

Zen Heart Sangha

Issue 17

Fall/Winter 2009 Newsletter

Special Upcoming Events

Guest Speakers:

- Sept. 28: Diane Comey (ZHS)
Oct. 26: Rev. Jane Shuman
(Twining Vines, Purchase, NY)
Nov. 30: Rev. Jill Kaplan (ZHS)

Special Events:

Vajrapani 3-day Retreat

Oct. 23-25
(Starting Friday at 9:00 am)

Segaki Ceremony

Nov. 2

Rohatsu One-Day Retreat

Dec. 5

Monthly Schedule

Monday evenings*

Welcome/Instruction	6:30 pm
Zazen	7:00
Service	7:40
Lecture	7:50
Final Bows	8:45
End Evening	9:00

* except 1st Mondays

1st Monday of month: Retreat

Welcome/Instruction	6:30 pm
Zazen	7:00
Kinhin	7:40
Zazen	8:00
Three Bows	8:40
End Evening	8:45

1st & 3rd Saturdays of month

Zazen	5:50 am
Kinhin	6:20
Zazen	6:30
Service	7:00
Community breakfast	7:20
Soji (Cleanup)	8:00
Zazen	8:40
Study/Tea	9:10
End program	10:10

Zazen – sitting meditation

Kinhin – walking meditation

One Thing, Same Thing

Zazen practice and everyday activity are one thing. We call zazen everyday life and everyday life zazen. But usually we think, "Now zazen is over and we will go about our everyday activity. But this is not right understanding. They are the same thing. We have nowhere to escape."

Suzuki Roshi

This summer many of us visited Tassajara as guest students, joining in the community's work practice and spending time studying the dharma. We had the rare opportunity to be a part of monastic practice, bringing our zazen practice into everyday activity. As Suzuki Roshi said, they are the same thing and there is 'nowhere to escape'. Zazen practice is in every moment and in every activity; even when we are unaware, our practice is supporting our life.

The founder of our lineage, Dogen Zenji, had a profound understanding of this support early in his life. After his sea voyage to China, he met an old monk who boarded his ship to buy mushrooms from one of the merchants. Dogen invited him to have tea and discovered that he was the tenzo (head cook) from a local temple. The tenzo was making the monks a special soup for a celebration the following day. He had walked twelve miles to the ship and was preparing to return. Dogen invited him to stay for a meal, but the tenzo replied that this was not possible because he needed to oversee the next day's meal. When Dogen suggested that someone else in the monastery might do this, the tenzo replied, "I have taken this position in my old age. This is the fulfillment of many years of practice. How can I delegate my responsibility to others?" Still not understanding, Dogen asked, "Why don't you concentrate on zazen practice...rather than troubling yourself by holding the position of tenzo and just working?" The tenzo laughed and said, "Good man from a foreign country, you do not yet understand practice..."

This conversation was a pivotal moment for Dogen. The tenzo was trying to show him that zazen practice and everyday activity are one and the same thing, something that often takes many years of practice to understand. Many years later, Dogen wrote in the Tenzo Kyokun (Instructions for the Tenzo):

When you wash rice and prepare vegetables, you must do it with your own hands, and with your own eyes, making sincere effort. Do not be idle even for a moment. Do not be merely a drop in the ocean of merit; do not fail to place even a single particle of earth at the summit of the mountain of wholesome deeds.

We have the opportunity each moment of our day to bring our zazen practice into everyday activity and everyday activity into zazen practice. Whether it is brushing your teeth, feeding your child, typing an email, or cooking a meal, do not be idle even for a moment, and wake up!

With Many Bows, Misha Shungen