
MOON ON THE WATER

Volume 13, Issue 2

April 2011

Earth Soup

Zen Master Dae Kwang

May 1, 1991

Each morning we say the Four Great Vows at the beginning of practice:

Sentient beings are numberless; we vow to save them all.

Passions are endless; we vow to extinguish them all.

The teachings are infinite; we vow to learn them all.

The Buddha Way is inconceivable; we vow to attain it.

As Zen practitioners we start each day by together stating this clear intention. One interesting aspect of these vows is that in our school we use the pronoun “we”: “we vow. . .” The cornerstone of our practice is together action. When we act in complete harmony with others and become one with them, at that moment there is no “I, my, me.” This is great love, great compassion, the great Bodhisattva way.

A student once wrote to Zen Master Seung Sahn in a state of near frenzy because Rajneesh, an Indian Guru, had just predicted that a large earthquake would soon cause California to

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Taking Precepts is “Not For Me”

Pete Neuwald, Abbot

This summer a number of people in our Sangha are planning on taking precepts, including some five preceptors as well as a couple taking forty-eight precepts. No matter how many precepts we take, they all mean the same thing – “not for me.” Taking precepts conveys an increased commitment to our practice, our Sangha and looking deeply at our life.

Let’s look at what it says in our school’s Precepts Information and Application booklet – “Taking the five precepts means recognizing the importance of practicing, and making it part of your everyday life. It means joining a family of other people who have made the same decision, practicing with them when you can.” For ten precepts, we have “The dharma teacher in training program is an opportunity to deepen your commitment to your practice and your vow to help others. It encourages you to widen your focus from being largely a questioner and receiver, to being also able to guide, inspire, and teach others.” For sixteen precepts, it says “Senior dharma teachers are senior students who take on greater responsibility in order to help people better understand our practice.” And finally (for lay practitioners), with the forty-eight precepts we have “Bodhisattva teachers make an increased and visible commitment to the teachings and practices of the Kwan Um School of Zen. Many people who become bodhisattva teachers feel a connection to traditional monks and nuns, but because of their current life situations are not able to take that path.”

So you see that taking precepts has nothing to do with attaining anything, or getting something, whether it’s five, ten, sixteen or forty-eight precepts. Yes, senior dharma

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Earth Soup

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sink into the ocean. She wanted to know where to move to best avoid this catastrophe. He wrote back advising that she stay in California, help the people there and die with them if necessary.

In Zen we many times speak of the three poisons: desire, anger and ignorance. Usually the focus is on the first two but ignorance is also a root problem for human beings. Each of us is utterly enmeshed with everything else in this universe. From the bacteria in our bowels, to our next door neighbor, to the ozone layer, we are all in this earth soup together. It is only our thinking which allows us to “think” that we are separate in some way. Thinking creates the ego’s idea that this is a “one man (or woman) show.” This illusion of separateness is ignorance.

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Buddhism uses the metaphor of Indra’s Net to express our essential connectedness with everything else. Here, every thing and event in the universe is portrayed as a brilliant jewel which lies at the intersection of the lines in the net. In addition, each jewel is many-faceted, reflecting each of the others. This is a wonderful poetic image which I’m sure we can all relate to and understand, but how can we attain it?

Zen means when you are doing something just do it. “Do it mind” has no subject and no object, no inside or outside. Inside and outside become one. Already, you and the whole universe have become one. Zen Master Ko Bong’s third gate is very interesting in this regard: “The whole universe is on fire. Through what kind of samadhi can you escape being burned?” If you hesitate for even an instant, you are lost. ❖

Three Poisons

Gretchen Neuwald

In Buddhism we are taught that desire, anger, ignorance are the three poisons that cause suffering.

We are also taught that it is not the desire, anger, and ignorance themselves that cause suffering but our own desperate clinging to them.

Over the past several weeks as the budget battle rages on in our state, we have seen these three poisons on display. We have heard much about desire--- such as the desire of some to rein in public employee unions, to lower the taxes of the

hard-working middle class, and to save the state from financial ruin. Others say their desire is to preserve hard-won benefits and rights, to protect society’s most vulnerable from cuts to basic services and to save the democracy from the ever increasing influence of corporate interests. Each side has noble-sounding aspirations. However, we all know that there is plenty of “Little I” or “for me” desire mixed in with these “Big I” or “for others” aspirations. On each side lurks the desire to have money, the desire for power, the desire for fame or simply the desire to be right.

As a public employee, I definitely have plenty of “Little I” desire right now. I want to keep my health benefits at a level I can afford, I want a secure retirement fund and I want to keep my union protections. Of course, it’s not just for me. I want that for my co-workers, for all workers, really—but there is no denying that I am worried about my personal situation. My husband and I are not that far from retirement and are still paying down debts -- how will all this affect us? And an even greater concern for me: how will I fare without a union? As a union steward, I am not use to biting my tongue when I see a misuse of authority. Will I suffer in silence or speak out and possibly risk retribution, maybe even risk losing my job?

As you see, I have lots of anxiety, lots of fear—it keeps me awake at night. I tell myself my suffering is brought on by grasping of what I like (desire) and pushing away of what I don’t like (anger). Yet with emotions running high on both sides, it is hard not to get whipped up. We have all heard the name-calling, the personal slanders and the threats of violence. We have heard of public employees weeping because they feel so disrespected and of Republican Senators fearing for their physical safety. All over this state, there are family members, friends and co-workers not speaking to each other because of anger over this issue. I have experienced this in my own circle of friends and family. My posts on Facebook about the protests in Madison set off a chain of comments among family members, some of it hostile and hurtful. Now, I find myself avoiding those friends and family members who disagree with me. I’ve also begun to gravitate to news programs with a decidedly liberal spin, because I can’t stand to hear anything negative about “my side.” While it does make me feel good to hear my viewpoint reinforced, it doesn’t take away my anger. Sadly, I think it makes it stronger.

Buddhism teaches that anger itself, is not good or bad, just as having desire is not good or bad. It is part of being human, part of being alive. It is the clinging to our desires and anger that is not helpful. When we hold onto our emotions too

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Calendar of Upcoming Events

April 2011

- **Introduction to Zen, Monday, April 4, 7:30 PM - 9:00 PM**
- **Buddha's Birthday Celebration Wednesday, April 6, 7:30 PM**
- **Dharma Talk, April 27, 7:30 PM**

May 2011

- **Introduction to Zen, Monday, May 2, 7:30 PM - 9:00 PM**
- **Annual GLZC Rummage Sale, Saturday, May 14, 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM**
- **Sutra Dharma Talk, Wednesday, May 25 7:30 PM - 9:00 PM**

Got Rummage?

The time is fast approaching for our smashing **Annual GLZC Rummage Sale**. The sale will take place at our center on **Saturday, May 14 from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm**. Start saving items now for donation to the sale. We accept almost everything (except clothes, large seasonal items, aquariums, humidifiers, vaporizers and computer components.) The annual rummage sale is currently our only fundraising event. It helps provide funds for the rental/maintenance of the center and support for retreats and other events.

The great event starts on Friday night with the setup and pricing of all the treasures. Pizza will be provided for all those who attend and help. While you are there you can spot those extra special items and get there early Saturday to buy them. If you need help transporting items, please email us at info@glzc.org and we'll arrange a pick up. Remember, donations are tax deductible and receipts for your donations will be available.

Now is the time to start scouring your closets, attics, and basements for things to donate. Remember, this is great opportunity to de-clutter, simplify your life, 'let go' of your attachments, and help the Great Lake Zen Center at the same time.

Taking Precepts

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teachers and Bodhisattva teachers are able to lead retreats and provide consulting (not kong-an) interviews, but one should never begin to think that they have something that nobody else has, other than maybe more cushion sores. I have sometimes heard people confusing taking more precepts with attaining some sort of "higher level," whatever that means. Dharma teachers, senior dharma teachers and bodhisattva teachers are often confused with being the "Teachers" in our school – the Ji Do Poep Sas, Ji Do Poep Sa Nims and Zen Masters. These are the teachers in our school who have received inka and can conduct kong-an interviews. These are the guiding teachers of the Kwan Um School of Zen, such as our very own Zen Master Dae Kwang.

What preceptors – all preceptors – do have is the intention of increasing practice with the commitment to helping others look at life deeply. Dharma teachers have made a commitment to strengthen their practice with the intention of helping others. This is a wonderful and sorely needed intention in our world. Thanks so much to all of you who are taking and have taken the precepts.

Three Poisons

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tightly, they prevent us from seeing the situation clearly and acting in a way that helps all beings. So that is what I am struggling with. How do I use this anger to help? How can it function to serve "Big I" aspirations and not "Little I" desire?

Without the right function for my anger, it continues to make "us" verses "them." This brings me to ignorance-- the last poison. Zen Master Dae Kwang says that ignorance is "the illusion of separateness." My suffering will not go away while I continue to make this "us" verses "them." Public employees, tax-payers, union-workers, non-union workers, business owners, consumers, politicians, voters--- we are all interdependent. Not only are we all part of the same economy, but we are also each other's family, friends, co-workers and neighbors. We may think we are separate, but we truly need each other. We all suffer from attachment to desire, anger and ignorance; not a single one of us is free from this suffering. But Buddha says that while we all suffer from these poisons, we are not these poisons; we are something else. What am I? What is a human being? Zen Master Seung Sahn in his poem *The Human Route* says that "*there is one thing which always remains clear. It is pure and clear, not depending on life and death. What then, is that one pure and clear thing?*" That is why I continue to practice, to attain that one pure and clear thing which is me, which is all of us.

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Great Lake Zen Center
828 East Locust Street
Milwaukee, WI 53212
414-264-1676

e-mail: info@glzc.org
Web-Site: www.glzc.org
Kwan Um Web-Site: www.kwanumzen.org

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

Founder: Zen Master Seung Sahn
Guiding Teacher: Zen Master Dae Kwang
Abbot: Peter Neuwald, SDT
Do Gam: Susi Childress, BDT, Do Gam
Treasurer: Laura Otto-Salaj, SDT
Secretary/Publicity: Andy Yencha, DT
Editor: Gretchen Neuwald, DTT
House Master: Chris Rundblad, DTT

Great Lake Zen Center
828 East Locust Street
Milwaukee, WI 53212

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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.



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