesshin 2019

"Soaring"

Daffodils waving,

Who can see the gentle breeze?

Eagles leave no trace.



Summer Sesshin

June 21st - 28th

Please help us get an accurate count by sending a **deposit (\$75)** and **application by June 15**, earlier if you want to guarantee a reserved spot. Please drop it by or mail it.

The cost of sesshin is \$250 (less dues for this month). Sesshin starts Friday evening, 6/21, 5:30pm with informal supper, introductions and orientation. Sesshin (from Saturday to the following Thursday) runs from 5am - 10pm. We provide sleeping accommodations for those traveling from out of town (**an additional \$10-\$20 per night**); please bring a sleeping bag, toiletries, sitting clothes, work clothes and a towel. The final Friday begins at 5am and concludes around 10am.

Rinzan Osho will lead Summer Odayaka Sesshin

August 16th - 18th

This sesshin is less arduous with more dialogue than our weeklong sesshins - \$100

more accurate to say that the Brahminic class eventually violently eradicated Buddhist practice and beliefs from its midst, and from India in general.

In this exquisitely researched book, Verardi, an archaeologist by trade, documents through careful analysis of historical texts, as well as archaeological research, the circumstances of the 1500 year tug of war between the Brahmin and Buddhist communities, a tug that ends very badly for the Buddhists, and which triggers their disappearance from Indian life since the Middle Ages (with only a very recent, and quite limited, resurgence).

Verardi's argument is that Buddhism, as an antinomian set of beliefs, had a repudiation of many of the tenets of Hinduism (through the Vedas) built right in, not least the idea of "Atman," or universal or essential soul, which Hindus believe is what we spring from, and that to which we return. Not ones to put the matter lightly, or particularly delicately, Buddhists instead embraced the notion of "Anatman," or "no-soul," at the heart of their worldview.

Add to that the implicit (and sometimes quite explicit) Buddhist repudiation of the Hindu caste system, which the Brahmins dominated, and the stage became set for an uneasy coexistence, in the best of circumstances, and eventually a brutal and quite violent repression of Buddhism in India.

Of course, this is no mere doctrinal debate, as the interweaving of religion and politics, tribal allegiances, wars, and invasions all conspire to diminish, and eventually eliminate, Buddhism in the Indian sphere, despite some moments of prominence, most notably during Ashoka's reign as Emperor in the third century BCE.

But Verardi's main thesis in this book is to accurately depict Buddhism as an insurgent, revolutionary force in the Indian milieu (albeit a mostly peaceful one), one that resisted not just core doctrinal assumptions of the Brahmins, but, more importantly, also rejected the authority of the Vedas and Upanishads, and the enforcers of that authority, namely the Brahmins.

Book Report

by Rev. Seifu Singh-Molares

On a visit to India a couple of decades ago, I was asked what my spiritual beliefs were, to which I replied "Buddhist," only to have my host point to a rendition of the sage of the Sakya clan, alongside Krishna, Vishnu and many other avatars up on the wall. "There is Lord Buddha," the man said with a broad smile on his face, "he is part of the Hindu family as you can see." And while Hinduism spans an astonishing array of spiritual manifestations, some quite antithetical to each other, it is certainly not true to say that Hinduism "assimilated" Buddhism, as is often asserted.

As Giovanni Verardi's *Hardships and Downfall of Buddhism in India* (Manohar Press, 2014) demonstrates, it would be

The flexibility and adaptability of the Buddhist positions, i.e. the notion of impermanence which lies at the heart of its worldview, and the emphasis towards a “middle way,” also meant that Buddhist practitioners kept negotiating and compromising, altering and fine-tuning their antinomian positions. Verardi compellingly argues that this constantly put them at a disadvantage in front of their Brahmin rivals.

Verardi buttresses his case by detailing numerous historical instances of Hindu texts dismissive of Buddhism, Hindu temples built on Buddhist ones, the converting of Buddhist figures and icons into Hindu ones, etc. The well documented examples he adduces are too many to mention.

The Buddhist last line of defense in India, the elaboration of Vajrayana in the eight century CE, sees Buddhists arguably turned into a class of outcasts, even magicians, living in liminal spaces, chanting mantras, with increasingly elaborate rituals, in what can be characterized as a last attempt to fend off the existential pressures being placed on them, while staying true to their beliefs.

But of course, this only provokes the Brahmins further, so that when Muslims begin to invade and take over many parts of India, the former make a pact with the latter that essentially gives them free rein to violently exterminate Buddhists and Buddhism from the Indian sphere.

Verardi's book provides a powerful, and well documented, counter-narrative to long established (Brahmin) scholarship on the diminishing role of Buddhism in India. It is essential reading for anyone interested in the topic.



Annual Two-Day Spiritually-Based Gestalt Workshop at Chobo-Ji, July 28 & 29

with Leonard Shaw, MSW, ACSW
(a deep friend and mentor of Genjo's)

Hours	Fee for Sangha Members
9:30am-5:00pm	\$50 - \$150 (sliding fee scale)

Participants will learn the blending of Eastern and Western methods, to empower and educate themselves and others. (Some didactic materials and handouts will be provided to reinforce this learning.) The workshop is almost entirely experiential with exercises, art therapy, and Gestalt Therapy practices.

You will also learn:

1. How to transform medical issues into powerful consultants.
2. How to deeply heal traumatic experiences.
3. How to break through intransigent difficulties with someone, when each person thinks the other is missing it.
4. Three powerful communication tools for discussing loaded subjects.

Contact Leonard at 206-322-5785
for more information and registration.



This is the intense healing experience that Leonard created in our state prisons and with therapists from the USA, Canada and Europe for over 25 years. Partial scholarships are available.
50% of fees return to the temple.

Important Dates to Remember

Daily zazen: M-F, 5:30-6:30 AM; Sat. 7-8:30 AM; M & W, 7:30-8:30 PM; Sun. 6:30-7:30 PM

Dharma Talks, Sundays, 7:30pm: 5/26, 6/2, 6/16, 7/7, 7/21, 8/4, 8/18, 9/1, 9/15

Zen Intro: Tuesdays, 7:30-8:45pm (except 6/25)

Zazenkai - 1/2 day sit with meal, Dokusan and Dharma Talk ...

June 9, 5 - 11:15am

Summer Sesshin (weeklong Zen intensive) ...

June 21 (5:30pm) - 28 (10am)

Zazenkai - 1/2 day sit with meal, Dokusan and Dharma Talk ...

July 14, 5 - 11:15am

Board Meeting ...

July 14, 11:30am - 1:30pm

Spiritually Based Gestalt Workshop ...

July 27-28

Soul Collage Workshop (learn about your many selves) ...

Aug. 3, 10am - 4:30pm

[Please pre-register with Anne Senryu Pechovnik: contact@pathfishstudio.com]

Zazenkai (1/2 day sit) with meal, Dokusan and Dharma Talk ...

Aug. 11, 5 - 11:15am

Summer Odayaka Sesshin...

Aug. 16 - 18

Zazenkai - 1/2 day sit with meal, Dokusan and Dharma Talk ...

Sept. 8, 5 - 11:15am

Board Meeting ...

Sept. 8, 11:30am - 1:30pm

Autumn Sesshin (weeklong Zen intensive) ...

Sept. 20 (5:30pm) - 27 (10am)

To subscribe to Plum Mountain News or our weekly Temple Happenings email bulletin write: subscribe@choboji.org

To learn more about membership see: <http://choboji.org/membership-and-no-ranks/>



Dai Bai Zan Cho Ba Zen Ji

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