



Is Satisfaction Enough?

The Buddha's earliest teachings speak of *duhka* as the pervasive state of human existence. Often translated as "suffering", *duhka* is broader in meaning than the English word implies. According to the Oxford Dictionary of Buddhism it takes three basic forms:

- **ordinary *duhka*** the sufferings of life such as illness, death, separation from loved ones, or not getting what one desires.
- ***duhka* produced by change:** resulting from the impermanent nature of all things
- ***duhka* as conditioned states:** the most important aspect, which teaches that what we call an 'individual' is a combination of ever-changing physical and mental forces known as the 'five aggregates.'

Our individual ego, like everything else, originates dependent upon and conditioned by other things, yet we cling to the illusion of an independently originated

self and crave the validation of this self. Still, nothing we can feed this illusion of self can ever completely satisfy it, for all things are impermanent, do not last and can only temporarily boost our sense of fulfillment.

We attempt to deny that our self is the product of a constantly changing set of causes and conditions by struggling to choose causes and conditions that we believe will satisfy us and make us happy. Perhaps a new haircut, a new car, a new lover, a new job, a new house will do the trick. Perhaps a rigid schedule will organize our life as we wish. But the haircut, the car, the lover, the job, the house are merely temporary fixes. The schedule collides with the reality of the demands of the moment.

And so our denial of the true state of things continues until we begin to understand the Buddha's Second Noble Truth: the cause of *duhka*. *Duhka* arises due to our cravings to possess, to

stop, to hold, to control, to deny the conditioned nature of our self. And so we struggle and we suffer.

The Buddha suggested that relief from *duhka* lies, not in denying, but rather in understanding and accommodating ourselves to the reality of our impermanent and conditioned nature. If we can radically reduce our thirst (Sanskrit, *trsna*, Pali *tanha*), we will reduce our suffering. This makes perfect sense – if we don't want so much, we will be more easily satisfied. So our practice as Buddhists is to realize the impermanence and illusory nature of things, emotions and events. We become less needy, less controlling, more easily satisfied.

To be satisfied runs counter to the innate grasping after self-fulfillment that is the call of our ego. We resist the blandishments of our consumer society that whispers that the acquisition of "just one more _____" will bring us satisfaction. However, knowing satisfaction is not born of what we

have, but of who we are.

In 1253, the last year of his life, Eihei Dōgen wrote an essay called *Eight Awakenings of Great Beings* (translation by Tenshin Reb Anderson and Kazuaki Tanahashi). The bulk of this essay is quotations from the *Yuikyo-gyo*, or The Sutra of Bequeathed Teachings, reputed to be the Buddha's last teaching before his death. Here are the first two awakenings of great beings:

1) "The first awakening is to have few desires. To refrain from widely coveting the objects of the five sense desires is called "few desires." The Buddha said, 'Monks, know that people who have many desires intensely seek for fame and gain; therefore they suffer a great deal. Those who have few desires do not seek for fame and gain and are free from them, so they are without such troubles.'

2) "The second awakening is to know how much is enough. Even if you already have something, you set a limit for yourself for using it.

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So you should know how much is enough. The Buddha said, ‘Monks, if you want to be free from suffering, you should contemplate knowing how much is enough. By knowing it you are in the place of enjoyment and peacefulness. If you know how much is enough, you are contented even when you sleep on the ground. If you don’t know it, you are discontented even when you are in heaven.’

The Buddha taught

that release from “ordinary *duhka*” comes from clarity of vision, acceptance of the realities of the moment and freedom from illusory desires. Reducing our grasping desires and knowing contentment lead to peace in our heart. But is this the end point of the Buddha’s teaching? If we stop here are we avoiding coming to grips with the “*duhka* of change” and “*duhka* as conditioned states”?

Is our freedom from

the shackles of our illusory “needs” to be merely contentment with things as they are? Buddhists have historically been criticized for their passive acceptance of the status quo and if we look closely at human suffering it has usually been reduced because someone did NOT accept it. Discoveries in science and medicine have been spurred by dissatisfaction, and our efforts to affirm the dignity of all members of the human race, our opposition to hunger and abuse, all these are born because we are not satisfied with things as they are. How does this relate to the Buddha’s teaching on *duhka*?

As the shackles of craving are loosened and the bars of the cage of self-absorption weaken, we leave behind our small individual self and a new definition of Self begins to emerge. We see that our true nature is the magnificent, all-encompassing and unimaginably intricate play of impermanence and interdependence within which each action has meaning. To say “I am the Universe” is not arrogance; it is the simple truth.

We move from being satisfied with our individual lives toward

satisfaction with how our lives function within the great Self. Understanding interdependence, we arouse *Bodhicitta*, the aspiration for the wisdom and compassion of a Buddha. We see impermanence as the possibility for change in the direction of harmony and the welfare of all beings. Likewise, we understand that we may be active elements in the coming together of conditioned states for the benefit of all beings. To be free of *duhka* is to forget the cravings of the small self in exchange for the actions of the Bodhisattva within the great Self.

To be free of our personal *duhka* is to be free to alleviate the *duhka* of the world. No longer the prisoner of our ego, we find satisfaction in the great vow of the Bodhisattva as expressed by Shantideva in the 8th century:

“As long as space abides and as long as the world abides, so long may I abide, destroying the sufferings of the world.”

-Tonen O’Connor

– with thanks to Satyaki Saikia, who asks the hard questions.

Milwaukee Zen Center – Schedule

November 2008

- 5 Introduction to Zen 6:30 p.m.
- 15 All-day sitting
Dharma Talk, 10:20 a.m.
- 16 All-day sitting
Dharma Talk, 10:20 a.m.
- 27 CLOSED for Thanksgiving

December 2008

- 3 Introduction to Zen 6:30 p.m.
- 5-7 Rohatsu Sesshin
- 24 & 25 CLOSED for Christmas
- 31 Renewal of Vows, candle lighting ceremony

January 2009

- 7 Introduction to Zen 6:30 p.m.
- 17 All-day sitting
Dharma Talk 10:20 a.m.
- 18 All-day sitting
Dharma Talk 10:20 a.m.

To see the 2009 Schedule and more information on Two-day sitting, visit our web site at www.milwaukeezencenter.org

Happenings

October 2-5, Tonen O'Connor chaired the third biennial national conference of full members of the Soto Zen Buddhist Association, hosted this year by the San Francisco Zen Center, and Tomon Marr attended a conference of Associate Members at Green Gulch Farm. The two groups came together for the final day of meetings (see photo). Following this conference, Tonen stepped down as President of the SZBA and from its Board.

On October 11, Victoria Brundage received ordination from Tonen O'Connor as a novice priest and the new Buddhist name of Toshin. It was a joyous occasion for both Toshin and friends and sangha members. (see photos) Tozen Akiyama joined us as an honored guest and Tojun Cobb served as the ordaine'e's jisha. Toshin "is now in residence at the MZC.

The MZC Board met on October 25 to discuss plans for repairs and

maintenance of the Center and approved up to \$1,500 to meet this year's needs. They also agreed to place the monthly contributions to the Dharma Teacher's Fund in a money market until such time as the Pax World Fund recovers from its current losses.

On October 28, Tonen gave a featured talk at the Wisconsin Chaplains Association's annual conference at Green Lake. Her topic was what chaplains might expect in working with Buddhists in hospital, hospice and prison settings.

Thanks to Carol Cook for her donation of two sets of bells and many small Buddhist and Hindu figures to the Zen Center.



Above: MZC ordination ceremony for Toshin Brundage



Members of the Soto Zen Buddhist Association at the 2008 National Conference

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 of each month.

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

MZC 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

Useful Websites:

Soto Zen Buddhism: <http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/>
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