



Mountains Talking

Lotus in the Flame Temple, Zen Center of Denver

Spring 2003

Prajna Ango

Training in Zen has to be real training. Satori has to be real satori. – Master Mumon

The winter and summer sila angos (January-March and July-September) focus on the extension of our practice and realization into our daily lives, manifesting as compassionate action. The spring and fall prajna angos (April-June and October-December) focus on intense formal practice and satori realization in the zendo.

Without intense practice of zazen, dokusan and teisho together in the temple there can be no realization of the Buddha Dharma. Without this *prajna* realization of the empty and undivided nature of our selves and the universe there can be no application of our practice in our daily lives. So it is essential that we keep our feet to the fire, work hard and awaken to our inherent selfless and affectionate nature or clarify and deepen this realization in deep silent sitting and subsequent koan practice. Without this experience of satori, of returning to or uncovering or discovering or recovering our true nature, there is no basis for a new life. In fact there is a danger that we fall into a practice of self-reform, in which we work to change what we are into what we think we should be. This work of overlaying a new network of conditioning over our present conditioning is not the practice of Zen. Our work is to realize our true nature and live out of this clear understanding for the benefit of all beings.

So let us once again plunge into the fire of practice and realization at the temple in the course of our daily sittings, zazenkai and, of course, sesshin.



Joko Beck writes: “Practice is about breaking our exclusive identification with ourselves. This process has sometimes been called purifying the mind. To ‘purify the mind’ doesn’t mean to become holy or other than you are; it means to strip away that which keeps a person – or a furnace – from functioning best... There’s a saying in the Bible: ‘He is like a refiner’s fire.’ It’s a common analogy found in other religions as well. To sit through sesshin is to be in the middle of a refining fire. Eido Roshi said once, ‘This zendo is not a peaceful haven, but a furnace room for the combustion of our egoistic delusions.’ A zendo is not a place for bliss and relaxation, but a furnace room for the combustion of our egoistic delusions. What tools do we need to use? Only one. We’ve all heard of it, yet we use it very seldom. It is called attention.”

Joko’s words clearly describe the nature of the prajna ango. To help us take up this energetic temper of practice, we will have a ceremony Sunday, April 6* before teisho, inaugurating this prajna ango by enshrining the sword-wielding Manjushri, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom or Emptiness, on the altar. Manjushri will remain on the altar, as a reminder, for the duration of the spring prajna ango.

I invite us all to practice hard together during the months of April, May and June that we might come to know our unsullied Buddha Mind that is at the heart of all existence.

-- Danan

*Sunday, April 6 begins Daylight Savings Time

Diamond Sangha Wedding Ceremony

Excerpted from Danan and Nancy's wedding in Kaimu, Hawaii, February 14, 2003

Ceremony performed by Robert Aitken Roshi

We begin our ceremony with the Heart Sutra, which expresses the depth of the Zen Buddhist way, telling how all things and we ourselves are founded on emptiness and mystery and at the same time come forth into the world, each with its portion of eternity, unique and shining. *Chanting of Maka Hannya Haramita Shingyo.*

Roshi: Danan and Nancy, you have come to Kaimu today to marry before your friends. Also present are unseen relatives and friends who could not make the trip, or who have passed on. Let us take a moment of silence to welcome them.

Nancy and Danan, in this ceremony you will reaffirm yourselves on the Buddhist path, and acknowledge your marriage, now, and day by day in years to come, as a fulfillment of the Buddha Dharma. Let us begin our ceremony together, afresh and anew, by purifying all our past karma. *Recitation of Purification Sutra.*

Roshi: Will you, Danan and Nancy, fully and reverently cultivate your lives on the true path of the Buddha, toward the enlightenment and sensitive awareness of Buddhahood?

Bride and Groom: We will.

Roshi: Will you fully and reverently cultivate your lives on the true path of the Dharma, toward realizing the subtle law of the doctrine and of all things?

Bride and Groom: We will.

Roshi: Will you fully and reverently cultivate your lives on the true path of the Sangha, in the spirit of the precepts, toward the welfare of all beings?

Bride and Groom: We will.

Roshi: The five main precepts of our Sangha practice are: 1) not to kill, 2) not to steal, 3) not to misuse sex, 4) not to lie or slander, and 5) not to cloud the mind with drink or drugs. Not to kill means, "I vow to aid all beings to attain to their own fulfillment." Not to steal means, "I vow to respect the persons, thoughts and things that relate to my brothers and sisters." Not to misuse sex means, "I vow that sharing shall be my way of love." Not to lie or slander means, "I vow to speak and act appropriately, according to circumstances, guided by the needs of the family and the community." Not to cloud the mind with drink or drugs means, "I vow to cut off distractions that lead me into self-indulgent ways." These precepts light our Sangha path. Is it this Sangha path that you would follow?

Bride and Groom: It is.

Roshi: Now Nancy and Danan become their own Sangha, evolving their own unity of diversity within our community. The Buddha Dharma is like this. At once we are separate I's and me's, completely self-motivated, and also a unity of we. This I and this we are not two sides of the same thing, for there is no place where we can point precisely and

say, "This is I" or "This is we." Each of us walks the universe alone, and yet our very bodies are the constituents of all bodies. Even we is a vanity, unless it is a we that includes all people, all beings, all stones and clouds and trees, all demons and devas and angels, and all things in endless dimensions.

Danan and Nancy, you present this truth of the Buddha Dharma in your lives together, mingling and separate, empty and loving. Each of you is Kannon Sama, saving the other, and with that spirit,



saving all beings. Marriage is the context of Kannon named Nancy. Marriage is the context of Kannon named Danan.

Here is my very free translation of the Ten Verse Kannon Sutra for Eternal Life:

Kanzeon, we venerate the Buddha,
With whom we have direct cause,
As the seed is the source of the tree;
With whom we have indirect cause,
As the rain and soil and air
Will nurture the tree;
And cause with the teachings of wisdom
And with the fellowship of those who pursue it;
The eternity of mind,
The ease of its realization,
Freedom and integrity
And purity of spirit.
Mornings my thought is Kanzeon;
Evenings my thought is Kanzeon;
Thought after thought arise in mind;
Thought after thought is not separate from mind.

Roshi: Now with rings of precious metal, Nancy and Danan, you affirm your union. The precious nature of your rings represents the subtle and wonderful essence you find by losing yourselves in each other, and the subtle and wonderful essence you find individually in mutual love, respect and support. The metal itself represents the long life you cultivate together, not only in years, but in all the infinite dimensions of each moment you share. *Roshi recites Vandana and Ti Sarana while Danan and Nancy exchange rings. Roshi showers them with rose petals.*

Roshi: Now by the authority vested in me by the Diamond Sangha and the State of Hawaii, I pronounce you wife and husband. *Bride and Groom stand and embrace as Roshi recites Shigu.*

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Sangha News

Dana System

The Board of Directors has decided to replace set fees for zazenkai and samu with a dana system of giving. Previously, the fee for zazenkai was \$8 for supporting members and \$12 for all others; and the fee for samu was \$3. Although no set fee will be charged for zazenkai and samu, please give as generously as you can to help support the temple.

It has always been the Center's policy not to turn people away from Zen practice for financial hardship. Sensei would like to move toward a dana system for all aspects of temple finances. This is a first step toward that goal.

Buddhist Peace Fellowship

The Rocky Mountain Chapter of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, which operates out of the Zen Center of Denver, has meetings the first Sunday of each month at 10:45 am. The meetings are held at the Zen Center for now but may be held at alternate locations in the future. If you would like to be on the BPF list-serve, contact Nancy Peters at 303-964-0802 or kohchangblue@yahoo.com.

Raising the Zendo

The Design and Architect Committee will soon be working with a professional carpenter to get the necessary City & County of Denver building permits to construct the new zendo. The committee is also working with the Center's architects, SlaterPaull, to ensure the new zendo blends in with the overall architectural design. As events unfold, construction dates will be set for the sangha to join forces and raise the zendo.

Weekend Sesshin

The Center's first weekend sesshin, February 21-23, was deemed a success by the eight participants. The sesshin started on Friday evening with zazen from 7 to 9. The next day was similar to the "quiet day" of sesshin with zazen starting at 4:30 am and continuing until 8:45 pm. The participants shared the duties of jiki and tenzo. Meals were served informally in the kitchen. With very little samu, there was plenty of time for rest during the breaks. Sunday, seventeen zazenkai participants joined the weekend sesshin participants. A second weekend sesshin has been scheduled for August 22-24.

Meeting to Review Denver Elections

After the March 30 teisho the community outreach committee will host a presentation and discussion about the upcoming city of Denver elections. The informational meeting will be non-partisan and non-advocacy.

Community Outreach Meetings

The community outreach committee is hosting Friday evening pot lucks for a couple of months to brainstorm about future projects and discuss ways to take our practice off the mat into the larger community. The first potluck is scheduled for Friday, April 11 at 6:30 pm at Kymm and Greg Ciccio's home at 4350 Easley Road, Golden, CO. If you wish to attend please RSVP to the Ciccios at 720-214-0882. The second potluck is scheduled for Friday, May 9.

Sensei to Attend Diamond Sangha Meeting

Sensei will attend the Diamond Sangha teacher's meeting in Germany this year. He will be gone May 4-10, and thus unavailable for dokusan these dates.

Committee Opening

The Center needs a chairperson for the yard committee. Any supporting member interested in chairing this important committee should contact Peggy Sheehan.

Interfaith Gathering

Wednesday, May 7 at 6:30 pm, the Zen Center of Denver will host the Interfaith Group to explore meditation in three different traditions. One-half hour will be devoted to zazen instruction and practice in the zendo. Then two other denominations, yet to be determined, will have meditation or prayer from their faith. The Interfaith Group was established after September 11 out of a desire among different churches in Denver to better understand each other and to promote peace. This event will replace public zazen, which is normally offered the first Wednesday evening of each month.

Nelson Foster Visit

Diamond Sangha teacher Nelson Foster and his wife Masa will visit the Zen Center of Denver Tuesday, June 10. Foster Roshi will take questions during the Zazen with Q&A scheduled for that evening.

Daido Looi Seminar

The Naropa Institute is offering a weekend seminar with John Daido Looi Roshi June 6-8. The seminar is entitled "Anatomy of the Koan: Mind to Mind Transmission in the Zen Tradition." For more information go to Naropa's website at www.naropa.edu/extend or call 303-245-4800.

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