



MOON ON THE WATER

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Ignorance

by Michael Zinke, SDT

When we are young we learn from our mistakes. If we happen to touch a hot stove, we learn exactly what hot means and we quickly remember not to touch hot stoves anymore. We also learn through personal experience by trial and error. We try something and if we don't get the expected result, we try something slightly different and keep repeating that process until we get the desired result. We also observe others and learn from watching what others do and then repeating the process based on the reaction of the person we are watching. If it is a good reaction or a happy reaction, then that is a signal that this is definitely something that ought to be attempted. If we notice a bad reaction or an angry reaction then we realize that maybe this is something we want to pass on. We learn new things quickly, we are able to easily determine whether an action is good or bad. We sort out the good things and become experts at getting what we want. But a funny thing happens as we grow older; I think we grow more stupid! Oh sure, we learn more in the fact that we learn to talk, to read, to do arithmetic. We study history, languages, biology, physics, chemistry, etc., etc. But we seem to lose that portion of our learning that teaches us through experience. The result of that is that we keep doing the same things over and over again while expecting a different result each time.

So, in zen we often talk about cause and effect. Cause and effect simply stated says that whenever you do something, something else will happen because of your action, for example, rob a bank (cause), get caught and go to jail (effect). Touch a hot stove (cause) and get burned (effect). The laws of Karma are based on this principle and, very simply, imply that all good actions (causes) are followed by good re-actions (effects), bad actions are followed by bad re-actions. So if you are nice to people they will be nice to you, if you are mean to people, people are going to be mean to you. Even Christianity has that as a basic principle, "Do unto others, as you would have done to you".

Life would be so easy if this cause and effect relationship would happen right away. Like if cause and effect worked so fast that when we did something good for someone; we would turn around and have something good done for us right away. And we probably wouldn't lose sight of cause and effect in its negative sense if, when we did a bad deed, the bad effect came and slapped us up along side the head immediately. Unfortunately it doesn't always work that fast. Some things do obviously, when you touch a hot stove you do get burned immediately; but other things can take days, weeks, years and

A Time of Complete Transformation

Zen Master Seung Sahn

Everything that happens in this world is correct. Things go in cycles: spring, summer, fall, winter. Every year this cycle of seasons occurs. But there are longer cycles too, and this year is the beginning of both a 60 year and a 360 year cycle. It is a very interesting time.

There is a very large insect called the cicada, which grows very slowly inside a cocoon fastened to a tree. The transformation from cocoon to winged creature takes a long time, about seventeen years, and is very difficult. During this time in the cocoon, the cicada's internal body appears disrupted. The skin, the organs, the wings, all appear not to be working. They aren't moving. The body looks as if it were confused and broken.

Then slowly the cocoon breaks open and the new body begins to appear. A wing emerges, then a leg stretches forth. At first the cicada's movements are slow and difficult. It crawls out of the cocoon and falls to the ground. At this stage the cicada never thinks about the sky or about flying - it only thinks about how to get food, any kind of food. Sometimes it takes three or four hours between the time it leaves the cocoon and the time it is able to fly. But this is a time of complete transformation. One moment it tries to fly and it flies!

We are very worried about the future. How can we ever fly? How can our wings possibly appear? How can we get enough food? Many problems are appearing. If we buy a business, we want to know if the future will be good for sales or bad. So we have many worries. But human beings are part of nature. Like the cicada, even if we have already emerged from our cocoon, it still takes time before we understand how to stretch our wings out and fly. Finally we will fly.

There is always change, but changing means not changing. Moment to moment, everything is complete. Everything that happens is correct. If you are attached to name and form, it means that your thinking appears and disappears. If your thinking does not appear and disappear, everything is complete. If your center is not moving, you will have no difficulty even though many new conditions will appear. If you have no center, you will always have problems. Think of it like this: not much happens in the winter months, the season of cold and ice. No leaves or flowers appear from the frozen ground. When spring comes, the ground thaws. Water goes into the soil and starts working. Everything erupts. The

***A Time of Complete Transformation*con't**

grass grows. Leaves appear and get bigger. Flowers appear. All the colors are changing. Everything is changing, quickly changing.

It's the same in our minds, in our "inside" world as well as the "outside" world. During winter, for three or four months everything stays the same, so we experience no difficulty. In the spring there are many changes, so our minds move and we experience many doubts and problems. Just at this time of the ending of an old set of 60 years and 360 year cycles and the beginning of a new set, many things are happening "inside." A strange, complicated mind is appearing.

Just now we need to practice more strongly and make our direction clear. If you are not doing hard practice or your direction is unclear, any kind of demon might take you. When you die, you will not understand where you go. What kind of hell will you go to? There are many kinds. If in this life you have killed many animals, when you die, these animals will appear to you saying, "Give me my life!"

It is necessary to die every day, and every day to give life. If in one day you die ten thousand times, you are ten thousand times alive. This life is maybe seventy or eighty years long. Many things happen in one life. We think it is so short, but to some beings, even one second is very long.

Buddha went to heaven to save his mother. He only stayed three days, but in this world, it was ninety days. During this time the king missed the Buddha. He went to see the Buddha, expecting a dharma speech, but the Buddha was not there. The king was unhappy. His mind could not rest. So he invited a very good sculptor to make a gold Buddha, and he put it on the Buddha's seat.

Then the Buddha came back. He looked at the gold Buddha - its face and his face were the same! The king explained, "We missed you, so we made this statue just like you and put it on your seat. Is this good or bad?"

The Buddha said, "You understand form is emptiness, emptiness is form. If you think this Buddha is truth, that is me." So Buddha statues appeared at that time.

Just like that story, if your mind, your center is strong with no thinking, then you already have infinite time and infinite space. If you have thinking, then even one hour can seem like many years. Sometimes our thinking makes many years seem like only one second. So it's very important how strong your center is. In a changing time, a time of beginnings, it's very important to have a strong center. At this time, if your direction is clear, then the beginning goes this way and that way. If you are not clear, the future is not clear.

Some people say the end of the world is coming. But when an old age is finished, a new age appears. Human beings are part of the natural cycle and this is a changing time for all species. This year is the beginning of the age when women will control everything, just as men have up till now: the house, the family, politics, the economy. Soon there will be many more women leading their countries. Women will become as strong as men, as it was thousands of years ago. This change from yang to yin has already begun.

When Bodhidharma came to China, he became the first patriarch of Zen. As the result of a "marriage" between Vipassana-style Indian meditation and Chinese Taoism, Zen appeared. Now it has come to the West and what is already here? Christianity, Judaism, and so forth. When Zen "gets married" to one of these traditions, a new style of Buddhism will appear.

Perhaps there will be a woman matriarch and all dharma transmission would go only from woman to woman. Why not? So everyone, you must create American Buddhism. Get enlightenment!

In this new age time, a strong center is necessary. Are you clear, everyone? No? Then more hard training is necessary. Also, your direction must become clear. Why do you eat every day? Why do you study Zen? Why do you sit? These are important questions.

YMJJ Retreat October 1 – 3

A YMJJ retreat was held on October 1 -3, 2004. The YMJJ was followed by a precepts ceremony. Congratulations to **Rachel Hugg** who participated by taking 5 precepts. Taking the five precepts means you recognize the importance of practice and making it part of your daily life. It means joining a family of other people who have made the same decision, practicing with them when possible. **Mike Yonkers** fulfilled his Dharma Teacher Training and became a Dharma Teacher this ceremony publicly marks the completion of the training program for Mike. And **Mike Zinke** took the 16 precepts for Senior Dharma Teacher.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Friday, November 19: Extended Practice. 7:30pm until midnight. Come for the entire evening or for part of the evening.

Wednesday December 8 : Buddha's Enlightenment Day.

7:30. One of two Buddhist holidays observed, please join us to celebrate the awakening of Buddha. Family and friends are welcome.

Ignorance.....can't

even lifetimes to resolve. When the effect takes a long time to follow the cause, we get a false sense of feeling that we can go around doing whatever we want without having to worry about the consequences. We all know people who act that way. Cause and effect will always happen, sometimes quickly, sometimes not so quickly, but it will always happen.

Somewhere in the process of maturing we seem to lose the meaning of cause and effect. Or, more specifically, we forget all about the effect portion of the cause and effect principle. So what we see is people robbing banks and then being surprised that they were caught and that they have to go to prison. We see people touching hot things all the time and getting burned, then touching them again and getting burned again. We see people in bad relationships finally get out of the bad relationship only to get back into the exact same situations with a new partner. In zen this is referred to as the Wheel of Samsara, the wheel of suffering. We get on the Wheel of Samsara when we repeatedly do the same things over and over again while expecting the results (effect) to be different. But guess what, when you do the same thing over and over, you get the same results over and over. For some reason, we feel that if we continue to do the same thing over and over, the result is going to change sometime. It never does though and then we find ourselves on the Wheel of Samsara wondering why we are so unhappy and why everything in the world sucks! Going round and round, suffering and suffering over things all because we don't recognize that we need to change what we are doing in order to change the effect. It is like a ferris wheel that goes round and round, only this ferris wheel doesn't stop to let you off until you wake up and realize that you are at the controls and are the only person that can make the wheel stop.

This not knowing who is at the controls is what we refer to as ignorance. Ignorance of the rule of cause and effect. Ignorance pertaining to the thinking that the effect will change if we continue to do the same thing over and over again. Or ignorance in not recognizing that there is an effect to every cause, that when you do something, something else will follow that action. That's why we see suffering in the world today. People don't seem to learn that the result of an action isn't going to change.

So let's take an everyday example because we don't always walk around touching hot stoves or robbing banks. Let's say that you are having money problems but you also have a great desire mind. And your great desire mind says, 'hey,

wouldn't that new High definition TV look great in the family room?" You know you really can't afford it and you are barely making the minimum payments on your credit card now but that desire mind is really strong, really insistent and keeps on bringing up that High def TV every chance it gets. So ultimately, you give in to your desire mind and go get that new high def TV and the cost goes directly on that oh so convenient credit card. Now you have more money problems. You would think that we would realize that our money problems are causing a lot of suffering in our lives, right? Well it might for a while but then we see that new progressive scan DVD player/recorder that we can't live without and it goes on the oh so convenient credit card, also. And the desire goes on and on. We never get out of the money problem suffering until we realize that we have to stop buying things on credit and that we need to get that credit card balance paid off. We know when we charge the cost of the TV it is going to cause money suffering, we know when we charge the cost of the new DVD recorder that it is going to cause money suffering, we know that every time we put some new item on our charge card, it is going to cause more and more suffering but we ignore the effect of the charges, we convince ourselves that everything is going to be alright. That is ignorance that causes suffering. That is the ignorance we need to get rid of. We need to recognize the suffering that could result from our actions and change our actions to avoid the suffering. In these cases, to avoid the suffering we simply stop charging items on our already maxed out credit cards. I know it sounds easy: I also know how strong desire mind can be and how difficult it can be. But then, I don't ever remember hearing anyone say life was going to be easy.

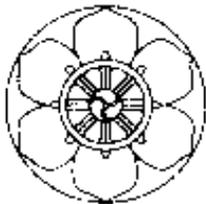
Buddha's Enlightenment Day

Buddha's Enlightenment Day will be celebrated at GLZC on December 8, 2004 and 7:30 pm. There will be a small ceremony and celebration then stay and join us for tea and treats and friendly discussion. Family and friends are welcome to come and celebrate.

Buddhist Conversation Series

The next in a series of discussions organized by the Buddhist Peace Fellowship will have Foundations of Buddhism as its subject. The talk will be held at the Mindfulness Practice Center and is currently being planned for January 29, 2005. Check the next newsletter for the exact date, time and address. The discussion includes panel members from GLZC, The Milwaukee Mindfulness Center, The Milwaukee Zen Center, and the Shambala Center. This is a great chance to learn about other practice centers and to meet and talk with fellow Buddhists. Plan on attending for a stimulating discussion on how our differing Buddhist practices were founded in the west. More information will be posted as details become finalized.

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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.

