



An Easy Way

There is an extremely easy way to become Buddha. If you refrain from all evil, do not cling to birth-and-death; work in deep compassion for all sentient beings, respecting those over you and showing compassion for those below you, without detesting or desiring, worrying or lamentation—that is Buddhahood. Do not search beyond it.

—Eihei Dōgen, *Shoji*
(trans. Abe & Waddell)

When the passage from *Shoji* quoted above appeared in the July MZC Newsletter, someone said to me, “Boy, if only it were that simple!”

Simple, perhaps, but to most of us it seems far from easy. Dōgen appears to be laying out a straightforward program that describes the nature of Buddhahood. In a way, it is so straightforward and clear that our mind balks at it. We feel that these demands are simultaneously too obvious and too far beyond our capacity. We would

instinctively prefer a mysterious path taking many lifetimes of deep zazen and endless devotion, for in that case we could forgive ourselves for not yet being a Buddha. The Way we would prefer is shrouded in mist and not right here before our noses. “I’m too busy to think about being a Buddha right now—the whole thing is too deep, too vast and mysterious.” And here comes Dōgen saying that it is a simple matter of what we do!

Shoji, or Birth-and-Death, is not dated, yet is usually included late in a compilation of *Shōbōgenzō*, which means that we come upon it long after following Dōgen’s philosophical progress through an examination of reality in such essays as *Genjo-koan* (Manifesting Suchness), *Uji* (Being-Time) and *Busshō* (Buddha-Nature).

I find it intriguing to see that after so many years of striving to capture the essence of the as-it-is-ness of a world of constant change and interdependence, in *Shōji* Dōgen turns to

how one concretely lives Buddhahood. I also find it interesting that the final two essays in *Shōbōgenzō* are *Jukai* (Receiving the Precepts) and *Hachi-dain-ingaku* (The Eight Truths of a Great Human Being). Rather than philosophical inquiry, at the end of his life he was concerned with human behavior, with how we manifest Buddhahood in the actions of our daily lives.

There is an extremely easy way to become Buddha.

This suggests that although we are active participants in the Buddha-Nature of the universe, we are not automatically Buddha. We must become so. We must actively pay attention to our actions and our intentions and try to bring them into harmony with a Buddha’s actions and intentions. Dōgen says it is easy, meaning, I think, not out of our reach.

If you refrain from all evil.

This is a large order, perhaps an impossibility,

for how can we avoid harming something with each bite of food we eat, each breath of air we take, each step we walk? Yet I think what is being suggested here is that we can consciously refrain from what we know harms the fabric of life. Evil is disharmony, disruption, distortion, destruction. If I wake up to the consequences of my actions I can refrain from evil.

Do not cling to birth-and-death.

Dōgen addresses this in *Shōji* itself: *Just understand that birth-and-death itself is nirvana, and you will neither hate one as being birth-and-death, nor cherish the other as being nirvana. Only then can you be free of birth-and-death.*

That is to say, don’t struggle to force life to be other than it is—this temporary existence is itself nirvana, don’t look for it elsewhere. Clinging to this life as though we could make it eternal is spitting into the wind. If we let go and simply live, we are free.

continued from page 1

Work in deep compassion for all sentient beings.

This is not so different from injunctions found in other religions, but we must beware of mistaking pity or “helping” that separates us from others for true compassion. True compassion is grounded in a deep awareness that “We are tied together in a single garment of destiny, caught in an inescapable network of mutuality”, as Martin Luther King, Jr. once said. Since we are one with all beings, we must look at all beings with eyes of clear understanding, undistorted by preconceived notions.

Respecting those over you and showing compassion for those below you.

We Americans like to pretend that hierarchy does not exist. Yet we all answer, in one way or another, to someone or something directing our behavior, whether it is our supervisor at work or the pressures of society’s assumptions about what behavior should be. We need to respect those who apply this pressure and not discard their views without careful thought. And we all have those “below” us— our employees, our children, our pets, our aging par-

ents, all those for whom we feel responsibility. Respect must be paid and compassion offered.

Without detesting or desiring, worrying or lamentation.

The Buddha’s earliest teachings tell us that we create our own misery through our desires and our hatreds. One definition of nirvana is “the balanced state.” Neither desiring nor rejecting, accepting everything as it comes, neither fearful of what may happen nor lamenting what did not or cannot happen.

This is Buddhahood—do not search beyond it.

Buddhahood is right here in the actions of our daily life—it only requires being deeply imbedded in each moment, realizing it as true reality, and being compassionate companions to all those with whom we share our moments.

Simple, profound and though we find it hard, it can be easy if we get out of our own way. Buddhahood is here, in our own life. As Dôgen says: “Do not search beyond it.”

—Tonen O’Connor

Solitaire and Mindfulness

Every morning at around 9:30 a.m., I take the time to practice mindfulness by playing a game of solitaire. I want to stress at this point that solitaire, to me, is not a game nor am I playing it. I sit in my chair and shuffle the cards, then deal the standard number of cards out on the table. I make no judgment about the cards that

were dealt face up. I’m neither happy nor unhappy to see an Ace or a King. The hand that I was dealt is the hand that I must play. I then deal out the three cards in my hand with the top card facing up without expectation as to what the top card might be. The practice comes from not expecting a certain card to come up next. As I look, I see that I need a black seven in order to move the red six, but even though I am

mindful of this, I flip the next card up without expecting the black seven. The simplicity of flipping a card over without wanting it to be a certain card is a practice in itself. Accepting the next card for what it is and using it when I need it is also a practice in patience. There is no winning and no losing when it comes to this practice because you are not trying to reach a certain goal. Just sitting and dealing

the cards and playing whatever comes up without expecting a certain outcome is the best way to approach solitaire and the best way to approach life. The important lesson that I have learned through this is that I cannot play a card that I haven’t yet been dealt. The same is true with everything we do in life. We cannot reach an outcome before we’ve started.

—Raul Jimenez

Happenings

The MZC collaborated once again with the Cedar Rapids Zen Center to sponsor the fourth annual **Great Sky Sesshin** at Hokyoji Zen Community in Minnesota. There were 25 practitioners from 10 states, about equally divided between veterans of Great Sky and newcomers. The practice was steady, the mood high and the weather glorious. The teachers were: Myoyu Andersen (Great Plains Zen Center), Dokai Georgesen (Hokyoji),

Tonen O'Connor (Milwaukee Zen Center), Zuiko Redding (Cedar Rapids Zen Center), Brad Warner (Dogen Zen, Los Angeles) and Rosan Yoshida (Missouri Zen Center). Those in attendance from the MZC were: Lorraine McNamara-McGraw, Maud McGraw, Luke Mueller, Fereshteh Sadr and Susan Winecke, plus Tojun Cobb, who served as doshi jisha for the sesshin. Thanks go to Tori Brundage, who kept the Zen Center open during the time others were away.

Special thanks also go to Tori and Mary Bernau-Eigen, who accomplished wonders in the kitchen: deep cleaning, re-arranging and labeling things so that it is much easier to work there. Another addition is a new set of beautiful aluminum pots and pans which allowed us to retire some battered veterans of twenty years of use.

Thanks to the bountiful harvest in our garden, we have been able to make a couple of donations of fresh produce to Second Harvest to distribute to food pantries and shelters.

On August 26, Tonen traveled to New Lisbon Correctional Center to bestow the precepts on Leslie Pirk, who received the Buddhist name

Tôsoku (cave + as it is). Prior to the ceremony, Tonen had lunch with Kathy Derene, the regular teacher for the NLCI Buddhist group and Mark Teslik, the chaplain.

Save the Date – On Saturday, October 11, Tori Brundage will receive novice priest ordination from Tonen in a ceremony at 10:30 a.m. Everyone is cordially invited and there will be a pot luck lunch following.

Also, a reminder that our **two-day sitting** schedule will begin in October, with all-day sittings on Saturday, October 18 and Sunday, October 19. Tonen will give a dharma talk on Saturday, and Tojun will give a dharma talk on Sunday.

Milwaukee Zen Center – Schedule

October 2008

- 1 Introduction to Zen 6:30 p.m.
- 11 Ordination ceremony, Victoria Brundage
- 18 All-day sitting
Dharma Talk 10:20 a.m.
- 19 All-day sitting
Dharma Talk 10:20 a.m.

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

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



Work practice at Hokyoji.

Milwaukee Zen Center

2825 N. Stowell Ave. Milwaukee WI 53211-3775

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

NON PROFIT ORGANIZATION
U. S. POSTAGE
PAID
MILWAUKEE, WI
PERMIT NO. 2686

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/>
Soto Zen in America: <http://www.szba.org>

Membership Information / Order Form

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip+4 _____

Phone _____

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 \$ _____

Please make checks payable to Milwaukee Zen Center

**MILWAUKEE ZEN CENTER 2825 N. STOWELL AVE
MILWAUKEE, WI 53211-3775**

