



MOON ON THE WATER

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Newsletter of the Great Lake Zen Center, Milwaukee, WI

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Hair Today, Gone Tomorrow: Karma, Attachment, and Mind

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I'm a 36-year old woman. I have a blessed life: a spouse who loves me, a terrific child, a good job, a nice living situation, good friends and family. And I'm attached to my daughter's hair.

Well, sort of – as all attachments are, it's just an idea. When I was a kid, my mom kept my hair in a short, short cut – they called it a “pixie” at the time, and the spin my Mom placed on it was to insist that it was the stylish thing (and I guess that was probably true in 1970), but I knew better. That short cut was really the only way my styling-impaired parents could deal with my thick, wavy hair. All the other little girls in first grade at College Park Elementary School had long hair (especially Mary Alice Lukas, who in my mind embodied the idea of everything I wanted to be – a girly girl with immaculate dresses and long, flowing locks). Looking at my class picture, there I am, the lone shortcut in a sea of braids and curls. As soon as I got old enough to put my foot down (and could deal with combing and styling my own hair), I insisted that I be allowed to grow it long. You can see the pride on my face in my fourth-grade photo, as my hair went past my shoulders for the first time. Since that time, I've only gone truly short once, and immediately regretted it. So, as you can see, I've had this hair ‘thing’ going on. Some call it ‘attachment.’ But through the years, it has caused quite a bit of suffering for me: the times when I went home in tears because the stylist took ‘too much off,’ the ‘bad hair days’ resulting from the combination of humidity and long, wavy hair... So, fast forward to 2002. At 36, my hair is above my shoulders, and I firmly believed that I'd “let it go”, and that issue was now a “non-issue” for me. I'm cool, I practice regularly. There are plenty more important things in the world. Shaving my head for a retreat, no problem...I think. Yet, I've got quite a bit of “hair go” in my bathroom, and even Zen Master Dae Kwang said to me at one point that I should just “shave it all off.” I laughed. So, there are some indications that some unresolved issues remain (probably reflected in the number of times the words “I” and “my” appear in this last paragraph...).

The other day, my 5 ½ year old daughter Danika announced that she wanted her hair cut. Short.

My daughter's hair is blond (her dad's side of the family) and long. She has a wave that most people would kill for. And, aside from the time she experimented with the scissors and then blamed the day care giver for her choppy look (she later confessed to committing the atrocity), her hair has not been cut. It reaches to the middle of her back. I braid it or put it into ponytails, and she looks cute as heck. She has the hair I wanted when I was her age...Well, okay. Want. Present tense. So much for letting go.

Continued on page 3

The Diamond Sutra

All appearance is delusion.

*If you view all appearance as nonappearance,
Then that view is your true nature.*

Do not become attached to any thoughts that arise in the mind.

If you see form as the Absolute, if you search out the Absolute with your voice,

You are practicing the wrong path, and you cannot see your true self.

All compounded things are like a dream, a phantom, a bubble, or a reflection.

They are like dew or lightning. Thus should you view them.

***Comments by Zen Master Seung Sahn, adapted from
The Compass of Zen:***

The Diamond Sutra is one of the most important teachings ever given, and it represents the core of the Buddha's teaching. Its most important teaching point is that everything is impermanent and completely empty. Name and form are also completely empty. All appearance is constantly appearing and disappearing, so everything you see, hear, smell, taste, and touch is also impermanent. Finally, you, too, are impermanent! Only our true nature is never moving, and it never comes or goes. Perceiving *is* our true nature when we *just* see, *just* hear, *just* perceive. There is no subject or object; this is a very important point.

When you see, hear, smell, taste, touch, and think, everything - just like this - is the truth. So thinking is also truth if you do not let yourself become attached to thinking as it comes and goes in your mind. But very few people can do this. They believe that their thinking is real, and follow it everywhere. This is desire, and all desire is suffering. If you simply let your thinking go, then that same thinking is the truth. When you see a red light, stop; when you see a green light, go. “Just think” means there is no “I,” there is no subject or object. Inside and outside become one. It means just do it, just think, just perceive. Thoughts come and go in your mind with no hindrance. This is nonattachment thinking.

Many people are attached to seeing God or Buddha. They see things superficially and look for God and Buddha in outside things, expecting miraculous events. Also people try to pray for things. But this kind of view can never help you see the true Buddha.

Form means outside things that you can perceive. It also means inside things, like thoughts that arise in the mind. It means feelings, perceptions, impulses, and consciousness, in addition to outside objects. So if you

Three Classes on Buddhist Topics Scheduled

Presented by Senior Dharma Teacher Ron Kidd

Ron Kidd, a senior Dharma teacher from the Ten Directions Zen Community of Chicago, will present a series of three classes on Buddhist topics. Ron, who is completing a four-month retreat in the Milwaukee area, is an instructor of Buddhist Studies at DePaul University in Chicago. All classes will be held at the Great Lake Zen Center from 7:00-8:30 PM. The schedule of topics is as follows:

- ~**Tuesday, April 16: The Heart Sutra**
- ~**Thursday, April 25: The Buddha-Nature Sutra**
- ~**Tuesday, April 30: Zen Texts: "Oxherding Pictures" and "Hsin Hsin Ming" (Trust in Mind)**

Photocopies of the passages to be studied will be available at GLZC one week before the class. This is a rare opportunity to study some classic Buddhist texts with a teacher of Ron's caliber. There is no cost for the classes, although donations to the Zen Center are always appreciated. Please plan to attend one, two, or all three classes. Hot tea and treats will be served.



Ron Kidd, Senior Dharma Teacher

Heart Kyol Che Ends

From January 7 until April 8 we observed an extended period of intensive practice known as Heart Kyol Che. Participants made commitments to increase their practice during this period. Midway through the Heart Kyol Che period, during the week of Feb. 18, we held practice everyday, and practice times were extended by one hour. At the end of this intensive week, a Kido retreat was held, followed by a one-day retreat. The Heart Kyol Che period ended on April 8th with a celebration of Buddha's birthday.

Special Chanting Practice

2nd, 4th, and 5th Mondays

For the next several months we will be brushing up on our special chanting. On the second, fourth, and fifth Mondays of each month we will replace our regular chants with the *Thousand Eyes and Hands* and the *Kwan Seum Bosal* chants. These chants are typically used at retreats or for special occasions.

Ecumenical Buddha's Birthday Celebration

Saturday, April 27, Noon until 4:00 PM

The fourth annual Ecumenical Buddha's Birthday Celebration, sponsored by the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, will be held from noon until 4:00 PM at the Mitchell Park Pavilion. Most of the Buddhist groups in the Greater Milwaukee area will be participating in the celebration, each contributing a part of their tradition to this collaborative effort. GLZC will be chanting the Heart Sutra in Korean. There will also be the traditional bathing of the baby Buddha. Don't miss this rare opportunity to celebrate with Buddhists of other traditions.

Annual Rummage Sale

Saturday, May 18, 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM

*Work Practice/Set-up Friday, May 17,
5:30 PM – 9:00 PM*

Our third annual rummage sale will be held at GLZC on Saturday, May 18, from 9:00 AM until 4:00 PM. We will be holding a work practice the night before, on May 17, from 5:30 until 9:00 PM. Pizza will be delivered at 6:00 PM to sustain the workers. Donated items may be brought to GLZC and stored there, but we request that you price them as you bring them in to save time the night of the work practice. Pricing stickers are available on the table in the community room. If you have any large items that you would like to have picked up, please let Peter or Laura know. This fundraiser is a major source of income for GLZC, and revenues are used to help us fund YMJJ's and Zen Master visits. Please help us with this effort by donating items, working on either the 17th or the 18th, or by purchasing items at the sale. Be sure to ask your friends, families, and neighbors if they have any items they would like to donate. Come on out and support your Zen Center!

Frequently Asked Questions

Zen Master Seung Sahn

Why do we bow when we enter and leave the Dharma room?

ZMSS: In the Orient, when two people meet, they bow to each other according to their status. The person who is high-class bows just a little bit; the person who is lower-class bows much more deeply. This is Oriental hierarchy. But when we enter the Dharma room, we leave behind this high-low mind; an emperor bows to the Buddha, and a beggar also bows to the Buddha. This is cultivating humility. In that moment, the mind becomes very simple. Also, this is a moment of paying attention and having correct relationship with the situation. The Buddha is our ideal and our inspiration. So the correct relationship is to bow to the altar.

Editor's Note: If you have a question you would like answered, please forward it to our E-mail address or send it to GLZC.

Diamond Sutra *(continued from page 1)*

believe that any forms actually exist, you are practicing the wrong path. Originally, there are no forms, feelings, perceptions, impulses, or consciousness. Outside things are also impermanent, without names and forms. They are completely empty. If you are attached to these things, you cannot see your true nature; attachment comes from the deluded view that things exist. Because of this basic delusion, you believe that there is some outside world of objects and things. You believe, too, that there is something inside. You make inside and outside. You believe that these things exist, because you have now made self and other, this and that. This is still only thinking and attachment. Deeply perceiving your true nature is a view that has no inside or outside. You attain the Absolute, which has no subject or object whatsoever. There is no name and no form. This view is your true self. You can perceive primary point, and everything returns to this point. Everything is universal substance, the same substance. You realize your true self, but this is only a first step. Once you attain your true self, you realize that everything is already the truth. Everything, just as it is, is already the truth.

If you want to attain your true nature, you must become completely empty. You must attain emptiness; understanding emptiness conceptually cannot help your life. You are already empty, but you don't realize it. You believe in inside and outside. This is delusion. You believe that things exist and don't exist. This is also delusion. But if you attain your original emptiness, you attain your true nature. You attain that you and this whole universe are completely empty. Then when you see, when you hear, when you smell, when you taste, when you touch, and when you think, everything is this emptiness. Everything is the Absolute. You are also the Absolute. From this point it is possible to perceive truth.

If you are attached to your thinking, then everything has name and form. This is the world of opposites. But name and form are always changing, and because of this, everything is impermanent. Everything is like a dream. Nothing stays but is always in a process of change. Rather than being some constant, fixed reality, this whole universe constantly appears and disappears. But there is a way to experience the true nature of this constantly changing universe. Simply do not become attached to the opposites world. Don't become attached to any outside world. Don't become attached to names and forms. If you keep that point, then your mind is not moving. You attain that names and forms are fundamentally empty, as is the whole universe. Nothing ever appears or disappears. When you keep this non-moving mind, you soon attain your true self.

So, attain emptiness, and you attain your true nature. By attaining emptiness, you cut through this thinking dream. But reading this sutra is not enough. If you want to cut your suffering dream, you need to use a diamond sword. Only keep a don't-know mind; this is your true diamond sword. Only practice. Only *do* it.

Hair Today *(continued from page 1)*

When I brought Danika's statement up—with great hesitancy-- with her dad, Scott's reply was, "Oh, yeah, she mentioned that the other day." Shoot. Twice mentioned. To both her dad and me. On separate occasions. A trend.

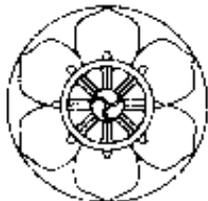
The beautiful thing about attachment is that when looking at changing a situation to which we're attached, the first thing we tend to do is to begin to think about how it affects us. So, it's pretty appalling for me to admit that I was HORRIFIED. And I immediately started in with counter-arguments: "How short?" "Well, you know that if you get it cut short, it won't grow that long again for, well, a couple of years..." "What will we do with all your pretties (hair doodads)?" And for each statement, each fishhook I attempted to place firmly in the mouth of my own child (as we attached persons are wont to do to keep those attachments firmly in place), she firmly and calmly deflected each one. "Oh, as short as Hailey's hair. It will stay out of my eyes that way." "I know about growing hair, and it's okay." "You can sell my pretties at the Zen Center rummage sale." (Sheesh, that's one tough kid.)

Karma is an amazing thing. The wheel of samsara, of Suffering, going around, revisiting the past and producing the future. Doing a meditation practice, you really do get to see everything. Whether you want to or not, it all comes around again. So, here comes my hair karma, full force, showing me my attachments, my ideas. Right now. And what am I doing? Trying to make my karma my daughter's karma as well?

So, this all may seem trite and superficial. After all, we've had the events of September 11th, Israel and the PLO continue to wage a war begun thousands of years ago, and other wars and conflicts rage on across the globe. People are starving, HIV disease is killing up to 1/3 of the inhabitants of some African countries, and alcoholism and drug abuse and other tragedies of sentient beings continue on. But karma and attachment are at the heart of all of this. Zen Master Seung Sahn says, "When you completely understand karma, you will understand life and death. If you completely understand life and death, then you will get freedom from life and death, and you will become a great no-hindrance human being. So, you must completely understand karma. Karma is a name, name is empty, so karma is made by thinking, and if you cut off thinking there is no karma." No "my." No "hair," no "girl" or "boy". But, not cutting off thinking, it is not only likely that I get to keep this, but also will pass this on to my daughter – I get to HINDER her. Heck, ideas about what one's hair and clothing should look like have been the seeds of war, as can be attested to by our brothers and sisters in Afghanistan. However, an eminent teacher said, "Our karma comes from our minds. If our minds are extinguished, our karma is also extinguished, like fire burning dry grass." So, practicing, we can see these ideas for what they are: not good or bad in and of themselves, but created by mind. No ideas, no attachment, then complete freedom. Then, this great love, great compassion nature shines forth, and great bodhisattva action is possible. The next day, Danika and I went to a local salon. Snick, snick, hair falling to the floor in clumps, in time with the stylist's scissors. Danika shook her head, pronounced it good, and is a happy camper. Her layered bob is cute, and it suits her. It is easier to take care of, and she's still the same kid. With ease, she pointed to foolish ideas and avoided fishhooks, and helped me help her. And, I am due for a haircut.

Meanwhile, the Great Lake Zen Center has a great collection of hair doodads for the rummage sale on May 18th.

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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Regular Practice Schedule of the Great Lake Zen Center

Monday and Wednesday at 7:30PM;
Saturday at 8:00AM

Other special events as described elsewhere in the newsletter. Unless otherwise noted, all events are held at the Great Lake Zen Center.

Beginners Always Welcome!

Unless noted otherwise, *Introductions to Zen* are offered on the first Monday of each month. Dharma Talks are offered on the fourth Wednesday of each month. Both are at 7:30PM.

