



Dukkha

DUHKHA (Sanskrit; Pali, Dukkha): “The first of the Four Noble Truths and the cornerstone of the Buddha’s teaching.....There is no word in English covering the same ground as dukkha in the sense that it is used in Buddhism.”

This definition is drawn from the Oxford Dictionary of Buddhism, which goes on to examine several understandings of dukkha, all of which are painful responses to the human condition. And yet, I believe that dukkha is also the fertile ground from which arises the bodhisattva’s great compassion and thus is to be appreciated as such.

The First Noble Truth says: “There is dukkha.” This is a blunt statement of the all-inclusive nature of the state of dukkha; no one is exempt. Dukkha is the universal experience of human beings. Sometimes translated as “suffering”, it refers to the pangs of being human: loss, grief, pain, illness, death, that break cruelly into our dream of being immune

to painful experience, and living a life of unbroken serenity until the moment of death (which we mostly refuse to think about.)

Our desire that the dream be true adds to the suffering. We don’t want to experience painful things. We wish to control our lives so that painful things do not happen. And still the leg gets broken, the friend dies, the job is lost. We do not get our wish.

At the heart of this understanding of dukkha is our desire to be in control. This takes not only the form of wishing to prevent what we don’t want, but of desiring to get what we do want. Our greed, envy and possessiveness seem boundless. Our emotions get into the act and we wish to possess what we love and to harm what we hate. And yet, nothing is permanent and everything is in a constant state of change. We cannot hold onto what we get, nor keep the things we love. Our hatred and anger have no permanent effect. This is the dukkha of impermanence, in which everything, without

exception, slips through our desperate grasp.

The Second Noble truth identifies our clinging and craving as the source of dukkha, and we most readily think of those longings that we find negative: greed for material things and for money, the longing for higher social status, cravings for food, alcohol and drugs, the craving for fame or for reflected glory in association with the famous, and our desperation to hang on to the good times at all cost.

There is also a form of the dukkha of impermanence in which we cling to our desires for outcomes that will benefit the world in a positive way. We agonize over our limited ability to stop wars, to feed the hungry, to eliminate all poverty. We desperately cling to the desire to have our actions rewarded by positive outcomes. Dukkha arises from the impermanence of a world in which all things are constantly changing and in which our personal actions for the good never seem fully effective. Dukkha comes into being

through our need for the present realization of lofty goals. Suffering of this type can actually dissuade us from doing what is possible, for it does not seem to be enough.

Finally, there is the dukkha of no-self. The fact that “I” arises from the coming together of causes and conditions in mutual interdependence and that “I” am subject to change is not what “I” want to hear. That “I” am merely a coming together of the five aggregates of form, sensations, perceptions, formations and consciousness is not acceptable to “I”. How can “I” be in control of everything if “I” am not separate and master of everything?

Dukkha is our response to being of an uncertain nature living in a world of uncertain substance.

The Buddha’s Third Noble Truth says there is a way out of the dilemma. The Fourth Noble Truth proposes a Path: Right View, Right Resolve, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness

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CHINA

PILGRIMAGE TO ZEN SITES

June 18-29, 2007

Visit Bodhidharma's cave, Joshu's bridge, practice at a Chinese temple and more

Led by Andrew Ferguson, author of *Zen's Chinese Heritage*; accompanied by Tonen O'Connor, Milwaukee Zen Center and Genmyo Smith, Prairie Zen Center

For full details, contact the MZC at kokyo-an@earthlink.net

December 8-10

ROHATSU SESSHIN

In Celebration of Buddha's Enlightenment

Fri. & Sat. 6:15 a.m.-8:40 p.m.
Sun. 6:15 a.m.- 4:40 p.m.
Dharma talks on each day
Everyone welcome for any portion of the day

Lesson

*there is no god nor
people, no bookshelf
no carpeting or plaster
wall still gouged
where I once
tipped over
in my chair.*

*there is happening
and breathing out
then in and carpeting
and people and chairs and
even god
but more like
nothing than
as we think.*

– Fr. Gregory, OJN

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and Right Meditation. This Path offers acceptance of the ephemeral and interdependent nature of all things as the antidote to our clinging and craving, and urges us to a life free of ego-driven desire.

So we practice letting go, letting go, and again letting go. We seek balance and equanimity. We practice the balanced posture of zazen and try to carry the stability and acceptance that we find there into the rest of our life. Letting go of desires and notions, we replace them with actions freely undertaken in appropriate response to circumstance.

So far, we have primarily considered the need to quiet the clamoring voices of desire that create dukkha, yet we must pause now and consider that the bodhisattva, the enlightening being on the way to the full wisdom and compassion of a Buddha, makes the vow to save all sentient beings, the vow to free them from the fetters that bind

them. How can the bodhisattva do that if s/he does not know the nature of these fetters? Dukkha is actually to be valued for its lessons that fuel our empathy for other suffering beings. The bodhisattva does not eliminate desires but, recognizing their source in vast egotism, relinquishes them. Operating from the freedom of small desire, the bodhisattva nevertheless has deep understanding of the great and desperate desires of suffering beings and thus can help them find a path to freedom.

We yearn to be free of dukkha and this is yet another craving. To actually practice the balanced state of nirvana in our daily lives is to experience, appreciate, learn from and yet be unattached to our desires. In accepting the dukkha of impermanence we come home to our bodhisattva nature and know compassion for all beings.

– Tonen O'Connor

Being ordinary is being lived as the universe of everyday functioning. Appreciating life is inhabiting this moment, even when pain and suffering arise. Even lying on an icy couch is the Dharma gate of joyful ease. This is the opportunity and the effort of practice. Are we carrying something along? Exactly this bodily moment is our opportunity. Appreciating this moment right here is being this, seeing and taking care of what appears, responding as this functioning life. "Not two" is exactly this manifold functioning right here of the joy we are.

– excerpt from a dharma talk by Elihu Genmyo Smith, reproduced with permission from Prairie Sky, newsletter of the Prairie Zen Center, Champaign, IL.

Happenings

October 4-8, Tonen attended the second national conference of the Soto Zen Buddhist Association at Zen Mountain Monastery in Mt. Tremper, NY. The conference attendees felt greatly welcomed by Daido Looi Roshi and his staff. The meeting covered varied topics and featured talks by Kazuaki Tanahashi and Peter Gregory. The attendance of Gengo Akiba Roshi and Yuji Ito from the Japanese Soto Zen office in San Francisco added greatly to the event. A highlight was the Dharma Heritage Ceremony in which dharma-transmitted priests were welcomed into the association. Tonen was pleased to act as Jisha for the ceremony honoring nine new members. Tonen serves on the Board of the SZBA.

Tojun introduced a class in Eastern Religions at UWM to the Zen Center and Zen Buddhism. The group, led by Prof. Anne Hansen, was very appreciative.

On October 28, the Milwaukee Buddhist Peace Fellowship sponsored a forum on the death penalty referendum on the Nov. 7 ballot.

Held at Phuoc Hau Vietnamese Buddhist Temple, the discussion was moderated by Tojun and featured Ven. Gioi Huong (Phuoc Hau Temple), John McAdams (Marquette University), Peter Neuwald (Great Lake Zen Center) and Tonen. Tonen also offered brief remarks at an anti-death penalty gathering of local clergy on Oct. 30.

Tonen spent the first weekend in November in St. Louis, giving the keynote talk for a colloquium on Women in Buddhism sponsored by the St. Louis Buddhist Council, speaking about meditation at a Thai temple and giving a dharma talk at the Missouri Zen Center.

During the October two-day sitting, sangha members showed their support for Lisa Marr by adding stitches to the okesa she is sewing for her ordination on February 10. Just after Thanksgiving, her sewing teacher, Rev. Zuiko Redding, will visit the MZC.



Procession to Katagiri Roshi's grave site, Great Sky Sesshin 2006.

Milwaukee Zen Center – Schedule

November

- 1 Introduction to Zen, 6:30 p.m.
- 12 Movie night, followed by potluck supper, 4:00 p.m.
- 18 All-day sitting, 6:15 a.m. – 8:50 p.m. Dharma Talk, 10:20 a.m.
- 19 All-day sitting, 6:15 a.m. – 4:40 p.m.
- 23 CLOSED for Thanksgiving holiday

December

- 3 Movie night, followed by potluck supper, 4:00 p.m.
- 6 Introduction to Zen, 6:30 p.m.
- 8 Rohatsu Sesshin, 6:15 a.m. – 8:50 p.m. Dharma Talk, 10:20 a.m.
- 9 Rohatsu Sesshin, 6:15 a.m. – 8:50 p.m. Dharma Talk, 10:20 a.m.
- 10 Rohatsu Sesshin, 6:15 a.m. – 4:40 p.m. Dharma Talk, 10:20 a.m.
- 23 CLOSED for Christmas holiday
- 31 New year's Eve renewal of vows and social gathering

January

- 3 Introduction to Zen, 6:30 p.m.
- 4 Movie night, followed by potluck supper, 4:00 p.m.
- 20 All-day sitting, 6:15 a.m. – 8:50 p.m. Dharma Talk, 10:20 a.m.
- 21 All-day sitting, 6:15 a.m. – 4:40 p.m.

To see the entire 2006 Schedule and more information on Two-day sitting, visit our web site at www.milwaukeezencenter.org

Milwaukee Zen Center

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Wed., Thurs., Fri.

6:15 am Zazen
(Zen sitting)
6:55 am Kinhin
(Zen walking)
7:05 am Zazen
7:45 am Service
8:00 end of practice

6:30 pm Zazen
7:10 pm Kinhin
7:20 pm Zazen

Saturday

6:15 am Zazen
6:55 am Kinhin
7:05 am Zazen
7:45 am Service
8:00 breakfast, oryoki
8:25 work period
9:15 break, coffee & tea
9:30 study class*
10:30 end of practice
**except on all-day sitting days*

Introduction to Zen

An informal presentation on Buddhism and Zen, followed by instruction in zen sitting, tea and discussion. 6:30-8:30 p.m.—first Wednesday each month.

Zen sitting instruction and private interview available by appointment. Call 963-0526.

Contact information

For messages: **Phone:** (414) 963-0526
Fax: (414) 963-0517 **E-mail:** kokyo-an@earthlink.net

For information and schedules: www.milwaukeezencenter.org

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I am interested in a membership (tax deductible):

- General -\$25/month
- Supporting – \$30 or more/month
- Out-of-town – \$10/month
- Participating - any amount you can afford \$ _____

I would like to make a one-time contribution \$ _____

- Please add me to your mailing list
- Please remove me from your mailing list
- Please change my mailing address

TITLE	QTY	PRICE	TAX*	TOTAL
Eiheiji Incense — Short 5.5"		\$ 7.00	.39	\$
Long 10"		\$ 7.00	.39	\$
Shipping - \$3.00 first two boxes of incense and 50¢ per item thereafter.				\$

*Only Wis. residents need include applicable sales tax.

TOTAL \$ _____

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