



MOON ON THE WATER

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June, 2004

The Right Stuff

by Michael Zinke, DT

Material things. "Stuff" as George Carlin called it in a mid 1960's routine. How much "stuff" do you own? How much "stuff" do you want? Not a day goes by without everyone wanting more "stuff". Don't believe that? Try going one day without using the words "I WANT". It would be a very tough day, but it would make you aware of how often desire mind appears on a daily basis. Desire mind isn't just "I want" it also includes things like "I don't want", "it would be nice if", "I'd really like to have", "I wish", and "I would prefer", etc., etc., etc. Of course, along with "stuff" comes suffering. Not having "stuff" causes suffering, wanting "stuff" causes suffering, and having "stuff" causes suffering. And even though "stuff" causes so much suffering in our lives, we still allow "stuff" to control our lives. Sometimes people want "stuff" so much they steal other people's "stuff" and sometimes people want "stuff" so much they kill other people just to get their "stuff". We think that the more "stuff" we have or the better our "stuff" is, the more important we are. We need to show everyone in the world how much "stuff" we have so they will know we are important or that we make a lot of money, or whatever reason. What we don't realize is that the more "stuff" we have, the more "stuff" we want and we soon get entangled in a vicious web of suffering. Do we need all of the "stuff" we have? Do we need more "stuff"? Do we need better "stuff"? Does all of this "stuff" give us a longer or happier life? What happens to all of our "stuff" when we die? Where will all of our "stuff" go then?

We can't even be satisfied with just "stuff". We have to have cool "stuff", neat "stuff", "stuff" that is just a little better or little different from the "stuff" our friends have. If our friends buy a new car, we suddenly need to buy a new car. From the time we decide we absolutely, positively need a new car until we actually buy a new car, the suffering we experience tears apart our entire lives and sometimes tears apart friendships also. We start getting jealous of our friends for getting a new car. We start thinking that they feel they are better than us now, that they don't want to associate with us any more, because our car is old and embarrassing. So we decide our car has to be bigger, more expensive, nicer, cooler, neater, faster, more options, etc., etc., etc. That's why there are so many different types of cars made today. Any car will get us from point A to point B but some people have to go from point A to point B in a Lexus, while others get there in a Chevy. Does it really matter what got us to point B? Not really. No matter what got you from point A to point B, when you get to point B the truth is simple -- you are at point B. Is there more than just that one little truth? No. Want, want,

'I' Saved the Frogs

by Zen Master Dae Kwang

True compassion means to become one with whatever situation you find yourself in, moment to moment. This is enlightenment. This is what the Buddha's enlightenment teaches. There is a famous story about Zen Master Man Gong, Zen Master Seung Sahn's grand-teacher which illustrates this clearly.

One day, Man Gong Sunim was walking into town with Hae Am Sunim, who at that time was also a Zen Master, a junior Zen Master. Along the path they passed by a pond where a boy had set up a little stand, much as when you drive down the street True compassion means to become one with whatever situation you find yourself in, moment to moment. This is enlightenment. This is what the Buddha's enlightenment teaches. There is a famous story about in your neighborhood and there will be a little lemonade stand. Except, this boy had set up a little frog stand. What he had done was catch a number of frogs and put a little string around their legs tethering them to the ground. Then he would sell them to passersby. Hae Am Sunim saw this and right away he went over to the boy, took out some money, and bought all of the frogs. Reaching down he undid all of the strings tying the frogs. Immediately the frogs jumped back -PLUKE! PLUKE! PLUKE! -- into the pond. Then they were all very happy, just sitting there, bulging eyes looking up. Returning to the path where Man Gong Sunim was waiting, he said, "Oh, I just saved those frogs! I bought them all and released them."

Then Man Gong Sunim said, "Yes, those frogs are very happy, but you are a devil."

Hae Am Sunim was quite taken aback, "Master, why do you call me a devil? I just saved those frogs from suffering."

"You said, 'I saved those frogs.' You have 'I,' so you are a devil."

One of my favorite stories about compassion comes from the book *A Flower Does Not Talk*. It's about a bird who lives in a forest. One day a very large forest fire sweeps through the forest. Seeing this the bird immediately understands what a forest fire means: a lot of suffering for all the animals. All the animals try to flee, some of them get trapped and burned alive; the animal's food is destroyed, their homes are destroyed. Since this bird understands what fire means, out of compassion, it flies to a pond that's some distance away and fills its beak

"I" Saved the Frogs.....con't

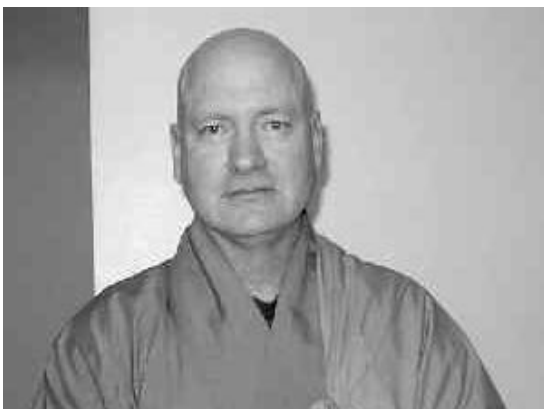
with water. Then it flies back and drops the water on the forest fire. And then it flies back to the pond for another mouth full of water. Back and forth; back and forth, until finally, completely exhausted, it falls to the ground, dead.

This kind of compassion has no "I," only "how can I help?" Many times when we get the idea that we're going to be compassionate, right with that idea is a judging and checking mind which says, "Uh-oh . . . this isn't going to work," or "Oh, there's so much suffering in this world, how can my little action help" or, "I might get hurt," or "Oh, I'm a really great and compassionate person." (Hae Am Sunim's disease.) But true compassion has no I-my-me, so it has no checking or wanting anything; no taint of "I." Only help; only just do it!

YMJJ Retreat Scheduled
July 23- 25 with Zen Master Dae Kwang
6:00 AM-9:30 PM

A YMJJ retreat has been scheduled with GLZC Guiding Teacher Zen Master Dae Kwang for July 23-25, 2004. The retreat will be held at GLZC. Zen Master Dae Kwang will be leading this retreat and conducting interviews. The price of the retreat is \$70 for both days, or \$40 for one day. The price includes vegetarian meals. Sleeping space is available at no extra charge at GLZC. Those planning on staying at GLZC should bring a sleeping bag, pillow, and washcloth/towel.

The retreat will begin with a free public talk with Zen Master Dae Kwang at 7:30 PM on Friday. Please plan on joining us for some very strong practice. **You may register for this YMJJ by signing up at GLZC or by contacting Peter or Laura.**



Zen Master Dae Kwang

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Friday, July 23: Free Public talk with Zen Master Dae Kwang, GLZC 7:30pm.

Saturday, July 24 and Sunday July 25: YMJJ with Zen Master Dae Kwang, GLZC 6:00am – 9:40pm

Sunday, August 22: Beginner's Mind retreat. GLZC, 9am – 4pm

Saturday, May, 15: Rummage Sale, 8:00am-4:00pm, GLZC

Saturday, June, 12: Kido Retreat, 9:00am – 4pm, First Unitarian Society (corner of Astor and Ogden)

No Practice Monday July 5, 2004

Due to the Fourth of July holiday, no practice will be held and no Introduction to Zen will be held on July 5, 2004. Practice resumes as normal on Wednesday evening. Enjoy the holiday!

"Beginner's Mind" Retreat
Sunday, August 22, 9 AM - 4 PM

If you have ever hesitated to do a retreat, join us for this introductory "Beginner's Mind" one-day retreat. Newcomers are especially welcome. We will walk you through our retreat forms step-by-step. The retreat will include a formal meal, chanting, and sitting and walking meditation. **You may register for this YMJJ by signing up at GLZC or by contacting Peter or Laura.**

Man's main task in life is to give birth to himself.....

Erich Fromm

***The Right Stuff*.....con't**

want -- suffer, suffer, suffer. Gets you tired, doesn't it? But we continue on, ignorant of what is causing our suffering.

The "stuff" we insist upon collecting isn't always material "stuff". Sometimes we collect mental "stuff". We insist upon torturing ourselves with "stuff" like: "will my parents approve of what I'm doing?", "what will my friends think?", "I feel so guilty for what I did when I was a teenager". We keep this "stuff" through mid-life into old age and most people still have this "stuff" when they die. We also let other people put their "stuff" on us and we put our "stuff" on other people. If someone makes a mistake, we always put our "stuff" on them. Don't let anyone make a mistake without letting them know we would never have done that or that we knew the right answer. Right? Get real.

Several years ago my mother passed away. My father didn't want to stay in the house they had shared for over fifty years. There were too many memories there and none of the kids lived in that town anymore: he would be all alone. He felt it would be better to move to a small apartment in the same town as my brother. The problem he faced in going from a house to a one bedroom apartment was that he had too much "stuff". The day after my mother's funeral the family helped to get rid of my mother's "stuff". My mother liked "stuff". She collected little knickknacks, mementos of special times in her life, little things that kids and grandchildren gave her over the years. She enjoyed crafts and sewing so she kept anything that looked like it might be used in creating some new craft item. She also saved every little scrap of cloth she found because it could have a use in some future sewing project.

We all started packing seventy four years of "stuff" into the back of a pick-up truck and took it to the landfill site. Many loads were taken. During each visit to the landfill the truck was weighed going into the landfill area and weighed coming out of the landfill area to determine how much "stuff" was left behind. When we were done we had to pay the landfill manager for discarding all of this "stuff". One day seventy four years of "stuff" was destroyed. Seventy four years of wanting, seventy four years of suffering, seventy four years of attachment -- and then one day all of this "stuff" had no meaning. What meaning did this "stuff" give to my mother? Did this "stuff" make her life happier? Longer? As the first truckload was unloaded, it became apparent to me that someday someone would have to take all of my "stuff" to the landfill. Suddenly "stuff" became meaningless. I saw exactly how empty that "stuff" really was. Since that day whenever I think about buying new "stuff" I see my children putting my "stuff" in the back of a pick-up and taking it to the landfill. "Stuff" doesn't seem as important lately. It was on that day, April 3, 1993 that I realized that "stuff" wasn't the answer. The cycle of desire

became very clear to me. No matter how much "stuff" I had, I always wanted more "stuff". Thinking about buying new "stuff" consumes the mind, controls our lives, and destroys our lives. We can't be in the present moment and we certainly can't enjoy the present moment if our mind is trying to figure out how to get more "stuff". My brothers and sisters were concerned over who would get some of my mother's "stuff". I guess a lot of that "stuff" was mine also, but I didn't want any "stuff" and some in the family thought it was strange that I didn't want any of mom's "stuff", they probably thought that maybe I didn't love her or I was too good for her "stuff". But I know that the real answer was that even though my mother was no longer with us, she still taught me a valuable lesson that day. "Stuff" isn't the answer. I felt rather detached from the moment as I watched everyone figure out what "stuff" they wanted but I also felt at peace. The race to get the most "stuff" is over for me. I forfeited the game and found that life is much easier now. I still get urges to get new "stuff" and sometimes I give in and buy something I don't really need -- more practice is necessary. But I know that "stuff" isn't the answer and knowing that is the important thing. How about you? How are you doing in the "stuff" race? Do you find yourself wanting "stuff" all of the time? Do you find that your mind is more consumed with where you're going to get the money to buy more "stuff" than it is with reading this article right now? Think you can go without wanting "stuff" for a few days? Weeks? Why not give it a try?

All of our collecting, all of our buying, all of our saving, all of our wanting, all of our suffering, all of our attachment -- put in the back of a pick-up truck and taken to the landfill. Is it any wonder that all of our landfills are filled to capacity?

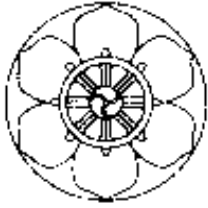
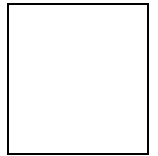
YMJJ Retreats Scheduled

Two YMJJ retreats have been scheduled with GLZC guiding teacher, Zen Master Dae Kwang. They will be held July 24 - 25, 2004 and October 1 - 3, 2004. At the end of the October YMJJ our annual precepts ceremony will be held. Mark your calendars and watch for upcoming details.

Annual Rummage Sale a Success

GLZC's annual rummage sale was a great success and made many people happy including those getting new-to-them things and those getting rid of things. Rummage sales are a great way to watch wanting mind. Thanks goes out to all those who helped setup, sell, and clean-up after. Without everyone's help we wouldn't be able to do activities like this and we also wouldn't have any money!!!

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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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.

