



MOON ON THE WATER

Volume 4, Issue 3

Newsletter of the Great Lake Zen Center, Milwaukee, WI

June, 2002

The Sandokai

The Harmony of Difference and Equality

Sekito Kisen (Ch. Shitou Xiqian, 700-790)

Eighth Chinese Zen Ancestor

The mind of the great sage of India
Is intimately transmitted from west to east.
While human faculties are sharp or dull,
The way has no Northern or Southern Ancestors.
The spiritual source shines clear in the light;
The branching streams flow on in the dark.
Grasping at things is surely delusion;
According with sameness is still not enlightenment.
All the objects of the senses
Interact and yet do not.
Interacting brings involvement.
Otherwise, each keeps its place.
Sights vary in quality and form,
Sounds differ as pleasing or harsh.
Refined and common speech come together in the dark,
Clear and murky phrases are distinguished in the light.
The four elements return to their natures
Just as a child turns to its mother.
Fire heats, wind moves,
Water wets, earth is solid.
Eye and sight, ear and sound,
nose and smell, tongue and taste.
Thus for each and every thing,
Depending on these roots, the leaves spread forth.
Trunk and branches share the essence.
Revered and common, each has its speech.
In the light there is darkness,
but don't take it as darkness.
In the dark there is light,
But don't see it as light.
Light and dark oppose one another
Like front and back foot in walking.
Each of the myriad things has its merit,
Expressed according to function and place.
Phenomena exist, like box and lid joining;
Principle accords, like arrow points meeting.
Hearing the word, understand the meaning;
Don't set up standards of your own.
If you don't understand the way right before you,
How will you know the path as you walk?
Practice is not a matter of far or near,
But if you are confused, mountains and rivers block your way.
I respectfully urge you who study the mystery,
Don't pass your days and nights in vain.

*Translation by Soto-Shu Liturgy Conference, Green Gulch Farm, 1997.
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Branching Streams Flow

In the Darkness

Zen Talks on the Sandokai

Shunryu Suzuki

Book Review by Susi Childress, DT:

In the book Branching Streams Flow in the Darkness, Mel Weitsman and Michael Wenger have compiled a series of twelve lectures that Suzuki Roshi gave on the Sandokai at Tassajara Zen Buddhist monastery in 1970. Each set of lectures is followed by a question-answer session between Suzuki and his students. This book represents the first follow-up book to Suzuki's classic Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind.

Suzuki begins by describing the historical background that led to Sekito writing the poem. He explains that Zen split into Northern and Southern schools in China following the death of the fifth patriarch. Sekito wrote the poem to give his perspective on the conflict between the northern and southern schools.

As Suzuki breaks the poem down into stanzas for in-depth study, he uses numerous anecdotes, examples, and explanations of Japanese and Chinese characters to help the reader understand the deeper meaning behind the words. Suzuki's great wisdom and humor shine through in his lectures, and his compassion and affection for humankind is obvious in his repartee with students.

While the Sandokai is the focal point of the lectures, the book is actually a treatise on Zen Buddhism. The ideas are as profound today as they were when the poem was written more than 1200 years ago. Sekito's mind, Buddha's mind, Suzuki's mind are no different. If the reader opens the book, then the mind, and completely attains the ideas expressed by Sekito and Suzuki, then something worthwhile will have been gained from this experience.

Here is a small sampling of some of Suzuki's insights:

"What is the real teaching of Buddha? If you don't understand it, you will keep asking, 'What is it? What is it? What does it mean?' You are just seeking for something that you can understand. That is a mistake. We don't exist in that way. Dogen Zenji says, 'There is no bird who flies knowing the limit of the sky. There is no fish who swims knowing the end of the ocean.' We exist in the limitless universe. Sentient beings are numberless, and our desires are limitless, but we still have to continue making our effort just as a fish swims and a bird flies."

"When you really know yourself, you will realize how

Continued on page 3

Moktak Workshop Scheduled

Saturday, June 29, 2002; 9:00 AM until Noon

A moktak workshop will be held at GLZC on Saturday, June 29, from 9:00 AM until noon. This workshop is for those who would like to learn how to lead chanting practice, with an emphasis on learning how to play the moktak. Interested students should notify Peter or Laura or sign up at GLZC.

One Day Retreat Scheduled

Saturday, July 13, 2002; 9:00 AM-4:00 PM

A one-day retreat has been scheduled for Saturday, July 13, from 9:00 AM until 4:00 PM at GLZC. A vegetarian lunch will be served. This would be a good opportunity for new students to learn some of the retreat forms, and would also provide a good opportunity for experienced students to get in some extended practice. Anyone interested should sign up at GLZC or notify Peter or Laura.

YMJJ Retreat Scheduled

*with Zen Master Dae Kwang
October 25-27, 2002*

A YMJJ retreat has been scheduled with Zen Master Dae Kwang for October 25-27, 2002. The location for the retreat has not yet been determined. Mark your calendars now and check upcoming newsletters for additional information.

A precepts ceremony will follow the retreat. In order to take five precepts, a student must be at least 18 years old and have attended at least four days of retreat in the Kwan Um School of Zen (this may include the two days of retreat at this YMJJ). In order to take ten precepts and to become a Dharma Teacher in Training, the student must have taken five precepts at least 24 months prior to the ceremony and meet other requirements specified by the Kwan Um School of Zen. Anyone interested in taking five or ten precepts should notify Peter or Laura.

GLZC Rummage Sale a Big Success

The rummage sale held at GLZC on May 18 was a great success! Many thanks to those of you who donated items, assisted with setting up or cleaning up after the sale, worked during the sale, or who supported the center by purchasing items. We had a lot of fun and made some money to support our retreats. How wonderful!

E-mail List Update

We are updating our e-mail lists. If you wish to be included on our list, please send your e-mail address to Peter at info@glzc.org. If you wish to be removed from our list, let Peter know. We use the e-mail list to send out copies of Sangha meeting minutes and notices about upcoming events, and to request feedback from Sangha members on various topics.

New Schedule to Begin in August

Beginning in August our practice schedule will be changed as follows:

~ The first Monday of every month we will continue to offer an introduction to Zen at 7:30 PM.

~ The second Wednesday of every even numbered month we will hold a Sangha meeting, beginning at 7:00 PM, with a 30-minute sitting period beginning at 8:00 PM.

~ The third Monday of every month we will offer a Discussion/Class on topics related to Zen Buddhism. These will be held from 7:00 PM until 8:00 PM with a 30-minute sitting period from 8:00 PM until 8:30 PM.

~ The fourth Wednesday of each month will be a Dharma talk, beginning at 7:30 PM.

~ Other than the above mentioned days, practice will be held on Mondays and Wednesdays, 7:30-8:30 PM, and Saturday mornings, 8:00-9:00 AM.

Discussion/Classes to Begin in August

Beginning in August GLZC will offer a series of discussion classes the third Monday of each month. The classes will be held from 7:00-8:00 PM, followed by a 30-minute sitting meditation period. The schedule for the remainder of 2002 is as follows:

Aug. 19: Common Roots: Zen, Taoism, and the Martial Arts
Jeff Ligman, DT

Sept. 16: The Wabi Sabi Classroom (or Zen Goes to School)
Susi Childress, DT

Oct. 21: Zen and Christian Mysticism
Mike Yonkers

Nov. 18: Prison Dharma: Teaching Zen to Prisoners
Peter Neuwald, DT, Co-director GLZC

Dec. 16: Zen and Environmental Activism
Andy Yench, DTT

Extended Practice Held

A night of extended practice was held from 7:00 PM until midnight on June 21. Despite the warm conditions, participants practiced with determination. Watch the schedule for more extended practice sessions to be scheduled in the fall.

No Practice July 3rd

There will be no practice on Wednesday, July 3rd due to the celebration of Independence Day. Practice will resume Saturday morning, July 6th. Happy holidays!

important it is to practice zazen. Before you know what you are doing, you don't know why we practice. You think you are quite free, that whatever you do is your choice, but actually you are creating karma for yourself and others. You don't know what you're doing, so you don't think there is any need to practice zazen. But we have to pay our own debts; no one else can pay our debts. That is why it is necessary to practice."

"Studying Buddhism is not like studying other things. It may take time before you can accept the teaching completely. The most important factor is you yourself, rather than your teacher. When you study hard, what you receive from your teacher is the spirit of study. That spirit will be transmitted from warm hand to warm hand. You should do it! That's all. There is nothing to transmit to you. And what you learn may be from books or from other teachers, so that is why we have other teachers as well as a master."

"When you learn something, you should be able to teach it to people. You should put the same effort into teaching as into learning. And if you want to teach, you should be humble enough to learn something. Then you can teach. If you try to teach just because you know something, you cannot teach anything. When you are ready to be taught by someone, then, if necessary, you can teach people in the true sense of the word. So, to learn is to teach, and to teach is to learn."

"The most important thing is not rules but finding the source of the teaching with your eyes and ears wherever you are. This is a direct way to know the source of the teaching, without trying to establish some particular way for yourself. If you stick to words, if you do not see the true way through your own eyes, ears, nose, and tongue, if you stick to rules and ignore the direct experience of everyday life, then even though you practice zazen, it doesn't work. To have some direct experience of everyday life without thinking 'this way' or 'that way' is the most important thing. That is how we understand the true source of the teaching transmitted from Buddha."

"When you are involved in selfish practice, you have some idea of attainment. When you strive to reach a goal or attain enlightenment, you naturally have the idea 'I am far from the goal,' or 'I am almost there.' But if you really practice our way, enlightenment is right where you are. This may be rather difficult to accept. When you practice zazen without any idea of attainment, there is actually enlightenment."

"When you do something with a purpose based on some evaluation of what is useful or useless, good or bad, more or less valuable, your understanding is not perfect. If you do things that need to be done regardless of whether the results are good or bad, successful or unsuccessful, that is real practice."

Branching Streams Flow in the Darkness, by Shunryu Suzuki, edited by Mel Weitsman and Michael Wenger, University of California Press, 1999, all rights reserved. Excerpts reprinted with permission of the publisher.

Frequently Asked Questions

Zen Master Seung Sahn

What is the origin of the moktak? (The moktak is the percussion instrument used to keep time during chanting practice)

ZMSS: "Mok" means wood; "tak" means hit. But the original word is "Mok O". The Japanese call it "Mokugyo". "Moku" means wood; "gyo" means fish; so this instrument is like a fish with its mouth open. There is a story about the origin of this instrument. Long time ago, in China, there was a monk called Chung San Poep Sa. He lived near a big city and a big lake. One day a high government official came to the lake with his family for a picnic. They had a small baby, only a few months old. By chance, when they were on the boat, the baby fell overboard. The official engaged local fishermen to swim into the waters and find the body of his baby, but they couldn't find the body. So he went to Chung San Poep Sa and said he would like to do a ceremony for his dead baby, but he couldn't find the body, so please help him. Chung San Poep Sa went into deep meditation and perceived what had happened. He told the government official, "We must go to the fish market very early tomorrow morning and buy some fish." So they went to the fish market, and Chung San Poep Sa selected a very big fish. Then they cut open the stomach and found the baby inside. To the surprise of the family, the baby was still alive. They were all very happy. Then the official wanted to help all fish for saving the life of his baby. So this moktak is shaped like a fish, with an open mouth and a hollow stomach. When you hit the moktak, a good sound appears. The meaning of the moktak sound is that the baby is still here, all fish can hear the sound and get enlightenment.

What is the origin of the four-bowl style of eating?

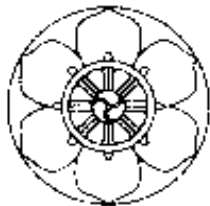
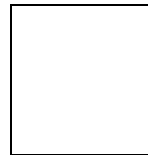
ZMSS: This style is from China. Originally, in Buddha's lifetime, there was only one bowl. In China, this style changed again. The four bowls are symbolic of the four elements- earth, air, fire, and water- and also of Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, and Mind. In Korea, they always use four bowls in the monastery; here also we use these four bowls during retreats and formal meals, but our American style is a little different from Korean monastery style.

The Great Dharani, which we chant, is a long mantra and has no translation. What is the origin of this Dharani, and what is its meaning?

ZMSS: In Buddha's lifetime, one monk broke precepts and was very unhappy. So the Buddha taught him that karma comes from your mind; if mind disappears, karma also disappears. If you hold your mistake, your karma will never go away. Then the Buddha gave this monk the Great Dharani mantra in order to take away his holding and thinking mind.

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.

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

MOON ON THE WATER

is published by the

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The Great Lake Zen Center is affiliated with the Kwan Um School of Zen.

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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.

