



Mountains Talking

Lotus in the Flame Temple, Zen Center of Denver

Winter 2001

The Conspiracy of Silence

The opening talk of the June, 2000 sesshin given by Sensei.

Zazen is the most important thing that we can do in this life. It is a radical act. It is a subversive, revolutionary activity. It undermines and subverts the ego. This mistaken notion of a self apart, this ego delusion, is the cause of all human misery and planetary destruction - individually, locally and globally. This notion of a self apart is the cause of our suffering. It is the cause of all greed, hatred and ignorance. It is the cause of all envy, competitiveness, conflict and violence. It is the cause of anguish.

A fellow practitioner calls our work "the conspiracy of silence." When we are silent, we see that the ego is empty of any discrete, enduring existence. When we see that there is no abiding self, that there is nothing behind our thoughts, feelings and body, a new and revolutionary insight arises in us - a clear realization that we are not separate and apart, that we are one with all existence. This realization comes in the silence of zazen.

It is in sesshin that we are able settle the mind and reach that silent place where we realize that our true self is no-self, and as such, that we are vast and wide, infinite and eternal. This is what sesshin is all about. But we must be careful to not fall into traps. It is easy to plot, plan, maneuver, pace our selves and the like. That is not the revo-

lutionary activity of zazen. That is ego-based activity, self-centered striving after some imaginary object of attainment. No, a great act knows no plan. Our finest moments are those of self-abandonment. Sometimes this abandonment is a gift. When we fall in love we abandon ourselves and our heart becomes as big as the sky. Where there is passionate involvement, we forget ourselves in the act of uniting with our activity. There is no plotting or planning in this. There is simply total involvement, one hundred percent combustion. This wholeheartedness, this abandonment is the culmination of a process born of the practice of zazen. And it is in sesshin, more than any other place, that we can make in-roads and have milestone experiences in this extraordinary activity of forgetting the self - the revolutionary activity of zazen.

We'll have kinhin, sit a little this evening and then get a good nights sleep by way of preparing ourselves for this revolution activity of zazen which opens the heart-mind.

Sangha News

"Do One Thing Well"

In an evening talk Dogen said:

People in this world often try to study many things at the same time and, as a result, do nothing well. They should instead learn one thing so well that they can do it even in front of a crowd. Buddhism, which transcends the ordinary world, is a doctrine that from the beginningless beginning has never been easily learned. This is still so today. Our capacity for study is also limited. In the endlessly high and wide sphere of Buddhism, if we try to learn many aspects, we cannot master even one. Even if he devotes himself to one thing only, a person with inferior capacity finds it difficult to get much done in one lifetime. Students must concentrate on one thing alone.

Ejo asked: "If this is so, what kind of practice should be undertaken? What aspect among the Buddhist teachings should we concentrate our practice on?"

Dogen replied: "It depends on the student's talent and capability, but in Zen the practice that has been handed down by the Patriarchs is essentially *zazen*. *Zazen* is suitable for all people, whether their capacities be superior, mediocre, or inferior.

"When I was in China in the assembly under Ju-ching, I became aware of this truth and thereafter practiced *zazen* day and night. Many monks gave up when it was very cold or very hot, fearing that they would get sick. But at these times I thought to myself: 'Even if I get sick and die, I must just practice *zazen*. If I do not train when I am healthy, what use is this body of mine? If I get sick and die, then that will be my fate. What more can I ask than to study under a Zen Master in the great Sung China, die here, and have the good monks bury me? If I were to die in Japan, such superior priests would not attend my funeral. If I practice but die before gaining enlightenment, I am sure that my next life will be that of a Buddhist follower. A long life without practice seems pointless. Of what use would it be? After so much concern for protecting my body against illness, what a pity it would be if I were to drown accidentally at sea or encounter some other unexpected death.' These were the thoughts that passed through my mind as I sat day and night in earnest effort. As it was, I never once became sick.

"Each of you should practice with utmost diligence. Out of ten of you, all ten should gain enlightenment. My late Zen Master, Ju-ching, encouraged his monks in this way."

(Translation by Reiho Masunaga. Excerpted from *A Primer of Soto Zen*, pp 14-15, University of Hawaii Press, 1988.

A New Arrival

Anna Hardesty-Sienko was born on October 11, 2000, at 11:25 AM to Linda Hardesty and Dennis Sienko. Anna weighed seven pounds six ounces at birth. A Birth Ceremony for Anna was held at the Temple on December 17, 2000. Congratulations to Linda and Dennis and welcome to Anna!

At that moment the child was born. Sky-walking devas appeared at the mother's side and washed the child in the streams of heavenly dew. The baby Buddha took seven steps, and at every step a lotus blossom sprang up to support his feet. Raising one hand towards the heavens, and pointing the other down towards the earth, he fearlessly sounded the Buddha's lion's roar-

*"Above the heavens, below the heavens, I am the only One. In this life I shall become a Buddha!" **

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Jukai

Jukai is the most significant ceremony held at our temple each year. By participating in Jukai individuals receive the Buddhist Precepts and formally become members of the Buddha's family. At the ceremony on November 26, 2000, four people attended their first Jukai: Bob Gamage, Richard Miklic, Laura Minks, and Nancy Owen. Congratulations!

Lay Ordination

The deepest commitment that anyone can make to the Buddhist path is that of ordination. At the Lotus in the Flame temple we have both Lay and Priestly Ordination. Both represent the same level of commitment to the Dharma, differing only in the manner in which the commitment manifests. Ordination entails walking the Way for the benefit of all sentient beings, the Bodhisattva's vow made manifest by real flesh and blood people in our community. This year Ed Wydallis, Debra Zapka and Ron Zapka took vows of Lay Ordination. Ed received the Dharma name "Burning Light." Debra received the Dharma name "Faithful Heart." Ron received the Dharma name "Great Doubt." Our deepest gratitude to them for their extraordinary vows.

Gassho Corner

A deep gassho to:

Laura Minks for her daily work around the Temple while here for her residency program during part of the Fall training period.

The Yard Committee for their good work in re-landscaping the south side of the Temple.

Upcoming Events

Kannon Ceremony	January 18
Zazenkai	January 21
Ceremony of Aid	February 1
Children's Zendo	February 4
Parinirvana Ceremony	February 15
Zazenkai	February 18
All Sangha Workday	February 24

* Baby Buddha quote from Rafe Martin's *The Hungry Tigris*, pp 8-9, Parallax Press, 1990.

Daniel Terragno

Daniel Terragno, a Pacific Zen Institute teacher, has sent a note of gratitude to those who made a monetary contribution at our Temple to help him during his recovery period after surgery for prostate cancer. He is now back to work.

An Open Letter from Lupe Rodriguez

Dear Sangha Brothers and Sisters,

I write from a Texas prison, and I would like to extend...to all of you my most sincere thanks and gratitude for the books you have donated to the Denver Zen Center, many of which have found their way to me through our mutual friend and Sister in the Dharma, Ms. Jann Chasteen.

I'm a novice student in the study of Zen Buddhism and my practice was somewhat erratic and slow due to the lack of materials from which I could learn. But ever since I was gifted with these beautiful books, my knowledge of Buddhism-in many regards-has expanded considerably, and I have corrected and put into perspective a lot of the things I was doing wrong.

Of course I still have a ways to go and so much to learn, but my practice has become infinitely richer because of the books I have received through your kindness and compassion. With these, and with the guiding hand of our Venerable Sensei, Danan Henry, I sincerely believe that my journey towards the Dharma will be much easier than it would've been on my own [with] nothing to draw upon.

I wish I could thank each of you individually for your lovingkindness, but since I can't at this time, I say it here (again) "Thank you all so very, very much!"

The Dharma's Servant and Yours,
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