



Mountains Talking

Lotus in the Flame Temple, Zen Center of Denver

Fall 2006

Kinhin: Mountain Walking

A talk given by Peggy Sheehan on May 16, 2006

Tonight we will continue our talks on zendo forms. Zendo forms are all those “rules” about bowing, and walking, and sitting, and when and how. And, of course, sometimes we do it this way and sometimes we do it the reverse. And whether you are new to the temple or have been coming for quite a while, zendo forms can feel a bit daunting and even perhaps rigid and militaristic. But I believe that if we can let go of our ideas of the outward appearance of the forms and our internal concerns of doing things right or wrong, and instead become curious, interested, and open each time we participate in zendo forms, then the door becomes wide open for insight and transformative experience. Of course, that is what zazen, our primary zendo form, is about. It’s about waking up, and all other forms are mere extensions and expressions of this waking up.

So, tonight let’s investigate kinhin together. And let’s be very curious about it. I can give some words and some thoughts, and that is what they’ll be—some thoughts and ideas. Please remember that only we ourselves, each of us individually, can make anything a live and intimate experience. Zazen and zendo forms are capable of facilitating understanding and transformation if we can be present, open, and receptive.

Here is what Aitken Roshi says about kinhin in his book, *Taking the Path of Zen*:

Kinhin is, we may say, halfway between the quality of attention demanded by sitting and the quality of attention demanded in the everyday world. You are doing zazen while walking, but you must also be careful to keep up with the person ahead of you.

There are two aspects of kinhin here that are important. One is that we are able to continue our meditation, so that in the evenings and during sesshin we can have long uninterrupted periods of concentration and practice moving

between sitting and walking. When the bells ring to end the round, the first bell signals the end of the round and informs our body/mind that it is time to begin the shift to standing and walking. At the second bell we have the intention to move and we begin to move. And we move slowly, deliberately, with our full attention. We are aware of each phase: bowing, shifting off our zafu, fluffing our cushions, standing. An entire symphony of movement has just occurred, and have we been aware of it? And that is even before we’ve begun to walk. The second aspect of Roshi’s comment is that we maintain focus *and* are aware of the person ahead of us. That’s what makes kinhin such a wonderful bridge practice between temple practice and our life outside. We cultivate the ability to be focused, attentive, grounded, rooted, and simultaneously aware of our surroundings. That’s IT.

In the four foundations of mindfulness, the Buddha clearly teaches that if we can be aware of the body—deeply aware of the body—then we are awake. And there are only four postures the body takes: sitting, standing, walking, and lying down. That’s all. Only four postures—ever. And in beginning kinhin we move through three of the four postures: from sitting, to standing up, to walking. If we are one hundred percent aware of the body, we are awake. We wake up.

So, one way of working with this practice is to be completely attentive to every detail of movement: meticulously attentive to each detail, from bowing, to shifting, to kneeling, to standing, to walking—lifting and placing each foot. Full awareness of the body. Next, I would suggest noticing what the mind does when the body begins to move. You’ve been sitting still, still like a mountain. The bell rings, and you bow and begin to move. How does your mind move? Finally, observe the intention to move before moving. Again, from the four foundations of

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mindfulness, it is taught that if you clearly see intention followed by movement, you will be aware of no self. Only intention followed by movement—no one moving. We sit like a mountain, and then the mountain gets up and walks. If we are fully absorbed, the mountain walks—not us.



A mindfulness teacher recently said to a group I was in, “How do you know that you are sitting?” Now, she was implying that you can investigate this by feeling your sit bones on the mat, your legs bent and not moving, and your torso upright. But I would ask you to take that question further. How do you *know* that you are sitting? Who knows that you are standing? How do you know that you walk? The great mystery of you gets up from the mat and walks. Can you be in touch with that?

Aitken Roshi also says:

The term *kinhin* means “sutra-walking,” the sutra that is walked rather than read aloud. In ancient days, sutras were actually recited while walking and in special ceremonies they still are. *Kinhin* shows us that our everyday actions are themselves sutras.

Yes, the sutra walks, the mountain walks, the mystery walks . . . and that is IT!

Change to Evening Sitting Schedule

In response to a suggestion made at the recent Sangha Meeting, the evening sitting schedule has been modified as follows: Whenever there are two sittings in a week, at least one will be devoted exclusively to zazen, without any other events. The purpose of this change is to make more time available for zazen, which is the primary practice at this center.

Non-Participant Sesshin Schedule

The following activities are open to non-participants during sesshin. These activities are open to members only:

Morning Sitting: (6:00 a.m. to 6:51 a.m.)

Arrive between 5:50 and 5:55 a.m. and wait outside for the jisha to admit you. If it is absolutely necessary to let yourself in for some reason, please do so as quietly and unobtrusively as possible. Please leave promptly and quietly when the sitting is over.

Teisho: (2:00 p.m. to approximately 3:30 p.m.)

Arrive between 1:50 and 1:55 p.m. and wait outside for the jisha to admit you. If it is absolutely necessary to let yourself in for some reason, please do so as quietly and unobtrusively as possible. Please leave promptly and quietly when the teisho is over.

(Note: There is No Teisho on Thursday.)

Evening Sitting: (7:00 p.m. to 9:15 p.m.)

Arrive between 6:50 and 6:55 p.m. and wait outside for the jisha to admit you. If it is absolutely necessary to let yourself in for some reason, please do so as quietly and unobtrusively as possible. Please leave promptly and quietly when the sitting, including the evening ceremony, is over.

Mountains Talking is a quarterly newsletter published by:

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Dokusan/Daisan Schedule

During the fall training period, Roshi will offer dokusan on Tuesdays and Thursdays beginning September 5th. Dokusan will be offered during both morning and evening sittings. On evenings when a ceremony or other event is scheduled, dokusan will begin during the first round of zazen following the procedure used for morning sittings. If you have any questions about this procedure, please speak to the jisha before the sitting begins.

Daisan will be offered during all other sittings. The daisan schedule is as follows: **Sunday Mornings:** Karin Kempe; **Wednesday Mornings:** Ken Morgareidge; **Friday Mornings:** Peggy Sheehan.

Financial Condition of the Center

After deducting the long-term loan obligation for replacement of the boiler, the center had a net income of just over \$1,000 for the first eight months of the fiscal year (September 2005 through April 2006).

The center experienced financial pressure in several key areas. Energy costs rose sharply, and we saw a significant drop in income from both seminars and sesshin. The loss of income from seminars was expected when the center was opened to the public and completing a seminar was no longer a prerequisite for participation in temple activities. The drop in income from sesshin is due to a general decline in attendance since April 2005. The reason for this decline is not known.

Fortunately, our increased expenses and the loss of income from traditional sources were offset by the following factors: (1) Roshi's decision to reduce his salary by the amount of his social security payments when he became eligible for social security last year; (2) the increase in monthly dues which took effect last October; and (3) increased dana from members. At this time, neither membership nor donations from nonmembers have increased since the center was opened to the public. Although this may change in the future, it is the continuing generosity of Roshi and the members that is keeping the center solvent at this time.

Wish List

Gena Carini has pointed out that many nonprofit service organizations maintain an in-kind donation wish list for

items that are needed by the organization. Gena's suggestion that we adopt a similar practice at this center has been accepted and will be implemented during the fall training period. Here is a preliminary list of items that are needed by the center at this time:

- Two digital alarm clocks for sesshin.
- Three night lights for sesshin (the ones with light sensors that turn on automatically when it gets dark).
- A small table/desk for the tenzo's room (the small office) for use during sesshin.
- One or two desk lamps for sesshin.
- Two or three standard toilet float mechanisms.
- A terry cloth tablecloth or several very large beige, dark blue or brown towels for the coffee table during sesshin.
- Boxes of 25-watt light bulbs (up to 50 bulbs).
- White shelves or small wall cabinets for supplies in the men's bathroom.
- Two eight foot long benches for the zendo.
- One package of Hoover Z-type vacuum bags.
- One 30" wide by 6' tall door to install on the tool shed.

Anyone wishing to donate an item on the list may do so by contacting the office. An updated wish list will be maintained on the center's website and will be posted on the bulletin board in the foyer.

Updated Contact Information

If you have moved or your telephone number(s) or email address have changed recently, please provide the office with your updated contact information. If you have a cellphone number, please provide this to the office as we have very few cellphone numbers in our database and this is the best way to contact members in an emergency. Helping us keep our contact information up to date will ensure that we can keep everyone informed of scheduling changes, special events, and other matters that are of interest to the Sangha.

A list of current contact information has been placed on the bulletin board in the foyer. If you prefer to update your information manually, simply make the necessary changes on the list and they will be entered into our database.

Gassho Corner

Deep bows to Gena Carini for coordinating the Sangha Yard Sale and to everyone who donated items and volunteered to help staff the sale. The yard sale generated over \$800 for the center at a time when additional income was desperately needed. Additional bows to Joel Tagert, Lindsey Trout, and the Yard Committee for the beautiful landscaping work around the temple.

A special bow to Bob Fallbeck, who has a long-term affiliation with the Sangha and serves as our webmaster. Because the Internet is our primary means of reaching out to the public and finding new members, a website that is professionally designed and maintained is critical to the long-term survival of the center. Bob's ongoing contribution of his time and expertise in this important area is deeply appreciated.

Upcoming Events

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| Prajna Ango Opening Ceremony | September 10 |
| Repentance Ceremony | September 21 |
| Zazenkai | September 24 |
| Dharma Discussion | October 1 |
| Chanting Practice | October 5 |
| Kannon Ceremony | October 12 |

Zen Center of Denver
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Sesshin

Shosan

Sangha Meeting

Zazenkai

Ceremony of Aid

Thanksgiving Ceremony

Jukai

Sesshin

Buddha's Enlightenment
Ceremony

Ritual Temple Cleaning

New Year's Ceremony

October 21-28

October 28

November 5

November 12

November 16

November 23

November 26

December 2-9

December 9

December 30

December 31