

The Hazy Moon

A Special Edition

Summer 2011

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Practicing Not Knowing: A Talk by Shishin Roshi

I view our practice as a process of continually stepping into the unknown. Rather I should say, "Learning how to accept stepping into the unknown." We are always stepping into the unknown because we never know what will be arising next in our life or even what will be the results of our actions.

Most people are only comfortable when they have certainty and know what is happening next in their life. If they plan a career and a family and do all of the right things, then everything will fall in place and they will be happy. But it usually does not work that way.

The Dalai Lama, when asked what surprised him most about humanity, answered "Man.... Because he sacrifices his health in order to make money. Then he sacrifices money to recuperate his health. And then he is so anxious about the future that he does not enjoy the present; the result being that he does not live in the present or the future; he lives as if he is never going to die, and then dies having never really lived."

Most people live their life like a dog chasing its own tail. They never quite get the brass ring. That is because we are all going to die, and I am sure that no one here

wants to die without having really lived.

A common concern I hear from Zen students who resist letting go of attachments, is that they will lose control and feel unanchored. I am not quite sure what the fear is. Are you afraid that you will lose all sense of decorum and run amok or do something harmful and crazy? Are you afraid that life will not go in the direction that you would like it to?

The amazing thing is that you don't have control now and you never have had control of events. Life unfolds as it unfolds and we hold onto the illusion that we are directing it. Then we suffer when things don't go the way we would like.

Part of the problem is that we don't trust the wisdom of our own bodies. We believe that our conscious discursive thoughts set the course and direction of our life. And if we let go of our thoughts, beliefs, projections and images, everything will spin out of control and crash.

Let's take our zazen practice as an example of control and not-knowing.

Meditation is to continually greet our experience, whatever it is, with mindfulness, loving-kindness and compassion. Everything changes constantly, and to be okay with that we have to learn to ac

cept whatever arises. The effort in meditation is a willingness to be open and to come close to what we have avoided, to be patient with ourselves and others and to let go of our preconceptions, our projections, and our tendency not to live fully.



Meditation challenges our outdated beliefs, our old, painful habits. It is a source of energy. With a strong foundation of meditation we learn to appreciate ourselves and to carry that appreciation forward into our life.

We are always looking outside ourselves for contentment and happiness. Those who do not see the way, do not see it even as they walk on it. It is always in front of us. We just need to keep bringing our attention back to the moment and notice without judging. Our

mantra is nonjudgmental awareness. Another way to state it is unconditional presence. When we are unconditionally present, we do not judge. And we are aware of what is going on around us. If you get tired of nonjudgmental awareness, you can practice unconditional presence.

In order to develop nonjudgmental awareness, we need to be bigger than our problems, our worries and our anxieties. Meditation makes us more spacious. We can hold more in the basket of our life. Your meditation is perfect just as it is. If you can accept that, then there is no judgment. But that does not mean to stop meditating. Because whatever we realize, we easily forget. We practice to keep reminding ourselves of the truth of being aware, without judgment, throughout the day and the night.

The quality of your meditation will change each time you sit down. When you have a blissful experience, you try to capture it, bronze it and put it on your mantle. And then you want to experience it again and again. Unfortunately that is not possible, since everything is in constant change. What good is it to clamor after bliss and try to avoid pain? As we continue our meditation practice, we begin to look at all of this panoply of experiences from a new perspective. On an objective plane, nothing has to change. What changes is our attitude. But it is so easy to slip back into our

old habits.

What arises in our practice is much less important than how we relate to what arises. When we start our practice, one of the first approaches is to count the breath. It is difficult at first to maintain concentration and actually count from one to ten. But we encourage you to just start over at one and do not judge, do not criticize. When you finally are able to count to ten without losing concentration, again, just start at one. Don't praise yourself. Just continue.

Ninety percent of success is just showing up. That is something I learned early in my meditation career. If you notice, I always make a big effort to show up. It is easy to find excuses. But if you put your body on your cushion, even if you are distracted, something happens. If you have the intention to sit every sitting at the Zen Center and keep reaffirming that intention, you will be here for many of the sittings. There might be times when you cannot make it, but don't get into the habit of missing zazen on a regular basis.

In Zen practice, some people come and put their toe in and may leave. Some stick it out until it becomes part of their daily routine, and eventually it becomes part of their bone marrow. A genuine connection needs to be made. One cannot reason himself into or out of practice. There needs to be a real "soul resonance."

I view continuous practice as commitment. Commitment means choosing to work with those obstacles that interfere with the free flow of love and energy in ourselves and with others.

Commitment in practice depends on attention toward one's growth and unfolding based on opening more fully to life. So there is an intimate connection between a healthy, open life and practice. One requirement is being willing to be vulnerable. It is scary to feel naked to all of the pressures and forces of life. As we continue to practice and realize in the depths of our body that there is no self to defend, then we can face life with an open heart and be vulnerable in more and more situations.

Most of us walk down the street with hooks protruding into the space around us. Almost anyone can grab onto them and knock us off-balance. When we are truly vulnerable, we become transparent and there are fewer and fewer hooks. All of those things that used to grab us become like a gentle breeze passing through a leafless tree.

Bring your practice into your life. Stop during the day and focus your attention. Do one breath zazen. You can do it while waiting at the checkout stand in the gro-

cery store or while stopped at a red light.

Master Dogen wrote in “Gyoji” (Continuous Practice)

In the great Way of the Buddha ancestors there is always supreme continuous practice which is the Way without beginning or end. Arousing the thought of enlightenment, practice, bodhi, and nirvana have not the slightest break, but are continuous practice which goes on forever. Therefore, it is neither one’s own effort nor someone else’s effort; it is pure, continuous practice which transcends the opposition of self and others.

The merit of this continuous practice upholds oneself and others, because it is due to one’s own efforts, all worlds in the universe all the way up to the heavenly abodes immediately share in its benefits.

One day of continuous practice by us becomes the seed of all the Buddhas.

Not to continuously practice what is to be continuously practiced is to hate the Buddha, not to venerate the Buddha, to hate continuous practice, not to be born with the Buddha and

die with the Buddha, not to learn with the Buddha and not to practice with the Buddha. Opening up enlightenment in this present time and letting go of enlightenment are the action of continuous practice.

....‘even avoiding continuous practice is itself continuous practice’ but this is half-hearted continuous practice and it cannot be considered seeking continuous practice.

As examples of continuous practice Dogen uses the life of the Buddha who left the palace and spent his life in the mountains or monasteries. He never wore new clothes and begged for his food. He taught continuously for over 40 years.

Mahakasyapa, the successor of the Buddha, was an exemplary monk who did not own a thing, he took his clothes from dead bodies and never lay down to sleep, but did zazen all night.

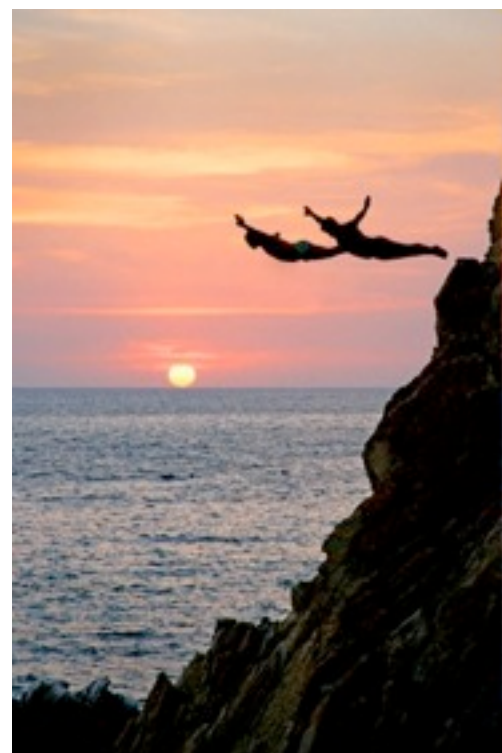
Are they any different from the single parent who looks after her child, goes to work, does the laundry, and cleans the house? Zen practitioners can emulate Mahakasyapa but with the wrong attitude their practice is weaker than the single parent who maintains mindfulness throughout the entire day.

Attitude is most important. Fear of the unknown becomes stuck in

the body and to be open to this uncertain life, we have to reprogram ourselves at a cellular level.

Your body knows what’s going on long before your conscious mind does. What does this tell us about decisions? If can learn to listen to the wisdom of your body, you will be clearer about what you are doing.

When I taught Zen Buddhism at Naropa, I always asked the students, “Have you ever made a rational decision in your life?” Consider something simple like which model of iPod will you buy. You can study the features and prices and then at some point you make a decision. What happens in the interval between when you are undecided and when you make a decision? It is like a leap of faith.



What would it be like if you approached all of the uncertain events in your life with curiosity rather than fear? However we make our bed, we have to lie in it – that is our karmic consciousness. There is a Zen expression that the water drunk by a cow becomes nourishing milk and the same water drunk by a snake becomes poisonous venom. The situation does not change it is just our attitude that changes.

There was an old immigrant woman who did not read English and her college aged son wrote to her for money. So she asked her neighbor to read the letter to her. The neighbor's toilet had just over-flowed and the plumber could not come to fix it, so she grabbed the letter and read it hastily and with a lot of irritation in her voice. The old woman said, "If that is his attitude, I will not send him any money." A day later, the old woman was having second thoughts and asked the neighbor to read the letter again. The toilet was fixed and the mess was cleaned up and the plumber fixed the leaking faucet for free and the neighbor was happy. She read the letter with gratitude in her voice and the old woman said, "That is more like it. I will be glad to send him some money."

It is amazing how much our attitude affects the quality of our life.

In case 83 of the Blue Cliff Record, Ummon asked when Buddhas in-

termingle with beings what level of activity is this? And he exclaimed: "Clouds gather over South Mountain and rain falls on North Mountain."

The clouds gathered on the neighbor and the rain fell on the old woman. What is the relationship between Buddhas and sentient beings? Clouds gather on South Mountain and rain falls on North Mountain. One day of continuous practice by us becomes the seed of all the Buddhas. When we really see that, then there is no room for complaints.

The wisdom and language of our body strongly affects how we perceive things and how we related to things. In prayer for example, it is less about the words we utter and more about the feelings that they create within us. When we pray we are sending energy into the world. What kind of energy are we putting out there? If our prayers are all ego based, they will be perceived and subtly answered. But probably not as we had hoped. The prayers must be without ego and judgment in order to affect possibilities. Feel that your intention is fulfilled and it is. Your prayer has been answered.

We must become the things in our life that we want to experience as our world. If you want to experience love, you have to be love. If you want to experience peace, you have to be peace. Working with whatever arises means facing it

and meeting it with attention and concern, so that you can find a way to engage it fully.

In our practice we become more spacious so that the container of our life includes everything we are and everything that everyone else is. Then it can accommodate even more growth. Dogen says that Buddha Treasure appears in vast space and in a speck of dust.

Consider this verse:

Dragon waters bore into the
cliffs and scrape way the
rocks,
But they do not ever hate
their labor.
When you see it from afar
You know how high the
dragon's mouth is.

Can the water in the valley
ever stop and rest?
When the water finally
reaches the sea, it becomes
the great waves.

Ninety percent of success is showing up. The other ninety percent is the continuous practice that is the seed of all the Buddhas.

Hyakujo and the Fox: A Talk by Shinko Sensei

Whenever Master Hyakujo gave a teisho on Zen, an old man sat with the monks to listen and always withdrew when they did.

One day, however, he remained behind, and the Master asked, "Who are you standing here before me?"

The old man replied, "I am not a human being. In the time of Kasho Buddha (a long time ago), I was the head of this monastery. Once a monk asked me, 'Does an enlightened man fall under the law of causation or not?' I replied, 'He does not.' Because of this answer, I was made to live as a fox for five hundred lives. Now I beg you, please say the turning words on my behalf and release me from the fox body."

The old man then asked Hyakujo, "Does an enlightened man also fall into causation or not?"

The Master said, "He does not ignore causation."

Hearing this, the old man was at once enlightened. Making a bow to Hyakujo, he said, "I have now been released from the fox body, which will be found behind the mountain. I

dare to make a request of the master. Please bury it as you would a deceased monk."



The Master had the Ino strike the gavel and announced to the monks that there would be a funeral for a deceased monk after the midday meal. The monks wondered, saying, "We are all in good health. There is no sick monk in the Nirvana hall. What is all this about?"

After the meal, the Master led the monks to a rock behind the mountain, poked out a dead fox with his staff, and cremated it according to the rituals for a deceased monk.

There is a final part to this koan that I will mention later on, in order not to repeat it.

This koan uses a ghost story in order to illustrate the laws of karma. Koans are records of the teachings of our ancestors. Did this particular record happen as it has been recorded or not?

In ancient China, life was in direct contact with the spirits of nature. In primitive cultures of

all times, the boundaries between the material world and the invisible are and were very thin. However, as we moved from the primitive into the modern societies, the boundaries between the spirit world and the material world, as a reflection of our minds, became more solid to the point where spirits did not exist anymore. In China during Hyakujo's time, the belief in ghosts was still very strong, so it would not be surprising to me if this particular koan record were a loyal description of an account that actually happened.

After the Tang Dynasty the belief in spirits started to fade away, and the following story is an account of this. Zhuxi was a famous scholar in the Song Dynasty (960 - 1279). He believed there were no ghosts in the world, so he decided to write an essay, "No Ghost." It was said he was a great sage, so even ghosts were afraid of him. If he said no ghosts, ghosts could no longer exist. When ghosts knew he was writing the essay, they gathered together to discuss this and decided to send the smartest ghost to beg him to abandon the writing.

So one night, the smartest ghost appeared at Zhuxi's desk and bowed towards Zhuxi repeatedly. Zhuxi was surprised and said, "A ghost? How dare you disturb me at night."

"Yes, I am a ghost, but ..."

"Why do you come in my study room, and why don't you leave?"

"I am here to beg ..." replied the ghost.

Zhuxi said, "People are in the Yang world and ghosts are in the Yin world. We are in the different worlds so there is no way I can help you."

"I have very important things to entreat you, Sir."

"Ok, say it!"

Then the ghost told Zhuxi the reason and begged him to abandon the writing to save them. Zhuxi laughed and said, "You, the ghosts, have been worshipped in the human world for so long. Isn't it time for you to go away all together?"

"We have good and bad ghosts..."

"Well, I heard you can do anything. Can you move me to the outside?"

"Certainly, Sir."

Zhuxi was moved to the outside instantly without even noticing it. He was astonished by the ability of the ghost but was unwilling to say it. Then he asked again, "You can move my body.

Can you move my heart?"

"That is impossible to do, Sir. But we can move things or a person's body, so that proves we exist. We exist in illusion. If you believe it, there will be ghosts, but if you don't, there will not. Can you say something like that in your essay, Sir?"

Zhuxi felt the words did have some merits, so he promised the ghost he would do that. The ghost left happily. Therefore, Zhuxi wrote the words, under the title of the no ghost essay, "If you believe it, there will be ghosts, but if you don't, there will not."

Chinese people these days often say, "If you believe it, it will be, but if you don't, it will not." Considering that the story of Hyakujo and the fox did actually occur gives this koan an incredible amount of strength and power. If you believe that the story of Hyakujo and the fox happened, it happened, but if you don't, it didn't. If you do believe, it will be alive for you, but if you don't, it will be dead for you. If you like it dead, then have it dead.

The master of a monastery was turned into a fox for 500 lives because he gave the wrong answer to his student. In order to understand this koan and to present it in a lively manner,

you need to be free from discriminations. Hyakujo, who has in himself the eye of truth, can see the old man, and the old man knows that Hyakujo can see him too. The fox is a fox but is also an old man who wants to know the truth about the laws of causation. If you were asked, "Does an enlightened man fall under the law of causation or not?" What would you say? What would you do?

Very often, Zen students new and old have a glimpse of their essential nature and arrogantly believe that they are not subject to causation, that they can do whatever they want and everything will be fine. I know this fact very well because I myself was one of those Zen students. Have you noticed how much the population of foxes has increased in the open space behind the Zen center? I myself was one of those foxes. How about you?

Since this koan talks about causation, let's get deeper into this matter now. Many Buddhists believe in the existence of nine layers of consciousness. Having experience these consciousnesses in myself, I am one of those Buddhists. The understanding of these consciousnesses helps us reveal our karma so we can be aware of where the path we are walking is leading. Sometimes I feel like

the Mother who brings you blended spinach, and you say "NO! I don't want it," but I reply anyway, "Open your mouth, it is good for you."

The clear understanding of these nine consciousnesses is the blended spinach that I bring for you. This understanding is very important because if you hear an internal voice that says to you, "That person is wrong and I am right," you'll know that this voice is only the deluded 7th consciousness speaking and clouding the view. The 12th-century Vietnamese Zen Master Thuong Chieu (Always Shining) said, "When we understand how our mind works, the practice becomes easy." Zen Master Thich Nhat Hahn wrote extensively about these consciousnesses in his book *Understanding our Mind*.

Today I will summarize these consciousnesses for you:

The first five consciousnesses of "sight, hearing, smelling, tasting & touching" are based in the physical senses of eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body.

The sixth consciousness is the intellectual processing center.

The seventh consciousness contains the delusion of ego separation which filters the perceptions of the first six consciousnesses.

The eighth consciousness or storehouse consciousness contains the potentials or seeds for the development and activity of the first seven consciousnesses.

The Ninth Consciousness or Buddha Nature Consciousness underlies all of the other consciousnesses; being empty of any fixed condition, it permeates everything throughout the whole universe.

Shibayama Roshi in his commentaries to Hyakujo and the fox says, "The fact of cause and effect is so clear and undeniable! In all ages and places there can be nothing on this earth that does not exist through the action of cause and effect. Every moment, every existence is causation itself. Outside it there is neither I nor the world."

The 8th or storehouse consciousness, located below in the realms of the unconscious, is called the storehouse consciousness because it stores all karma, whether positive or negative, created in the present and previous lifetimes. The eighth consciousness is a vast storehouse of all the causes and effects which affect the way that the world comes to us. The results of one's actions, good or evil, are stored here as a potential force, or karmic "seeds." These seeds are said to sprout in the future; in other words, stored karma eventually mani-

fest as happiness or suffering. It is also called the never-perishing consciousness, because the karmic seeds and the seeds of all habit energies and impressions from beginningless time are preserved here and continue even after death.

There are wholesome and unwholesome seeds in our store consciousness sown by ourselves and our parents, schooling, ancestors and society.

Vasubandhu, our 21st Indian Patriarch, wrote:

Some seeds are innate, handed down by our ancestors. Some were sown while we were still in the womb, Others we sowed when we were still children.

Even though a phenomenon is unmanifested, it is always there, as a seed in our consciousness. Our body, our mind, and the world are all manifestations of the seeds that are stored in our consciousness. Every act we make through our body, speech and mind sows seeds in our consciousness, and our store consciousness preserves and maintains those seeds. Like the seeds in the earth, the seeds in our store consciousness are hidden from us. Only when they do manifest in our mind consciousness do we become aware of them. When we feel happy, we believe that there is no seed of anger, but as soon as things

don't go the way we want, the seeds of anger, fear, anxiety etc. make themselves be known. Seeds carry habit energy with them. Habit energy determines our patterns of seeing, feeling, and behaving. Habit energy keeps us from being able to perceive the reality of the present moment.

Now, that being said, if I were to ask you again, "Does an enlightened person fall under the laws of causation or not?" What would you say? If your answer is, "YES," you'll be reborn as a fox. If your answer is "NO," you will also be born as a fox. No matter what you say, you will be reborn as a fox. In those circumstances, what would you do?



Not too long ago, I was returning to the Abbey after leading a weekend sesshin. When I got home, I lay down for a few minutes. As I was lying down I felt a presence behind me. Looking immediately out of the window, I saw a fox. In my empty mind of the moment, there were no concepts, no names, no words, there was only an amaz-

ingly vivid presence staring at each other. We stayed in a state of pure transparency outside of time, who knows for how long. In that state, what I saw was not anything I could call a fox. The only thing I could say when I came out of that trance was that I'd seen the face of God. It was a tremendous religious experience, and afterwards I could only bow down to the universe in gratitude. This kind of experience is available to each one of us all the time, but it does not happen that often because we earthlings are usually experiencing the world from the eight deluded consciousnesses. However, through practice we can experience the world from Buddha Nature Consciousness or ninth consciousness. This ninth consciousness is the free from defilement consciousness or pure consciousness. This consciousness is Omniscient. It is the basis of all life and of all things throughout the universe, and it connects everything and all life at the most profound level of existence. Tell me for the last time, "Does an enlightened person fall under the laws of causation or not?"

The last part of the Koan says, "In the evening, the master ascended the rostrum in the hall and told the monks the whole story. Obaku thereupon asked, 'The old man failed to give the correct turning words and was made to live as a fox for five

hundred lives, you say; if however his answer had not been incorrect each time, what would he have become?"

The Master said, 'Come closer to me, I'll tell you.' Obaku then stepped forward to Hyakujo and slapped him. The Master laughed aloud, clapping his hands, and said, 'I thought a foreigner's beard is red, but I see that it is a foreigner with a red beard.'"

This last part shows the vivid reality of these two great masters interacting with each other from Buddha Nature Consciousness. They are like the two faces reflected from one mirror or, even better, two faces reflecting each other without a mirror. This is what real transmission is. There is so much joy in their interaction, and the slapping is just how they play. Just like two young boys wrestling with each other. What a Dharma fiesta!

**MAY WE ALL REALIZE
THE BUDDHA MIND
MAHA, PRAJNA,
PARAMITA**

The Mission of Maitreya Abbey



The mission of Maitreya Abbey is to help create a nest of devotional energy to invite the coming of the Future Buddha, Maitreya, to this planet through Zen practice from the Heart, which will include residential and non-residential training rooted in the practice of zazen, practice to overcome the five poisons, prayer, chanting, dream practice, healing practice, processing circles, communion with nature in compassionate and harmonious partnership with human and non-human beings, creation of a self-sufficient environment and the appropriate use of natural resources. Everyone is welcome to participate in those areas that resonate with them. We would like to become a model for other communities around the globe. We are all the parents and the children of Maitreya, working, practicing and living together, preparing a home in our hearts for the coming of the Future Buddha.

Gala Benefit for the Abbey on August 20

Everyone is invited!

The Abbey will host a catered dinner and evening of entertainment as part of a fundraising benefit. The benefit will start at 4:30 PM on Saturday, August 20th.

Benefit Schedule and Opening of Maitreya Abbey

August 20

4:30 PM Arrival

4:30-5:30 Music by Kent, Gyodo,
Barbara and Donna

5:30 Flamenco dancing by Suzanne Kyokan

6:00 Dinner and presentation of the Abbey's past, present and future by Roshi

7-8:30 Zen plays: "The Old Lady Burns the Monk's Hut"
and "Isan Kicks Over the Water Bottle"

8:30 Merengue dancing with Gento

August 21

8:00 AM Breakfast

9:30 Zazen

10:30 Ceremony opening Maitreya Abbey

It will be a wonderful evening with an opportunity to contribute and to align yourself with the mission of Maitreya Abbey in honor of the future Buddha.

We will accommodate everyone who wants to come. Please RSVP to gmzc@gmzc.org soon to let us know you will be attending.

NOTE: Please plan to stay overnight at one of the wonderful bed and breakfast inns in the city of Berthoud in order to attend the ceremony opening Maitreya Abbey on the 21st.



MAITREYA ABBEY NEEDS YOUR HELP!

The following is an extract of the letter that Roshi sent to the Sangha in 2010.

October 22, 2010

Dear Sangha and Friends,

I often reflect on the training I had with Maezumi Roshi as a member of the Residential Zen Community in Los Angeles. Deep in my heart, I have the desire to share that experience with you.

When we bought the Abbey last November, Shinko Sensei and I saw that it could become a residential center that provides daily training and retreats as a way of bringing our Dharma relations to the next level. This residential center would be a complement to our city (suburban) center in Lafayette. The Zendo in Lafayette will continue to host Zen retreats and regular daily zazen with dokusan. I will continue to preside at those events as well as developing programs with Sensei at the Abbey.

As you know, we found the Abbey property almost in foreclosure and in a terrible state of repair. It needed a new roof, rain gutters, drainage ditches and new floors, among other things. However, the spirit of this land (5 and ¼ acres) and the spirit of its trees spoke to me and Sensei, and we decided to buy it together with our life savings.

In order to develop our vision, Sensei and I have spent many hours working at the Abbey since we bought it. We have improved the existing buildings and grounds considerably. This past year, with the help and labor of many of you, we made the main house habitable, replaced the old damaged roof, improved the property grounds, removed old fencing, dug drainage ditches and beautified the old

broken-up landscaping with new fabric and decorative rocks. Sensei and I have put all the money we have earned from leading retreats and more into paying for these improvements. The property and the living quarters are coming together, and for now we have done all we can to fix what needed to be fixed with our own resources.



American Gothic, Abbey Style

We already have had three Great Heart Retreats and other classes at the Abbey, but to have ongoing residential training, we need a residential area with a separate kitchen, bathrooms, showers and a new zendo (since the current one is in a traffic zone). We also want solar energy for the residential area.

With your monetary donations of \$8,635 and our work together, we finished two dorm rooms in the north wing of the building. These dorms do not have access to a water line, and there is no heat in that wing of the building, although we did install electric heaters in the rooms. Our future plans include solar energy for this wing of the building since the gas energy we are using for the main house is very expensive.

ABBEY UPDATE

Our original project and floor plan showed a new septic system for bathrooms on the far North side of the building. However, after getting some bids, we realized that installing a new septic system and leach field would cost approximately \$15,000.00, while we only have \$11,000.00 in donations for the whole project. Making a new septic system would not be possible.

Roshi decided to ask a certified plumber if it was possible to hook into the existing septic system and plumbing of the property, and he agreed that it was possible. Then Roshi asked his son David, who is an architect, if he would make another design of the residential area floor plan that would show the bathrooms, kitchen and showers in the South part of the residential area. Only the toilets will be connected to the septic system. We will build a gray water system for the waste water from the kitchen and shower and then use that water to irrigate the lawns. The floor plan that we include at the end of this article shows the new design. We hope that we can build the toilets and rough in the plumbing for the kitchen and shower with our present funds.

Some members are volunteering on Saturdays, and a few others are coming during the week to help Roshi and Sensei with the physical labor. Ksenya, who many of you know, brings a group of mentally challenged men to help at the Abbey almost every Tuesday, and they have been raking and removing weeds. We have announced a weekend working retreat in which we will be creating paths with flagstones and preparing the grounds for planting. As part of our self-sufficiency vision, we also plan to have vegetable gardens and greenhouses to supply food for the retreats. Last month we adopted four chicks who will eventually move to the chicken coop and start providing eggs.

The money to buy all the materials to embellish the grounds, create gardens and to finish painting the outside of the building has come entirely from Roshi's and Sensei's savings.

With the \$11,000.00 in donations that we received from the Sangha during the year 2010 and at the beginning of 2011, we have to complete all of the construction inside the buildings. As you can easily see, that amount won't be enough, and we are afraid that if we don't complete the project to a point that the residential area is in good enough shape to have a few residents, the Abbey won't be able to maintain itself, and we might be forced to sell it. Donations to complete the residential project can be made through PayPal.

The way that Roshi ended the fundraising letter last year applies now more than ever:

I am asking for your generous donations of money to support our vision of providing residential training at the Abbey. We will gratefully receive any donations that you can provide and any donation that we receive for the "Abbey Project" will grow the equity position of the Zen Center. The Great Mountain Zen Center is a 501(c)3 nonprofit religious organization which means that your donations are tax deductible.

Sensei and I will continue to do our part to support the development of the Abbey as much as we can with our labor and savings.

If you haven't seen the Abbey we would love to show it to you and give you a tour of the property. All you have to do is contact us to arrange a time. We will be happy to discuss our vision and your donation.

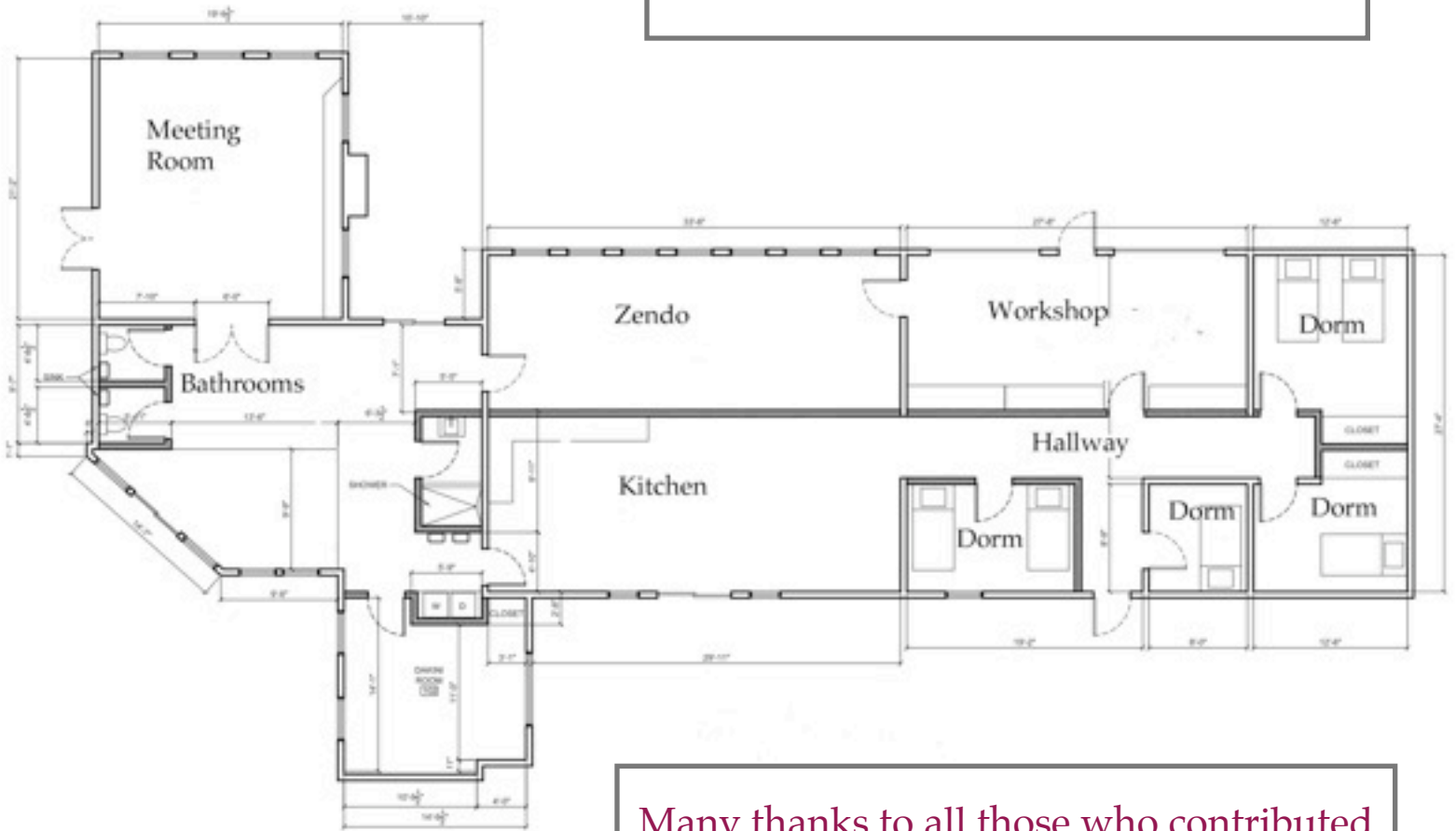
Thank you for your generosity.

In the Dharma,

Shishin Roshi

Please see the newest version of the Abbey's remodel floor plan on the next page.

Maitreya Abbey Remodel Floor Plan



- ### Abbey Wish List
- Garden Shed
 - Greenhouse
 - Pellet Stoves
 - Insulated Garage Doors
 - Outside Benches
 - Two-wheeled Wheelbarrow

Many thanks to all those who contributed their energy and efforts to working at the Abbey this spring:

Ryuko	Shoun	Matt
Ksenya	Gento	Bill
Shoun	Liz	Kuden
Namaste	Mugoku	Megan
Kent	Gyodo	Shoun
Gento	Tetsuji	Sotetsu
Brett	Craig	Kelly
Lisa	Tim	Anna Maria
	Daishin	

We apologize if someone's name was left off the list.

May your labors bloom into a wonderful Dharma refuge for all beings.

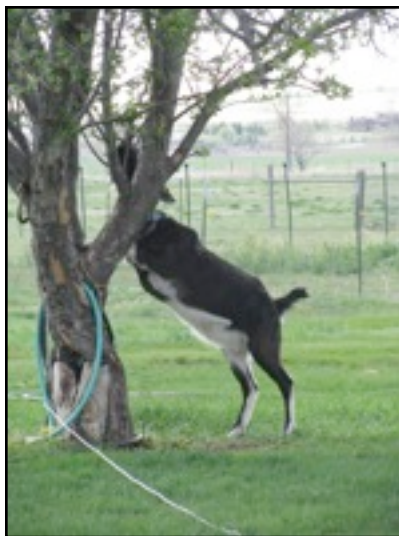
Meet the Eco-Lawnmower of Maitreya Abbey



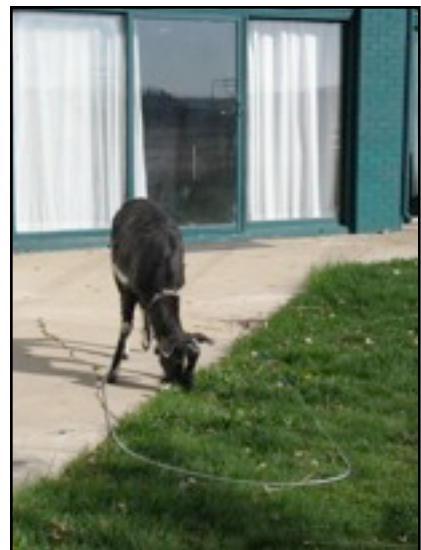
The Abbey presents the most ecological and versatile lawn mower available:
The Fauno model.



It mows.



It prunes.



It edges.



It even waters and fertilizes!!

Sensie and the Return of the Sacred Mermaid: An Allegory by Shinko Sensei

I have created the allegorical story of Sensie and the Sacred Mermaid to illustrate that the aspects of ourselves that we have rejected over a long time carry our own life force. Without reclaiming that energy, unity and liberation are not really possible. Most of the characters in this story are not human; however, there are two human characters whose names are Sensie (not Sensei) and the Sleeping Fisherman (not Roshi).

Sensie is a common human being, like you and me, who wanted to liberate herself and help all beings everywhere. She had spent a lifetime looking outside herself for her freedom and did not find it until she learned about the shadow from a wonderful book that came to her hands, *The Great Heart Way*. Sensie learned in this book that she can actually use the samadhi from her meditation to liberate those aspects of herself that have been enslaved or, in other words, disowned inside herself for a long, long time.

The following is a brief summary of what she learned, for those of you who are not familiar with these terms. If you are familiar with *The Great Heart Way*, you can bypass this information and continue with Sensie's story in the blue type, which will take you to an exciting lead.

What is the Shadow? An extract from *The Great Heart Way*

All of us have a hidden aspect that affects our lives without our knowledge. Some psychologists, following Jung, call this the "shadow". The shadow is like an unconscious trash bag, filled with those parts of ourselves that we have rejected. Just like our physical shadow, our unconscious shadow is always with us, whether we see it or not. We start filling this unconscious trash bag at a very early age. As young chil-

dren bursting with energy, when our parents exclaim, "Can you be quiet?" a part of us goes into the bag. To keep our parents' approval, we bag whatever they don't like. At school, when our teachers tell us, "Good children don't behave like that," we have more material for the bag. When others don't like some aspects of our personality, it too may go into the bag, and so on into adulthood.

All along the way, we learn to reject those bagged aspects of ourselves - even if we don't consciously know what they are. In our attempt to control others and avoid conflict and disagreement, we keep tossing in parcels. Unfortunately, every part of ourselves that we dump into the unconscious inevitably inhibits us from living a fulfilling life. Our shadow gives rise to negative projections that condition our perceptions and relationships with ourselves and the rest of the world.

One great eastern teacher, Master Gensha, wrote over a thousand years ago that even in the dark mountain cave of demons, complete freedom is present. He recognized what psychologists are now acknowledging: by entering the shadow or dark side of the personality, we can heal negative behavior patterns and emotional disturbances at their root. Complete freedom is present whenever we abide in pure presence.

The term "dark side" or shadow side" are not judgmental or pejorative. The unconscious is referred to in these terms because it exists in the absence of light. Until we develop awareness, our unconscious mind remains in the dark. Through the *Great Heart Way* we can come to realize that the unconscious is a source of true goodness and healing.

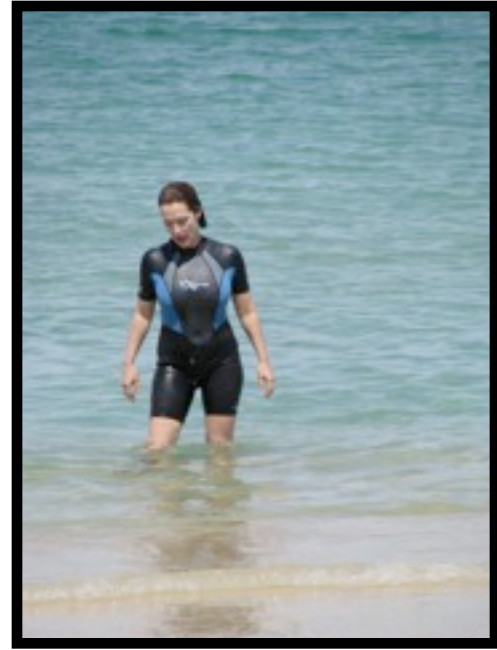
To take the veil of delusion from our eyes, we must first recognize that the veil exists. Then with all of our heart we must desire to remove it. The process of unveiling can be done by anyone who sincerely wants to do so.

Dr. Stanislav Grof, the founder of transpersonal psychology, wrote, "The deepest nature of humanity is not bestial, but divine. The universe is imbued with

creative intelligence, and consciousness is inextricably woven into its fabric. Our identification with the separate body-ego is an illusion, and our true identity is the totality of existence. This understanding provides a natural basis for reverence for life, cooperation and synergy, concern for humanity and the planet as a whole and deep ecological awareness."

Sensie then decides to use the Samadhi from her meditation to look inside herself, trusting her own intuition, which surprisingly takes the form in this story of the Sleeping Fisherman. I have made a slide show with text for your delight. Just remember that our characters are fictional, and any similarity between our characters and real characters is only out of pure joy!

As part of the Great Heart Way Retreat in July, you will learn how to recognize and own your shadow. Don't miss this incredible opportunity that will take place only **once** this year.



The first slide show image. Please click [this link](#) to view the entire show. You must witness this!!

Great Heart Zen: An Interview with Roshi and Sensei

Q: How did the process of Great Heart Zen originate?

A: (Roshi) Many people, including myself, start to practice in order to have some kind of an awakening experience. What I realized after years of practice is that it is possible to have awakening experiences and not deal with habitual patterns of behavior that cause suffering in ourselves and others. *The Great Heart Way* was developed as an extension of our zazen, in order to help us use meditation to see into our habit patterns or karma which isn't completely wiped out by awakening experiences. We have to actually make a conscious effort to deal with our karma. That was basically the origin of Great Heart.

Q: How long ago did you create Great Heart Zen?

A: (Sensei) About 11 years ago, in 2000, we started to

create systematic steps to help bring forward, in a safe way, aspects of ourselves that had remained unexplored during many years of traditional meditation. Our book, *The Great Heart Way*, explains the technique.

Q: What motivated you to develop Great Heart Zen?

A: (Sensei) As a Zen student, I had thought that healing and spiritual practice went hand in hand. By the time I became a teacher, I'd had many so-called "enlightenment experiences", but I hadn't experienced the deep healing in myself that I'd taken for granted would happen when I entered the Zen path. I was dissatisfied because the so-called "enlightenment experiences" I had were taking me to places of total transcendence of life and family situations, but when I re-entered my daily life, I was not able to flow well with situations, and I was always getting stuck in my self-righteousness. That self-righteousness was protecting something that I had not penetrated with traditional practice.

A: (Roshi) When I started teaching, students would share with me issues in their lives with which they

were struggling, but they were more interested in their stories about it than they were in staying with their feelings. They were using the stories to by-pass their feelings. *The Great Heart Way* emphasizes the transformative power of staying with one's raw feelings - just the energetics of the feelings without dwelling on the why, the who did what to whom, of the stories. Personally, I saw that I had feelings of inadequacy even after practicing Zen for many years, and that the meditation I learned from my teacher wasn't helping me to deal with them. I saw the foibles and inappropriate behavior of my teacher that caused harm to the Sangha, his family and himself. In addition to that, I and other teachers were doing things that were unskillful. I realized that something was lacking in the practice. In the book, I detail one of my major breakthroughs, and Sensei details some of hers.

Q: Why is this work not just for teachers, then? Why is it important for everybody?

A: (Sensei) I remember when I was a child, I was so receptive and spacious and happy and fearless, and the whole world was open to me. Then I remember growing up, going to school, hearing 'You should not do things that way' and 'If you do that, you're not a good person,' I became handicapped. I lost my openness; I lost the capacities with which I came into this world. If I had heard of something like the *Great Heart Way* then, I would have joined wholeheartedly and practiced zazen at the same time, in order to recover those aspects of myself that had been chopped off in growing up. So the opportunity is open for anyone who comes to Great Heart retreats to recover aspects of themselves that they brought into this world but lost in the process of growing up because they were shamed, betrayed or not accepted by whomever was in power at school, at work or at home. This practice is great for anyone who wants to live a more plentiful life, to recover the gifts that we were born with.

Q: How did you actually come up with the method?

A: (Sensei) Something happened during one of my first Zen retreats in Rochester. An incredible amount of fear and terror came up from deep in my guts, and without any guidance on how to deal with it, I just held to the koan I'd been assigned and felt the terror fully. Eventually, the terror passed, and an old image hidden for many years was revealed to me. At that time, I didn't know how to deal with emotions, and I was not able to provide healing to what was revealed to me; this was at the beginning of my practice. After many years of practicing zazen, I learned on my own how to work with feelings and to trust them. I had to be them--be the fear, be the anger.

Great Heart Zen teaches the systematic steps for healing the inner wounds we all carry and that we've learned to bypass over time. The truth is that unless we reclaim and heal those aspects of ourselves we've left behind, our so-called "enlightenment" will not be complete.

Q: What is the most important aspect of yourself that you've healed?

A: (Sensei) The feminine aspect. I had adopted the ways of the masculine in order to succeed in the world, but the more vulnerable feminine aspects lay beneath many solid layers of protection that kept me numb to my inner truth. In order to undo the numbness, I had to go through many painful feelings. The lessons I learned from doing that were innumerable, and I would do it many more times, if I had to, in order to reclaim my true heart and the true person I am. I had to go through a lot of shame in order to bring forward this true self of mine. It was like coming out of a dark closet to bring forward the true heart of the Mother.

Q: What makes this process safe for people who are nervous about entering unfamiliar emotional territory?

A: (Roshi) People explore at different rates. We're quite aware of that, and we don't push people beyond their safety zone. We use the technique of

Voice Dialogue to help people who have a lot of resistance, and particularly people who don't have a lot of meditation experience. Through Voice Dialogue we talk to sub-personalities as if they were individuals. In particular, we all have a *protector*, and if the *protector* isn't on board with the Great Heart approach, it will subvert the whole process. So we actually give that sub-personality a voice, let it talk about what its concerns are, what it does, and then ask its permission to proceed. We've found by doing this, people with a considerable amount of trepidation are able to relax and go to those places that might ordinarily scare them. The results are that people are always very grateful for that and find that they are more spacious, open up more and are more accepting of themselves and of others.

Q: What part do group meetings play in Great Heart retreats?

A: (Roshi) We have group processes where people in the group share their insights they might have had about themselves. When people start sharing, others in the group find first of all that they're not so alone, so isolated and unique in their concerns. What always happens is that people see themselves in other people when they're sharing, and they can relate and learn from each other. That opens up a safe container for people to go a little deeper because they see other people doing it, and they say, 'Wow, I have exactly the same issue,' and it's encouraging, people encourage each other. The group sharing is an important and very valuable part of the retreats.

A: (Sensei) The group experience is absolutely important. In that group experience there is a great safety because very strong, deep relationships and empathy toward each other are developed. Also, the group at some point becomes its own entity. It's not all these separate beings but just this one group, and then a vortex of energy is created in which we all start descending deeper and deeper into the core of our being. Some of us are at the leading edge of the spiral as it goes deeper, and some of us are at the outer edge of the spiral, according to our capacities.

Everybody finds their own safety in this spiral that's created with the group energy. We recover this very old, innate capacity of being human, and we feel that we are not alone. We are not separate entities but members of this group.

Q: How do Great Heart retreats differ from regular meditation retreats?

A: (Roshi) The group processes are one of the main differences between a regular Zen retreat and a Great Heart retreat. Also, we have exercises in our book, *The Great Heart Way*, that people can do in order to help them become aware of the patterns that they have. A lot of this practice is just awareness, being able to be unconditionally present without criticizing or judging, just feeling whatever the feeling is without adding a storyline to it, feeling the energy of whatever is present in the body.

Q: This year's Great Heart retreat is being held in two consecutive weekends. What are the benefits of this format?

A: (Sensei) One of the important things is that people can attend without taking vacation time from work, so that's a benefit. Some people coming from out of town are going to spend a week away from home anyway. They can spend the two weekends of retreat at the Abbey and the period in between as well, if they want to. Sometimes people also go and visit friends in between weekends. But the most important thing, besides that, is that people have almost nine days total to stay with this practice, nine days to process and to look deeply within themselves. The Great Heart practice is a practice of awareness that we can take with us into our relationships, the work place and social lives. Through interactions with people during the week, we see where we get stuck. That adds a great value to the retreat. We can process a lot more and accomplish a lot more in nine days through meditation and looking at our reactions as we interact with other people.



GREAT HEART ZEN

2011

A Two-Weekend Retreat

July 16-17 and July 23-24

This is the **only** opportunity to attend a Great Heart retreat in 2011. Don't miss it! Participation is limited, so reserve your spot soon. Excellent homemade lunches are included. Housing is available for out-of-town participants.



Healing Ourselves and Making Heart Connections: An Interview with Heather Kuden Collins

Senior student Heather Kuden Collins has been attending Great Heart retreats since Shishin Roshi and Shinko Sensei introduced the Great Heart Way to their students in 2000. Leading up to this year's Great Heart retreat, which will be held at the Abbey in a two-weekend format from July 16-17 and July 23-24, we asked Kuden to share what the Great Heart Way means to her.

Q: You've been practicing Great Heart for a long time. How has it benefited you?

A: I can accept my own emotions, where I might have stepped away from them before. That's the most important benefit to me. The more I allow myself to feel, without judging, the more the old knots of blocked energy loosen. I have a lot more energy available to me now.

Q: What brought you to Great Heart practice in the first place?

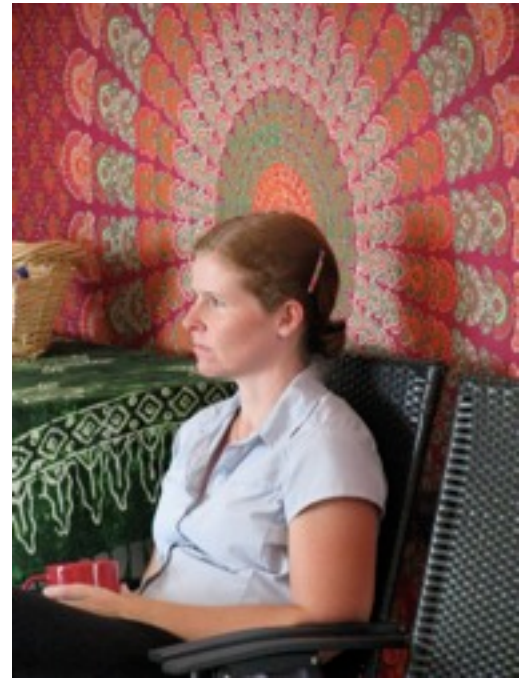
A: A number of years ago, I realized that even though I had a

committed meditation practice, my relationships were a mess. Like many meditators, I had gotten pretty good at bypassing my emotions. In the presence of strong feelings, whether they were mine or other people's, I would unconsciously step back from them. But with Great Heart practice, I became more able to see myself stepping away. Now I respond differently to strong emotions in others. I can be more present, and my relationships have changed for the better because of that.

Q: What is it that keeps you going to retreats and practicing the Great Heart Way?

A: The practice isn't static. Nothing is fixed, so I don't know where I'm going to go in my emotional world at the beginning of a retreat. Sometimes I'm really surprised. It's an adventure. Also, some of the images and patterns I've discovered in retreats are very rich; I could work on them for years and keep revealing new layers. I've heard others say the same thing. The foundation of meditation practice is very important to me. The emptiness and stability that regular zazen provides gives me the space to get in touch with my feelings without being overwhelmed.

Q: Can you describe an experience you've had during a Great Heart retreat?



A: During a retreat a couple of years ago, an image surfaced from my unconscious mind. When I was about four years old, I lived on a farm, and I had a little black and white kitten that I really loved. The kitten disappeared. A few days later, I was in the barn with my dad when he lifted an engine off the barn floor. My kitten was there, underneath the engine. She had died there.

I ran into the house, hysterical. My mom didn't understand how upset I was. She said, "Why are you so hysterical? It's just a cat." And I suppressed the whole thing. I was so little, and my feelings overwhelmed me. I didn't have the resources to process them at that time, so I shut them up inside me.

What amazed me, in retreat thirty years later, was that all those emotions had been stored

in my body all that time, waiting for me to be able to feel them. Finally, I could; Great Heart retreats are a very non-judgmental and supportive environment, so I felt safe. The little girl I was had believed that it was her fault the kitten died. I had carried a sense of guilt for thirty years without knowing what was my guilt about. I felt also the repressed pain and sadness I've been carrying around with me since then. I felt very light and peaceful afterward.

About a week after that retreat, I was in a pet store, and I felt drawn to the cats for sale there. In one of the crates was a little black and white kitten, with the same markings as the one I'd lost so many years before. I took him home, and my boys and I still have him.

Q: How does it feel to work in such charged emotional territory in a retreat setting, with other people?

A: Great Heart retreats are a great place to practice with others because it's such a supportive, accepting environment. People are often working on similar issues, so we find out that we're not alone. Witnessing other people's work and their healing is very encouraging. We build closeness and heart connections during retreat, and it's effortless; it's the natural result of doing this work together.

Q: This year's Great Heart retreat will be held in two consecutive weekends. You've attended these two-weekend retreats before. What's it like?

A: It's a good format for lay people with jobs and families. You don't have to use up lots of vacation time or be away from the kids for a whole week. Also, that week between the two retreat weekends is great integration time; there's naturally more awareness of emotional and relationship patterns after the first weekend. It's a rare opportunity, to see what comes up during that week and then bring it back into retreat to work with again. The chance to work with Roshi and Sensei, who have so much experience and are such skilled facilitators, for two weekends in a row, is invaluable. The two-weekend retreat is a good foundation for continuing to clarify our inner world and deepen our practice.

Great Heart Zen in Spain

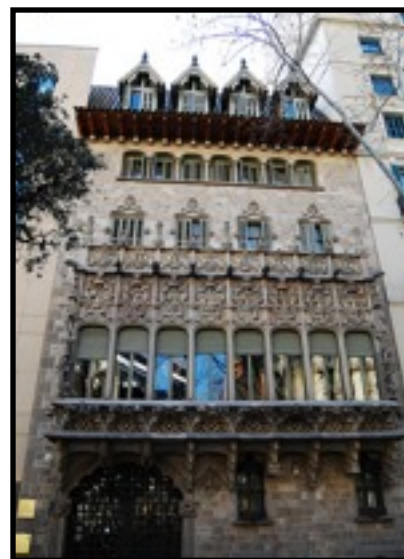
Shishin Roshi and Shinko Sensei have the honor of being invited to speak at Casa Asia in Madrid on January 16, 2012. Casa Asia was created to strengthen the knowledge and dialogue between Asia and Spain, to support activities and projects that contribute to a better knowledge about Asia and Spanish societies, and to promote the development of rela-

tions among them.

Roshi and Sensei will speak on the journey of Zen Buddhism through India, China and Japan and its arrival in the Western world. They will also discuss the transformation that took place in Zen practice in each country, what is being done in the West to preserve the tradition, and current adaptations to the special circumstances in the US and Europe.

Roshi and Sensei will also lead a weekend Great Heart retreat at the Convent of Madres Salesi-

sianas del Sagrado Corazon de Jesus from January 20-22, 2012.



Casa Asia

To Make a Vow

by *Andy Hakuju Smith*

One of the things I like about our Zen practice is that we take vows. To make a vow you have to acknowledge, on some level at least, that you have the power within you to carry it out. You might not know where that power is or how to use it yet, but by making a vow you are admitting to yourself and the world that you are not powerless and that you can take responsibility for your own life.

Another reason I like vows is they are first cousins to oaths, and oaths remind me of pirates and swords, kegs of rum, grapeshot, buried treasure, walking the plank and nailing a gold coin to the mast. For good or ill, oaths and vows speak of great determination and setting out on a journey with no intention of ever turning back.

When I first started sitting, I spent a great deal of time trying to come to some clear picture of exactly what I was doing and exactly why I was doing it. I had already given up religion, I thought, and I didn't want to start again based on any of the typical

hazy misconceptions that I normally use to make important decisions. I wanted to know exactly what was important to me about this and what my real goals were.

I spent quite a bit of time just sitting with that. And finally it came to me, and it came to me as a vow. And the vow is this: I vow to follow this path for the liberation and happiness of all beings. I was not yet sure I wanted to become a Buddhist, but I was sure I wanted to find liberation and happiness. And though I wanted to find liberation and happiness mainly for myself, I somehow realized that if I did it only for myself there would be no power behind it and I would not last at it long. I think by its nature a vow must reach for something greater than oneself.

So I included myself in with all beings and I made my vow: I VOW TO FOLLOW THIS PATH FOR THE LIBERATION AND HAPPINESS OF ALL BEINGS. I have always kept my vow to myself, as a private matter, but I now realize that vows are not just private, they are also public. And the public part is as important as the private part. That could be

where the power comes from. You don't just acknowledge to yourself that you have the power to attempt the impossible, to fight dragons and toss mountains into the sea, you acknowledge it to the whole world. That's important. Chanting the Four Great Vows, taking Jukai and getting married are some times when most of us make vows, and we make them in public.



I still repeat my vow every day. I have a lot of other vows I have made, but that one came from my heart and all the others are just ways to back it up. I invite you to make the same vow if you like, or make one that suits you better.

I have no idea how I will accomplish this vow of mine, even though it's vague enough to leave me plenty of wiggle room if I wanted it. But it comes to me a lot, and it has the power to guide my actions. When I don't feel like sitting, when someone in the Sangha says something that hurts my feelings, when I feel discouraged or like it's hopeless, that vow comes to me and reminds me why I am here. When I look at my practice and see how sloppy, inconstant and half-hearted it sometimes is, I could want to forget the whole thing. I'm not great at any of it. Then I remember that I didn't vow to be great; I just vowed to keep trying. Forever. My vow sustains my practice. I think a real vow slowly becomes part of your nature.

Of course, lots of people say the words of a vow without making it in their hearts, and then the vow will have no power. And even when we do make a real serious vow with our whole being, it's fairly impossible not to drift off the straight and narrow from time to time. But I think if you have really made a vow, you have already kept it, and I give myself leniency when I stray from the path, knowing I can't help but get back on it.

Every morning I get up and have a cup of coffee, then go upstairs to the room where I

sit. My dog follows me up there and lays on the floor beside me, twitching and dreaming of chasing deer through the woods.

Recently I was having a hard time: with my koan, with my life, with the weather, with everything. I swore softly under my breath while I sat there and my dog immediately got up and left the room. He's a saint. I'm not. That could be the main difference between us. But I kept on sitting and he quit.

When I was 22 I decided to try celibacy. Maybe I shouldn't claim, "I decided," for when I was 22 that idea wouldn't ever have naturally occurred to me. But I was in a meditation group and the teacher strongly promoted celibacy as a way to build up spiritual energy. So I tried it and the results were, to me, horrifying. First of all there was NO sex. Second of all, well, really, I never got past the first part: there was NO sex.

At the time it seemed like a depressing way to live and I gave it up like ketchup on fish, but years later I came to understand and appreciate it. Today, by using skillful means to modify the practice a bit, I even benefit from it. I've found that as long as I abstain from work instead of sex, celibacy is

fine. I'd recommend it to anyone.

I think it's time we turned this whole world upside down, and our vows are how we can do that. I think we should all sin enough to get sent straight to Hell, because that's where we Bodhisattvas are needed the most. And I vow to follow this path...

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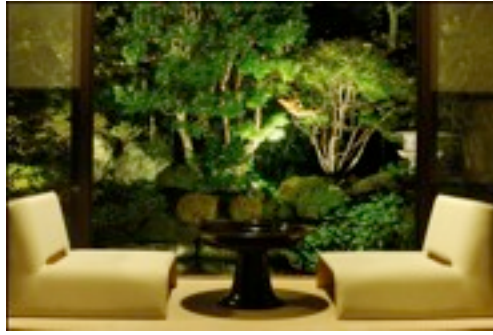


It's All About You and It's Not Personal: Chiropractic Zen

by Anna Hodge

I was recently referred to a chiropractor to address a six-year-old back injury sustained from excessive samba dancing. The chronic pain was a “problem” I just accepted. But this doctor informed me that there was simply a gap in communication between the muscles at the site of the pain and the brain. Messages to the muscles to fire had stopped coming. So nearby muscles were having to work harder to compensate. The actual muscles at the site of the injury had forgotten how to fire normally and were continuing to act as if the injury was still there. But all was well. The muscle had healed. It just didn't know it, because the brain was holding on to a problem that didn't exist. The brain forgot to start firing again. It forgot how to function normally at this site. As a result, it essentially, made a mountain out of a molehill.

Do you see where I'm going with this? How do I make mountains out of molehills in my lives, when all is well? Why do I have any problems at all when I am living in the Garden of Eden? I go on and



on creating problems out of nothing. All problems are created in the mind because I have forgotten who I really am. I think I am the separate ego living in a separate world of other people and other things. In this perspective, without problems, ego feels empty. Without problems there is nothing to do, nothing to fight with, nowhere to go. I create problems because I feel that life is this great work. I have to have purpose and meaning. I have to be going somewhere, accomplishing something. I have to grow. And I have to struggle to get more.

I see that ego exists only when it struggles. It needs something to argue against, to be unsatisfied with...the greater the perceived problem, the greater the challenge. The more “important” the issue is, the more ego rises to meet it and to soar with it.

What did the chiropractor teach me? Problems don't exist; I create them... in the structure of the brain, in the structure of condi-

tioned thought/feelings and in the structure of the self-centered ego. First I create molehills out of nothing. All is neutral before I add my story. Then I create mountains out of molehills. To feel ALIVE.

Look at what I'm doing? What nonsense. I bump into a situation that requires a correction or adaptation. For example, I twisted my sacrum too hard. It needed a two day rest. So neurons need to stop firing at the site for two days to give the muscles a rest and then restart. That's it. No problem. Adaptation to injury. But that's not how things happen. Why didn't it refire the muscle fibers after a couple of days? I don't know. But I have a guess.

Could the body be trying to catch Anna's attention? Could it be trying to tell her something by not re-firing and adapting as it knows how to do? Could the pain have meaning? Well, let's give some attention to why the situation occurred in the first place? Did my choices and actions have anything to do with it? Or was I a victim? Why was I pushing those hips so hard that it overstretched the muscles? Hmmmm. Not a victim. I'm a perpetrator. I created the problem in the first place. “Push, push, force those darn adipose tissues to

melt away". I remember that day. First week in January six years ago. Ego was determined to lose those twenty pounds, even if it killed the host. Seriously, that's where I was coming from when that injury occurred. Can you relate? Does the ultimate source of our being care if an individual body/mind has that attitude? I don't know. Maybe it doesn't care in the way we normally think about caring and attaching. But maybe it does provide built in mechanisms to remember who we really are. Maybe pain is one of those built in mechanisms.

To not have any problems except the ones I create doesn't appeal to the ego. I have to see what's really going on. I have to realize it's all about ME and it's not personal. If there is nothing to do; if I am already in the Garden of Eden and I know who I really am; nothing to struggle with or grow into, what will become of who I "think I am"-EGO?

The deeper I laser in on my so called "problems", the smaller they appear. The longer I look, undaunted, the more they begin to disappear. As I go on just gazing, just looking, suddenly what I find is that I am everything.

Awakening, enlightenment, god-consciousness...is not something I have to struggle to achieve. But that doesn't mean that nothing has to happen to BE and Live awake. That's the paradox. Something DOES need to happen. It's just that I can't make it happen directly. Something has to be realized about who I am. And that often occurs when I laser in on who I think I am. It's the laser that brings light into the darkness. Realizing means seeing. I need to laser in on the root of the problem (how I see things) for them to disappear.

So, would you like to know how my six year old problem disappeared after an hour and a half with this chiropractor? He used something called "cold laser therapy". Yup. He lasered that sucker. And, not surprisingly, the light waves of the laser were not directed at the apparent problem either. They were aimed at the source of the problem...The 5th vertebra, where the brain neuron is supposed to pass into the peripheral nervous system and fire all the gluteus, piriformus and hamstring muscles that support the sacral area. That gap in the firing, that misunderstanding, was corrected. And I am now pain free. More awake and aware than I was before I discovered Chiropractic Zen.

**Join us at GMZC for the 2011
Ango Entering Ceremony!
September 18, 2011**





Retreat and Event Calendar Summer and Fall 2011

Summer 7-Day Sesshin: June 12-June 19

Great Heart Retreat 2011(Two Weekends): July 16-17 & 23-24

Abbey Gala Benefit: August 20

Weekend Sesshin: September 15-18

Ango Entering Ceremony: September 18

Weekend Sesshin in South Dakota: October 7-9

Fall/Winter Residency Opportunities at the Abbey

Are you looking for a quiet place to live and practice? There are opportunities for fall and winter residency at Maitreya Abbey in Berthoud, CO under the direction of Zen Masters Shishin Roshi and Shinko Sensei. Regular meditation retreats are available but optional. Residents pay reasonable rental fees, which can be reduced in return for work. The Abbey is a 5 acre ranch with a sprawling ranch house about 40 minutes drive from Boulder.

Zen Retreat in the Black Hills

Come join Zen Masters Shishin Roshi and Shinko Sensei for a weekend retreat in South Dakota's beautiful Black Hills this fall. The retreat, "Zen Wisdom from the Heart", will be held at Placer-ville Camp, a secluded forest retreat center in the heart of the Black Hills, located along Rapid Creek, approximately 15 miles west of Rapid City.

The retreat will start the evening of Friday, October 7th and end early Sunday afternoon, October 9th. Food and lodging are provided. Cost is \$125 per person. For more information, or to reserve a spot, contact Andrew Smith at 605-342-4467, goldarrowood@aol.com, or Suzan Nolan at 605-451-1554, kezsuz5@rap.midco.net



Poems by the Sangha

達摩



One

The color of a shadow
is the color of the sun
only deeper.

-Andy Hakuju Smith

*Bodhidharma walked
Shaolin to redrock canyons
No trace of his path*

-Geoff Shoun O'Keeffe

VISITING KENTUCKY IN LATE SPRING

-Rey Ford

The damp green
of everything-
such a fertile earth
to swim in.

Everywhere
the moisture
and honeysuckle
lick each other

until
the sweet smell
fills the great pond
of all imagination,

until
just past sunrise
when a thin blue heron
settles in the water
in front of me
and tucks his wings away,
and waits so quietly,
watching for anything that moves
below the surface
as if his life depended on it,
as if all our lives
depended on it,
as if in this silent moment
the breathing of the entire world
balances so perfectly
on his thin legs.



Many thanks to the following members
for their generous donations to GMZC this spring.

Chip Soten Chace
Geoff Shoun O'Keeffe
Diane Berry

Richard Shinzen Blackmore
Peter Tetsuji Van Etten
Paul Gyodo Agostinelli

Sangha Listings

The following is a list of services that Sangha members provide to the public. If you would like to be included in a future list, please contact us at gmzc@gmzc.org.

Shishin Roshi offers Voice Dialogue sessions to Sangha members. He can be contacted at [720-751-7553](tel:720-751-7553) or gerrywick@mindspring.com

Shinko Sensei offers transformational Dream Work to the Sangha. For more information, contact her at [720-624-9214](tel:720-624-9214) or shinko07@gmail.com.

Andrew Hakuju Smith, Bonsai: Trees, workshops, lectures, demos. www.goldenarrowbonsai.com.

Lisa Gakyo Schaeve provides art therapy and counseling in a working art studio on North Broadway in Boulder. She can be contacted at [303-803-2264](tel:303-803-2264) or gakyo61@gmail.com. Her website can be found at www.lotusopeningtherapy.com

Russian-English/English-Russian translation and interpretation in various fields provided by Ksenya O'Banion. Contact email: kseyainchina@yahoo.com and telephone: [720-877-4862](tel:720-877-4862). Russian tutoring: individuals and groups are welcomed! Beginners and/or advanced levels in speaking, reading and writing.

Rey Ford offers oil painting for beginners: individual or group instruction. Please contact him through his website, reyfordfineart.com, or by phone at [303-684-6588](tel:303-684-6588).

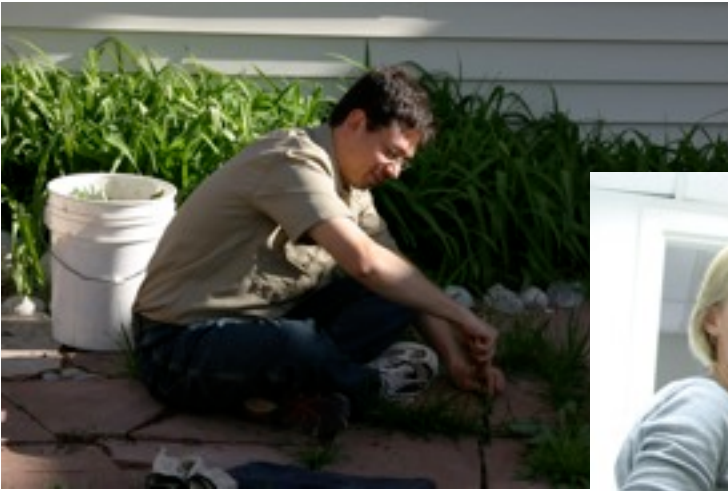
Laura Ryuko Minks offers pet, house and plant sitting and also help in household and garden projects. She can be contacted at [303-684-6588](tel:303-684-6588) and lminks@gmail.com

Mari Heart, BA, MATL, is currently offering custom designed outcome based life coaching and facilitation services uniquely tailored to meet individual and group needs. NVC trained and a graduate of the Hendricks Institute Leadership and Transformation Program, Mari is an educator, entrepreneur, and Intuitive Creativity Life Coach. She is also an Awakening the Dreamer Facilitator, Training Leader, Community Coordinator and Ambassador for the Pachamama Alliance. She is a member of the Evolutionary Collective Core and Catalyst for the Genius Alliance. She can be contacted at [303-588-8508](tel:303-588-8508) and mariheart@aol.com.

Gallery

These photos were taken at the April weekend retreat at GMZC in Lafayette...and saved from the black hole where retreat photos go!







These photos were taken at the recent Abbey Work Retreat. Our apologies to the participants who are not pictured. We were working against the clock and only took a few minutes off for photos...



