



Mountains Talking

Lotus in the Flame Temple, Zen Center of Denver

Winter 2005

Shoshin Tanza: Correct Upright Sitting

The use of the *kyosaku* (encouragement stick) in the *zendo* has been eliminated at our Temple. The *kyosaku* had its place within the highly masculine, monastic traditions of China and Japan, but it is no longer consistent with the style of practice and realization that has evolved at the Temple. Our style emphasizes the natural ripening of inherent realization through settling the body and mind rather than pushing oneself towards an imagined state of attainment. While the purpose of the *kyosaku* is to encourage and stimulate vigor in practice by striking specific points on the shoulders (and only by request), in our western culture it is difficult to shake the deep rooted association of hitting with punishment and physical abuse. This creates an atmosphere that is threatening for many, and might discourage newcomers from practicing with us.

In place of the *kyosaku*, the *tantos* will place greater emphasis on working with posture. Posture is of fundamental importance in the practice of *zazen*. When asked what the most important thing to preserve about Zen practice, *Joshu Sasaki Roshi* answered, "Posture and breathing." When *Robert Aitken Roshi* was asked about this, he said, "I would just say posture." The following talk, given by *Shonen Dunley* during the October *sesshin*, aims to convey the profound nature of posture in *zazen*:

Shoshin Tanza: correct, upright sitting.

Whatever mode of *zazen* we practice, the very basis of it is posture. Noble and upright, it is the form of the Buddha, actualized with our bodies. The bottom and knees are rooted deep in the earth, at one with the earth. It is solid, immovable, like the base of a mountain.

The spine is lengthened, fully extended. From the tip of the tailbone to the base of the skull, every vertebra is alive with vigor. The bones are like a frame, a scaffold. The muscles and organs naturally fall into place; settling, opening.

Resting atop the spine, the crown of the head pierces the heavens. It's like a pillar, holding up the sky. It's like a flower, in full bloom. The chin is tucked slightly, not pushing forward, not drooping down.

Hands form an oval- no beginning or end, eternity, infinity, completeness. Yes, completeness: there is nothing lacking, nothing more to wish for.

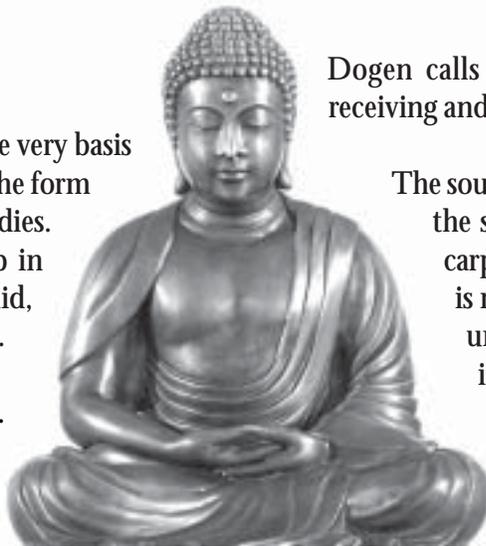


Photo by Jeff Black

Dogen calls this *jijuyu zanmai*, the *samadhi* of receiving and using the Self.

The sounds of traffic, sounds of the neighbors, the smell of incense, the white expanse of carpet: the universe becomes the Self. This is not a matter of becoming one with the universe - you were never separate from it.

The mind is vast, limitless, open like the sky, empty and bright as a mirror.

Let your mind be like a motionless lake, reflecting clouds and geese at sunset. Which is the reflection?

Which are the clouds and geese? The boundaries of the self begin to dissolve- settle here and continue your practice.

Shoshin Tanza, correct upright sitting. This is the basis, the path, and the fruit. Let us ripen together, and nourish the many beings.

Vigilance

A talk given by Roshi at the morning sitting on December 17th before a peace vigil in front of the State Capitol building.

This morning, some of us will be doing zazen at the State Capitol building in front of our Buddhist Peace Fellowship banner and other signs protesting the war in Iraq.

Some time back, I began to join Aitken Roshi on Friday mornings near the Federal Building in downtown Hilo to protest the sanctions imposed upon Iraq. At the time, information was so limited in the press that the vast majority of us were virtually unaware of the consequences of the sanctions in Iraq. As it turned out, eleven years of sanctions resulted in the deaths of one and a half million Iraqi citizens. Aitken Roshi has spent his adult lifetime speaking truth to power and resisting injustice and violence perpetrated by our government even as he practices to become ever more selfless, affectionate and peaceful, and works to create a new improved world within the shell of the old. Now, as Roshi has become frail due to a recent stroke and old age, he is unable to be out on the streets as he once did. We hope he will regain his ability to protest with his pen.

The time has come for me to step forward.

I vow that:

As long as our government wages imperialistic wars anywhere in the world, killing innocent people,

As long as our government pursues an unspeakably dangerous policy of increase and even use of nuclear weapons that will surely result in nuclear proliferation and disaster,

As long as our government pursues policies that continue to degrade the environment,

As long as our government tramples on our democratic rights and principles here, and refuses to cooperate with the world community of sovereign nations,

As long as our government wages war on the poor in our country and abroad through its mean spirited social and economic policies,

As long as our government continues to be a force of evil as the greatest purveyor of violence in the world,

I will sit in zazen in front of the Capitol Building every Wednesday morning by way of peaceful, vigilant, protest and resistance, unless I am ill or out of town and until I am too old or frail to continue to do so.

And I vow from this day forward to work to stop using the word “we” to refer to the government of the United States and the US corporations that dominate the world. The word, “we” will henceforth be used by me to refer to “we, the people of the United States.” For, ultimately, it is only we, you and I, who can stop the government and corporations from destroying the planet.

I invite you to join us.

If you would like to join Roshi in his weekly vigil, you can meet at the Center following the morning sitting, or meet in front of the Capitol building on Lincoln St. at 7:30 am.

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Sangha News

New Time for Sunday Events

There was a discussion at the November Sangha meeting about changing the time of our Sunday events from 8 am to 9 am. The change in time makes it easier for those living at a distance from the Temple to attend, would enable people to get more rest, and also allows for the possibility of opening the Sunday morning sitting to non-members. An email poll of the Sangha was taken after the meeting, and a large majority of those who responded favor the change in time. So, beginning with the Dharma Talk/Shila Ango Opening Ceremony on January 9, all teishos, Dharma talks, work-days, meetings- any Sunday events that began at 8 am- will now begin at 9 am.

Temple Vision Retreat

In his Spiritual State of the Sangha address given at the November 7th Sangha Meeting, Danan Roshi said, "Moving the zendo upstairs into the lovely sanctuary, marks a milestone in our Temple development. Already the new zendo has made an enormous difference in providing a spiritually aesthetic and spacious setting for zazen, the cornerstone practice of our tradition. In the course of the next several months we will complete this stage of renovation by removing the seats from the north and south sections of the remaining auditorium, leaving the center section of seats to be used as a smaller, more intimate lecture and entertainment hall. A sound and lighting booth is nearly in place and we will also partition off the entire sloping auditorium section from the zendo section. We did not know for sure that we would get this far. We have! Svaha!

"As well as this auspicious development, our sangha is thriving. Vitality, harmony and affection pervades the Temple. Our Dharma style is clearly established and our senior leadership is ripening beautifully.

"I believe this is an ideal time for us to pause, take stock, and create together a long-range vision for our Center. Sometime in the course of the coming Winter Sila Ango, I suggest we rent a conference facility in the mountains, enlist a facilitator, and spend a weekend together brainstorming (in and out of the box) in search of a shared long-range vision for our Center and sangha. I feel it is important that we do this before continuing our out-of-house fundraising and temple renovation project."

An email was sent to poll the Sangha for interest in such an event, and a large portion of the Sangha responded favorably. Based upon restrictions in time that some members indicated and events at the Center, the retreat has been scheduled for Saturday and Sunday, January 15-16. The retreat will take place at Trinity Mountain Fellowship Ranch, near Blackhawk, and is open to all supporting members. In addition to our brainstorming meetings, there will be time scheduled for zazen and personal time for such things as snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and socializing.

Please contact the office if you would like to attend, and if you will need childcare or have other special needs. More details will be forthcoming as the plan comes together.

Sangha Email List

Aside from the newsletter and announcements in the zendo, email has become the primary method of getting information about schedule changes, upcoming events, and questions to the Sangha. Because of this, it is important to keep your email address up to date with the office if you wish to receive these messages. Likewise, if you would rather not be bothered by email from the Center, please let the office know so we can remove you from our mailing list. To add or remove your name from our email list, please send an email to office@zencenterofdenver.org, or call 303-455-1500.

Weekend Sesshin

A weekend sesshin has been scheduled for February 18-20. Sesshin will begin Friday evening at 6:30 with an orientation meeting and continue through Sunday afternoon. The application deadline is Wednesday, February 16. Please fill out a regular sesshin application. The prerequisite for attending the sesshin is completion of at least one full zazenkai, or another sesshin. Participants can sign up for the whole sesshin, or just the zazenkai on Sunday. It is not necessary to fill out a sesshin application if you will only be attending zazenkai. Also, the Dharma talk scheduled for that Sunday is open to those who are attending neither the sesshin or zazenkai.

Eightfold Noble Path Discussion

There will be a talk and discussion of the Noble Eightfold Path beginning Tuesday, January 18th and continuing every other Tuesday evening through March 29th. Following two rounds of sitting, a member of the Lotus in the Flame Order will give a short talk on a particular point of the Eightfold Path and lead a discussion. Roshi will introduce the series at the first discussion on January 18th. As the fourth of the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Noble Path is at the core of all Buddhist traditions and is an essential doctrine for study. Recommended books to prepare for the discussion include *What the Buddha Taught* by Walpola Rahula, and *The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching* by Thich Nhat Hanh.

T'ai Chi Classes

The next round of t'ai chi classes will begin in April on Wednesday evenings from 6-7 pm, and will continue through June, except during sesshin or when a board of directors meeting is scheduled. The classes are open to beginners, and also to those who have been through a previous course of t'ai chi classes at the Center, and would like

to further refine their practice. The classes are sequential in nature, so those who are just beginning need to commit to the entire course, starting with the first class on Wednesday, April 6. A signup sheet will be posted in March, but you can also sign up by contacting the office.

Upcoming Events

Shila Ango Opening Ceremony	January 9
Kannon Ceremony	January 13
Temple Vision Retreat	January 15-16
Zazenkai	January 23, February 20
Repentance Ceremony	January 27, March 10
Zen Games	January 29
Workdays	January 30, February 13, March 13
Parinirvana Ceremony	February 10
Weekend Sesshin	February 18-20
Lay Ordination	March 6

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