Dear members and friends,

Here in Seattle we have had the wettest October on record. As I write this it is still raining. The leaves too are raining down this day. Once again it has been a very busy quarter for Chobo-Ji. In August we held a three-day Odayaka Sesshin with twenty people in attendance. I’ve gone back to leading these, and they are a “fun” intense time for all involved. We had several people from Oregon in attendance, and it gladdens my heart that people are willing to come this far to do a three-day sesshin. Our next Odayaka is scheduled for February 24-26, 2017 and you can register online for upcoming Rohatsu or Odayaka Sesshins at www.choboj.org.

We had twenty-five people for our Autumn Sesshin with people coming from as far away as Connecticut and Colorado. Rev. Rinzan served as Shika (host/manager) and kept the samu work assignments flowing. Anne Sendo Howells served as our Dai-Tenzo (chief cook) and was ably assisted by Scott Ishin Stolnack and Sally Zenka Metcalf. The meals as usual were both balanced and delicious. Rev. Tendo was our Jikijitsu (time keeper) and was firm about helping us all hold “noble silence.” Rev. Seicho did a fine job as our Densu (chant leader), and Rev. Daikan, assisted by Gavin Ozan Mackay and Rick Gendo Testa, excelled as our Jisha (tea server). Rev. Daikan has been through every post at least once and always gives his all to each endeavor. During sesshin several participants worked hard removing grass from the central curbside strip in the front of our building. On the last day of sesshin samu, many of us, including myself, helped move the bags of dirt to the yard-waste dump truck. Unfortunately, I think this action along with doing my usual full-lotus for a week, caused my right hip to go out. By Friday, the last day of sesshin, I found I couldn’t get dressed or go downstairs! This meant I was not able to conduct the Jukai (precept – Buddhist name) ceremony for Dulcey Simpkins and I asked Eshu Osho from British Columbia, to stand in for me. I hear it was a great ceremony, more about that later in this issue.

After several osteopathic treatments my right leg works again, but I’ve been left with a limp, numbness in my right foot, and weakness in my right leg, so much so that I had to cancel a planned trip to Zenwest Buddhist Society in Victoria. I’ve started weekly physical therapy and will soon see a rehabilitation doctor. Of course, it is my hope to be in good shape for our upcoming Rohatsu. I’ve been doing only half-lotus or Burmese position in the zendo, and I have discovered how much I have become dependent on full-lotus to help me root into our deep nature. Well, everything is practice, and I’ve gained more empathy for everyone disabled in one way or another. I talk about these insights in my most recent teisho for October mini-sesshin, Satsuma Weeps, if you care to listen.

Shortly after Autumn Sesshin I left for a great adventure in India. I have never been that far away from Seattle before, a twelve-hour time change. Hozan Alan Senauke Osho, who is a Soto Zen priest, folk musician, poet, Vice Abbot of Berkeley Zen Center, and head of the Clear View Project, invited me to attend a conference sponsored by the International Network of Engaged Buddhists and the Nagaloka Buddhist Training Center in Nagpur, India. I am still processing my visit, and I think it will take some time to digest what I have seen and heard. Most of the students who attend Nagaloka come from the Untouchable caste, and have never felt truly human before setting foot on this campus. Two insights really stand out. One, just how radical the idea of Sangha was in the time of the historical Buddha; to accept women and anyone from any caste was revolutionary. Second, that we too have a caste system here...

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in the United States, just not as prevalent or pervasive as in India, with Native Americans at the bottom of the heap. To help everyone have a sense of the conference, I’m including in this issue Hozan’s visionary talk that he gave at this event, “Breaking Down Barriers Between People.” You can see pictures of my journey to Mumbai, Nagpur, Nalanda, Rajir, Bodhgaya, and Varanasi at my Flickr site. You can also hear an interview of my time at Nagaloka produced by a new friend of mine, who trained at Nagaloka and is now working on a Masters in Buddhist Studies in Thailand, Rev. Bhante Sugato. Towards the end of my journey I visited a rudimentary elementary school for orphaned or severely disadvantaged children in Bodhgaya, the town where the historical Buddha came to enlightenment. Now I happily make a small monthly donation to the Gyan Jyoti Rural Development Welfare Trust to support the school, and I ask that you consider the same or one or more of the organizations that are listed at the Engaged Buddhism tab of Chobo-Ji’s web site.

Unfortunately, all the recordings of teishos from Autumn Sesshin got erased in a botched system upgrade of my iPhone, but included in this issue is a transcript on the subject of the Purification verse that we chant every morning during sesshin. As you read on, you will see how this subject is of particular importance to me right now.

You may recall that in the Spring Issue of PMN I said, “It is hard when occasionally I feel misunderstood, misinterpreted and mistrusted. In fact, I have been pretty blue lately. After a day of sitting this dark cloud clears, and also returns from time to time. Above all I do not want to cause harm, yet clearly I do make mistakes that once in a while hurt sangha members. Thank goodness, wherever we are, we are just beginning, and as long as we have sufficient mental acuity and determination there is always room for improvement.” And in the Summer Issue of PMN I reported that, “I’ve also been doing a lot of psychological sweating the last few months, and have felt pretty thin-skinned. A lot has been going on, and I have returned to seeing my therapist after a long hiatus.” These lines are related to an event that took place last spring when a sangha member made a complaint to the Ethics and Reconciliation Committee about some verbal exchanges with me. This all has to do with Right Speech (part of the Noble Eight Fold Path): when to speak, how to speak, when not to speak.

I have a habit of sometimes being too self-revealing in my teishos or in conversations with sangha members. Some people appreciate this, others do not and may feel confused or put upon. Also I’ve been known to send off fiery emails where I’m trying hard to be clear and direct, but later realize they have been warped by my background fear and anger. I’m working to digest these shortcomings with the hope that this will lead to more maturity. I regret the distress I’ve caused, hope to make amends, and learn from my mistakes. Above all, I wish to cause less harm and take responsibility for the harm I have caused.

As I have often said, enlightenment is easy, maturity is not. Of course, I want Chobo-Ji to be a safe place for anyone coming to train here, so as you read the enclosed Dharma Dialogue on the Purification verse, please know that I’m working hard to follow recommendations and take responsibility for my part in misunderstandings and missteps.

In this issue you will find an article on our “100 Meals” program, an essay on American Buddhism by Rev. Tendo, and my Autumn Sesshin Closing Incense Poem. In addition please be aware of our upcoming Rohatsu Sesshin to be held at Gwinwood Conference Center in Lacey, WA, near Olympia, Dec. 3-11, the Faith Action Network Annual Dinner, where Chobo-ji will sponsor a table, Nov. 20, and our upcoming holiday schedule, including our New Year’s Day celebration with chanting, bell ringing and potluck. Also coming up soon is a special night at Chobo-Ji where we will be hosting Dharma Teacher Tuere Sala, Saturday, Nov. 19, 7-9 PM; please mark it on your calendar.

I will be traveling to Bonn Germany once more at the end of January to lead my third annual five-day sesshin and attend many other planned events. It is a busy and rather isolating life being abbot of Chobo-Ji, but I am deeply grateful and honored to serve this tradition and sangha for over 40 years. May your holidays be joyous and I hope to see you soon in the zendo or one of the many events we have planned.

With gassho,

Genjo

While in India, I was blessed to visit Deer Park near Varanasi, where the historical Buddha gave his first sermon on The Four Noble Truths to five ascetics.
Breaking Down Barriers Between People
by Hozan Alan Senauke

The Indian constitution, a visionary document of justice and equality, was confirmed by India’s new parliament on January 26 of 1950. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, who led the drafting of this complex document, played a central role in establishing a government of liberty, equality, fraternity, and justice by which India to this day stands proudly as the world’s most populous democracy. In the remaining years of his life, Dr. Ambedkar turned to writing The Buddha and His Dhamma, and moved towards conversion to Buddhism as his chosen religious path. On October 14, 1956 he received the Three Refuges and Five Precepts then, in a radical act, he turned and offered them—along with Twenty-Two Vows renouncing Hinduism, superstition, and other oppressive beliefs—to 400,000 Dalit followers at Nagpur’s diksha ground. This conversion movement, by which one takes on the Dhamma and sheds an old caste identity, continues. On December 6, 1956, Dr. Ambedkar passed away, just three days after completing his legacy, The Buddha and His Dhamma.

The messages of the Indian constitution and The Buddha and His Dhamma run on parallel tracks: secular governance and spiritual liberation. They may appear separate, but Babasaheb Ambedkar understood the Buddha’s teachings to embody exactly the same principles of liberty, equality, fraternity, and justice as the constitution he wrote.

The barriers we feel to exist between people don’t just seem to exist. They begin, of course with mind from which flows all thoughts, fears, and self-centeredness. From delusive thinking we turn our fears into oppressive systems and institutions. From delusive words and deeds we continuously create societies, communities, and institutions. As they are built on delusion, these communities and institutions often divide us from each other, privileging one group and giving them the power to exploit and oppress others. Dr. Ambedkar described this as a “system of graded (or degraded) inequality.” As animals we have a hard-wired instinct to protect our existence. As mammals we instinctively form various kinds of communities, tribes, and societies for the same. We readily band together as family, clan, caste, or race, “us” against “them.”

The roots and branches from which we create social and personal barriers have always been with us. They are the Three Poisons of Greed, Hatred, and Delusion. The good news is that Buddha’s teachings offer an antidote, a way to restore the harmony and balance of all beings.

In Book 3 of The Buddha and His Dhamma, Babasaheb Ambedkar speaks of saddhāmma, which serves to purify the mind and transform society. Saddhāmma means “the good law” or “one’s own dhamma.” Here, Dr. Ambedkar offers an integrated vision of spiritual practice and social liberation. Internal and external barriers fall away. He is very clear that:

1. “Dhamma to be Saddhāmma must break down barriers between Man and Man” (or Person and Person, Man or Woman).
2. “Dhamma to be Saddhāmma must Teach that Worth and not Birth is the Measure of Man.”
3. “Dhamma to be Saddhāmma must Promote Equality between Man and Man.”

To this last point, Babasaheb Ambedkar writes:

Men are born unequal. Some are robust, others are weaklings. Some have more intelligence, others have less or none. Some have more capacity, others have less...All have to enter into the struggle for existence. In the struggle for existence, if inequality be recognized as the rule of the game, the weakest will always go to the wall.

He asks:

Should this rule of inequality be allowed to be the rule of life?...What society wants is the

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best, and not the fittest. This was the viewpoint of the Buddha, and it was because of this that he argued that a religion which does not preach equality is not worth having. Is not that a better religion which promotes the happiness of others simultaneously with the happiness of oneself, and tolerates no oppression? The religion of the Buddha is perfect justice, springing from a man’s own meritorious disposition.

These points are the spiritual basis of our social practice. The question, of course, is what is the practice itself?

Dr. Ambedkar explains that Metta/Lovingkindness, Karuna/Compassion, Sila/Ethics, and Prajna/Wisdom are all necessary. The principles are straightforward, but the practices are difficult. In this world where someone might insult us, or beat us, steal, and even kill those we love, how shall we respond in order not to build the barriers between us higher and wider? Vietnamese Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh writes that we must “love the unlovable.”

When we come into contact with the other person, our thoughts and actions should express our mind of compassion, even if that person says and does things that are not easy to accept. We practice in this way until we see clearly that our love is not contingent upon the other person being lovable.

— from Peace Is Every Step

How can we accomplish this? We rely on meditation as our foundation. It is true that Babasaheb Ambedkar was critical of some Buddhist monks he saw as exemplifying passive meditation ignoring the suffering realities of injustice and inequality. But meditation we undertake as engaged Buddhists is a practice of deep and wide awareness, not passive acceptance. It is the acupuncture needle of Dhamma, bringing forth sīla, samādhi, and prajñā. In concrete terms meditation is something that fully engages each person’s mind and body, even as we sit in the middle of personal, interpersonal, and transpersonal manifestations of pain, grief, and loss.

As we sit cross-legged (or in a chair, or as we walk upright), we become aware of each thought, feeling, and physical sensation as it arises and as it falls away. Moment by moment we can see the nature of impermanence and of interdependence. When we understand the impermanent nature of our own mind and how quickly suffering and clinging can arise, we have a compassionate sense how the minds of others work. It helps us to see how each person builds barriers between self and other out of our own fears and self-centered concerns. As our meditation practice deepens, we find ourselves little by little letting go of our deepest fears.

Meditation is a beginning, but it is not the whole of the dhamma as Babasaheb Ambedkar understood it. As I quoted above, “Dhamma to be Saddhamma must break down barriers between” each person and between each community. As early as 1936, speaking of conversion to the Bombay Mahar Conference, Dr. Ambedkar said:

I tell you all very specifically, religion is for man and not man for religion. For getting human treatment, convert yourselves. Convert for getting organized. Convert for becoming strong. Convert for securing equality. Convert for getting liberty. Convert so that your domestic life should be happy.

Dr. Ambedkar was not yet pointing directly to Buddhist conversion, but to deep human values. Conversion means dropping violence, privilege, and destructive self-hating, turning towards basic goodness. Babasaheb Ambedkar found that basic goodness is abundantly present in Buddha’s way. That is why he chose to convert.

The Buddha’s social teachings are completely clear about the equality of all beings, and each person’s capacity for awakening. Throughout the Pali Suttas and, of course, in all the Mahayana Sutras, he enumerated teachings for liberation not just in our meditation, but in our lives. The Eightfold Path guides our daily life. Each of the Five Precepts instructs us in our relationships with each other. There are the Four Brahmaviharas, Six Paramitas, Seven Factors of Enlightenment, Thirty-Seven Wings to Awakening. For many years I have tried to follow one short teaching, derived from early Buddhism’s “Sangaha Sutta” (AN 4:32), the “Four Means of Embracing Others”:

Monks, there are these four means of embracing others. What four? Giving or generosity/dāna, kind speech/piyavaca, beneficial effort/āthākāriya, and cooperation or equality/samanattata. These are the four means of embracing others.

Giving, endearing speech, beneficent conduct, and impartiality under diverse worldly conditions, as is suitable to fit each case: these means of embracing others are like the linchpin of a rolling chariot.

If there were no such means of embracing others, neither mother nor father would be able to obtain esteem and veneration from their child.

But these means of embracing exist, and therefore the wise respect them; thus they attain to greatness and are highly praised.

In the Mahayana tradition, this teaching appears in the Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra, the Lotus Sutra, the Vimalakirti Sutra and other well-known texts. In my own Soto Zen tradition, these four practices are presented by our 13th Century ancestor Eihei Dogen in his fascicle “Bodaisatta Shishobo” or “the Bodhisattvas Four Embracing Dharmas.” Giving, Kind Speech, Beneficial Action and Cooperation are methods for connecting with each other, even with those who treat us badly. Because we are truly not separate from each other,
such teachings allow us to become free from the Three Poisons of Greed, Hatred, and Delusion. When we use the word “embrace,” barriers between people disappear. As I have written elsewhere: to embrace is to encircle. I wrap my arms around you; you put your arms around me. To embrace is to unify, to make one of two. Seen from the perspective of the Buddhas, two beings are one.

The barriers we live behind will not simply disappear. They exist in our minds and in all aspects of society. Each of us must do the work as if the whole world’s suffering is our responsibility. Because it is. The Dhamma provides the tools by which we chip away at barriers—those within ourselves and those between us. But remember: we must rely on each other. We are never alone. Nothing stands between us.

Purification
Sunday, 9/18/16, Dharma Talk
by Genjo Marinello

This evening I’d like to examine the Purification or Verse of Confession, which is found at the top of page two in your Sutra Books. We can read it together:

In the past, I have caused much harm. My greed, anger and folly arise from the beginningless past yet they spring from this body, this mouth and this mind. I alone am responsible for the suffering they have brought and I hereby renounce and relinquish them all.

It’s a beautiful verse and I’d like to go over my interpretation of it and how it relates to our Zen practice. In the past, we have all caused harm. As much as we would like to think that we don’t cause harm, from time to time we do, and this first line recognizes this fact. By “past,” let’s begin by referring to our personal past in this lifetime. I think it is impossible not to cause harm over the course of our life, even though we rarely, if ever, mean to. “Our greed, anger and folly” (our instincts for survival), which drive our needs, will sometimes impinge on others in a way that they feel harm. We are all biological creatures, corporeal beings that have a great deal of self-interest invested in surviving, in having enough and maybe a bit more. When those instincts of survival that arise from our primitive reptilian brain are dominant or possessive, we are more likely to cause harm. It’s from the “beginningless past” in the sense that our reptilian brain goes way back, well before our 200,000 years as a human species and it’s a part of all of us. The “reptilian brain” is also sometimes referred to as our “crazy core,” “needy core” or “primitive brain.” There is no escape from this truth, the reptilian brain is a part of all of us, and when it possesses us, we become more like a beast than a Buddha.

The human condition ranges from a primitive beast to a Buddha and everything in between. Each one of us contains this whole range, we cannot escape this fact and there is nothing to attain; we already encompass this range whether we realize it or not. Usually because of a limited sense of self, supported by artificial barriers we ourselves created during our upbringing, we stay inside a rather narrow range of our full potential. However, do enough Zen practice and I promise you, the whole range of the human condition and beyond becomes accessible. Zen practice slowly but surely eliminates the artificial barriers between so-called self and other and between so-called Buddha and beast. Therefore, it is important to be prepared to realize that we are both a beast and a Buddha.

“My greed, anger and folly arise from the beginningless past yet they spring from this body, this mouth and this mind.” Even though our reptilian brain sometimes directs us, we are still responsible for our actions that cause harm to others. From time to time I feel possessed by anger, greed or my attachment to my own personal self-interest. When I do, I’m much more likely to cause harm to others, and must own up to this fact.

I alone am responsible for any suffering that comes forth by being possessed by the primitive aspect of who I am and, when I’m possessed by it, I have to take responsibility that, yes, that is me. “I alone am responsible for the suffering they have brought,” and therefore I must make a sincere attempt to make amends when that happens. I must work to be openhearted and compassionate towards myself for my own faults, and be openhearted and compassionate to those who have been harmed by these faults.

“I hereby renounce and relinquish them all,” doesn’t mean that I can get rid of all my fear, greed and anger, but it does mean that I renounce being possessed by my reptilian brain. I can’t escape my reptilian brain but I can redouble my efforts not to be possessed by it. Of course, I have needs and wants and the fear that these needs and wants won’t be met, but I do my best to act in the world in such a way that causes the least harm to others. Our Great Vow in Zen is to not cause harm and to be a benefit to all creatures great and small, animate and inanimate. Whether we’ve ever encountered Buddhism or not, I believe we all have a natural vow to be caring and openhearted to everyone and everything in every circumstance. I vow to live in this natural inclination as much as possible. I’m also aware that none of us can escape our reptilian brain, but with practice we can learn to hold it in abeyance most of the time.

How does this verse relate to our sitting practice? When we do zazen we have the opportunity to rest or root in our deep nature, which is much more vast than our reptilian brain. When we sit we are able to meet our own craziness and neediness, and at the same time root in a depth that is less likely to be possessed by these reptilian features. In this way, over time we impose less on others and therefore cause less harm to others. In zazen practice, we become able to meet the whole range of the human spectrum, being careful not to deny or repress anything we don’t like about ourselves. At the same time, zazen practice grants us sufficient spaciousness and communion with our deep nature, which is much vaster than the human...
condition, and naturally cultivates what we call “Buddha mind,” “Heart of Compassion,” or “Bodhichitta.” We all have access to the vastness of Heart-Mind that can embrace and contain our primitive aspects. In this way, as our practice unfolds into our daily life, we become capable of causing less harm and being of more benefit to others and the environment.

Over the years of practice I’ve begun to perceive the full range of the human condition, and I hope because of this investigation I am more able to conduct my life so that I cause less harm. I will never say no harm, because though this may be our vow and goal, we must all acknowledge that this ideal is unattainable. Nevertheless, we must work to cause less harm and to live each day with more caring openheartedness. During sesshin we say this verse of Purification every day; we say it every day because we know we will never arrive at perfect purity. We are not expecting perfection; we all know life itself is a practice. We practice recognition, renunciation, and making amends. We practice honing a caring and respectful attitude in each and every circumstance and situation. It is because perfection is not expected that we say this verse each day in sesshin.

All right, that’s enough for now for what I have to say, but I’d like to hear any questions you may have. Has what I have shared stirred something in you? Would you like to offer any comments, or ask for clarification? This is a time of dialogue.

**Question:** When we chant this, I think of the past, not just the evolutionary past but also the more recent human past which is the chain of families that led to me. I know something about the knots a couple of generations back (mostly my parents), and I come from that, too. It’s probably from those patterns of behavior that my greed, anger and folly is shaped.

**Response:** True. Our family of origin hands us a kind of baton of “generational madness!” Our practice is to recognize the harmful patterns that are handed off from one generation to the next. In our life journey these patterns can be unknotted, relaxed and seen through, or become more knotted and intense. Of course, we are in the practice of trying to unknot and transcend these patterns and zazen helps with this. It is also true that we are connected to more than our family of origin. In a broader sense, we are connected to the whole of our society and culture. Therefore, we carry with us historical baggage and patterns that come from our society. Even if no one in my family participated in the wrongs in our culture, I still have a responsibility to work on these wrongs. Though I might not be able to identify my own personal greed, anger and folly in some actions of my culture, it is still my responsibility as a member of the collective to work on the societal baggage we all carry. It’s an endless job, but we all have to do it.

**Question:** How do I speak to that beast inside?

**Response:** With care! Sometimes, in Buddhism, we refer to the beast aspects as our “hungry ghosts.” We must learn to care for the primitive parts of ourselves. Otherwise, these parts will bite us in the butt. If we do not conscientiously take care of our need to breathe, eat, find shelter and companionship, if we deny ourselves these fundamentals, that beast will naturally become possessive, grumpy, angry and even violent. Another way of saying this is that we need to love our “inner child”; we all have a very young, very needy little inner child that has primitive needs that must be met. We must find and cultivate access to our own inner “good parent.” A good parent attitude towards our most primitive needs, given in lovingkindness, is the best way we can care for our hungry ghosts. If we do this with generosity and even gratitude for the “inner child” clearly expressing its needs, the inner beast is kept in check and we find ourselves to be relatively happy and content. With skillful self-care we have more energy and capacity to be of service to the wider world.

**Question:** How do we take responsibility without punishing ourselves or causing harm to ourselves?

**Response:** Great question! It is tempting to punish ourselves when we realize that we’ve caused harm. I hope we all realize that punishing a child for hitting, biting, stealing or lying really does not make the situation better. Unfortunately, we’ve picked up some bad habits from our teachers and our parents about punishing this primitive aspect of ourselves, and it doesn’t work very well. Fortunately, zazen gives us the spaciousness to see what doesn’t work, and the spaciousness to experiment with ways that work better. When we realize we’ve caused harm, we may well need to make some amends or offer an apology. If our inner child is looking to others to take care of him or her, then it behooves us to care for ourselves more directly rather than imposing our needs on others. However, even if this is the fault, we must be careful not to punish ourselves for being corporeal beings with needs. When the inner child is denied or frustrated there will likely be a regression. We must work at being caring parents rather than punishing, shaming parents to ourselves. This is a skill-set that doesn’t develop easily, especially if our family of origin wasn’t the best model of parenting. It takes time, but part of what we are able to cultivate on the cushion is a positive parental voice that manages our inner child without punishing.

**Question:** How does fear relate to our capacity for human compassion? Is fear one of the voices of this inner beast?

**Response:** Absolutely. Love (Bodhichitta) is the principal voice of our Buddha-mind. Our capacity to be compassionate is based on this end of the spectrum and our capacity to be the beast is based on the fear end of the spectrum. In some schools of psychology all emotions reduce down to fear or love and these two principal emotions are a part of everyone. Therefore, learning how to meet fear in a constructive way, without being possessed by it, is a really important skill we need to assure we’re not possessed by the beast. I know I still have work to do in this area, in fact we must accept that we never “arrive,” which is why zazen is a lifelong practice. If we are operating out of fear, we are much more likely to cause harm to others and ourselves. So I work really hard at recognizing my fear and mitigating my fear so that I can operate more from love. It’s a struggle and it’s not easy but that’s our practice. Recognize my fear, mitigate my fear and address my fear in a way that it’s not harmful to me and others. Easier said than done, but it can be done. This doesn’t mean that if I’m put under enough stress or strain or one of my developmental soft spots is triggered, that I won’t have a hard time not being possessed by fear. It’s a lifetime of work to get through all of the shadowy places where fear is dominant. It’s one of the reasons why I think other practices such as martial arts and psychotherapy, which also help us to transcend and meet fear, are good
companions to Zen training. Undoubtedly, the more skills we learn, the less harm we’re going to cause to others and ourselves, and the more Bodhichitta we will be able to manifest.

**Question:** I grew up in a family where there was a lot of criticism and so being hard on myself was a natural consequence. One way I helped myself was to put a picture of me when I was three with my two brothers on my dresser; we all had grinning, shining faces. Whenever I become afraid, selfish or shut down, I try to treat myself as if I were that three-year-old girl who needs help.

**Response:** That’s a great practice! Over the time I’ve known you, I’ve been watching you learn how to more deeply listen to your Buddha voice, your “good parent” voice. Sometimes I’ve heard you say, “We don’t have to do it that way!” That Buddha voice—the Quakers call it “the still, small voice”—is always there, but it’s not always easy to recognize. Through practice we learn to recognize that there is a universal good parent voice within us. During zazen we learn to listen for it and eventually to listen to it! It is from that place that we can care for our inner three-year-old in a noncritical way. You can see, just walking down the street, the parents who are handling their kids in a critical way and what that gets them, versus a similar situation, with a different parent also handling a child in a more loving way.

We all have this critical voice. In some schools of psychology, it’s referred to as the superego. Zazen lets us recognize our own critical internalized voice that is programmed by our family of origin and backed up by shame and punishment. In time, we are able to shift our listening from the superego to the “still, small voice,” subtle, yet deeply profound, caring and insightful. This Buddha voice bubbles up inside everyone. It’s clear, kind and manifests as what Zen Master Rinzai calls “true insight.”

In his letter to the Sangha in this issue of PMN, Genjo Osho refers to a complaint made about him concerning verbal interactions with a student. The Ethics and Reconciliation Committee has thoroughly investigated this concern and presented its conclusions and recommendations to the Chobo-Ji Board. The Committee, the Board and Genjo all agree that he made errors with this student and we all deeply regret the distress these errors caused. It was also agreed that what transpired was not an ethical breach on Genjo’s part.

With input from the Ethics and Reconciliation Committee, the Board has formulated recommendations to help us improve our community. As a first step, we will hire a facilitator to help us process what this incident has taught us, in hope of greater understanding and compassion for one another. After the facilitator has the lay of the land, she will make recommendations for how to proceed. We plan at some point to convene a Sangha Council meeting to invite everyone’s input on the healthiest ways to move forward as a stronger community.

We look forward to sharing more information about this Sangha Council meeting and how you can participate — please watch for further communication.

With Gassho,

Chris Zenshin Jeffries
Chobo-Ji Board President

**Polishing the Mind Mirror**

by Rev. Tendo Kirkpatrick

Zen is not a religion based on faith; nor is it some sort of speculative philosophy. It is the actualization of the unselfish life. (1, p. 85)

This past summer a podcast was released from Roshi Bodhin as part the fiftieth anniversary of the Rochester Zen Center (2) in which he discussed his founder, Roshi Philip Kapleau. He covered Roshi Kapleau’s training in Japan and he noted that as he prepared to return to the United States, his primary concern was how to translate his experiences into an American context (2.1). This, Bodhin noted, is the great issue for every teacher of Zen in America. He backed this up with an anecdote showing that at every American Zen Teachers Association (AZTA) meeting this is always the primary topic (2.2). Whenever an American Zen teacher is interviewed this issue always comes up, whether implicitly or explicitly, and it is one that everyone on that path has to address. So it was of interest to me that Nyogen Sensaki wrote an essay entitled American Buddhism in 1932 that shows this has been the primary concern since year zero.

Modern religions must keep pace with science and human reasoning generally; otherwise, they lose their authority and perish. The true value of a religion should be judged by the brightness of its mirror of reasons; it should satisfy the intellect of whoever studies it. It should be judged by its ability to harmonize with actual life. (1, p. 77)

This quote from Nyogen has quite a bit to unpack. I wonder how many religious teachers would say that their religion must “keep pace with science and human reasoning generally”? I do think that the evidence supports this statement; religions that do not evolve along with the changes in people’s understanding and culture do not last. There seem to be generally three responses to this fact among the various religions. In the fundamentalist churches that I was raised in they tended to reject...
mainstream science and reason but instead created their own alternate universe of "science" to support their beliefs. These had the veneer of reason to them and satisfied at a surface level. But it is a Red Queen’s Race where they have to run faster and faster to try to just keep pace with science and never quite succeed. Building their faith upon these foundations means that as they are disproved by mainstream science their beliefs are thus disproved.

If scientific analysis were conclusively to demonstrate certain claims in Buddhism to be false, then we must accept the findings of science and abandon those claims. — Dalai Lama XIV (4)

Another common response is to deny this truth. Ultra-Orthodox Jews, Fundamentalist Islam, Evangelical Christians and many others take this approach. They become increasingly alienated from society, withdrawing into their own increasingly medieval enclaves as science and humanity pass them by. Finally there are those like the Dalai Lama who fully embrace this and strive to keep pace with developments in science and acknowledge shifts in cultural and societal thinking. He has stated that core beliefs of Tibetan Buddhism such as karma and reincarnation can be and have been rethought based on changes of scientific understanding.

Zen is based on self-evident fact, and so can convince anyone at any time. Because it is based on fact, Zen can pass freely through the gates of the innumerable teachings of the world; it offers no resistance and poses no threat, since its foundation is completely nondogmatic. The brighter one polishes one’s mind-mirror of reason, the more this true value of Zen can be appreciated. This statement is a little more difficult to unpack considering that human reason is a tool we use in daily life that in Zen practice can be of limited value. In koan practice for instance you have to exhaust reason and eventually express your deep nature. But here Nyogen is saying that through reason we can see that Zen is experimental, experiential and essentially human. Its non-dogmatic nature means that it poses no threat to established belief systems and norms. It is essentially a practice and the clearer we can see that the more its value can be appreciated.

Lastly, this idea that the American mind has a "scientific cast" is perhaps a bit outdated. Later in the essay he says “The American Mind is more inclined to practical activity than to philosophical speculation.” (1, p. 79) which I think is demonstrably true. The thirties, when this was written, was a golden age of science, which was seen as a pure and guiding light. At this time in particular the civic religion of the US as well as many of the standard religions adopted a scientific cast, as this was generally accepted as the way forward. It was an Age of Reason, where science felt it only had a few ‘t’s’ to cross and ‘i’s’ to dot before everything was understood. But in the intervening years there has been an increasing skepticism toward science, a turning away from fact-based actions, an increase in fundamentalism, and conspiracy-minded thinking. “Scientism,” a superficial adoption of science into a system of belief, and dogmatic non-belief has eroded science’s authority. When surveyed, contemporary Americans are much more likely to have a non- or even anti-science bent and there is greater belief in conspiracy, the fantastical and outright false ideologies here than anywhere else in the western world. (5)

This dense quotation contains numerous ideas as well as some rather interesting assumptions about Zen, religion and Americans. The notion that Zen in based on "fact" goes back to the original teachings of the Buddha. In these early teachings he’d often encourage experimentation. He’d explain something like the Eightfold Path and urge people to just try it out. Just try Right Speech for a couple of weeks, he’d suggest, and see if it doesn’t make your life easier, reduce your suffering a little bit. These basic rules, like the Golden Rule, are self-evident — you can just read them and understand that if you followed them things would go easier for you. They aren’t tied to any particular belief either, unlike say the Ten Commandments, and are thus non-dogmatic.

The most beautiful part of a religion is its practical faith, not its philosophical argumentation. The American thinker requires that faith walk hand in hand with reason; only in this way can it be harmonized with the practical world. The mere postulation of dogmas and creeds will never be approved of by the majority of Americans. … America Buddhism must be built upon a practical foundation. (1, p. 79)

This statement is one that I fully agree with, except that I question that this is the case for the “majority of Americans”. As noted in the previous paragraph contemporary evidence shows that a majority of Americans do not exist in the “reality-based community”. Dogma and creeds - those of American Exceptionalism, White Supremacy, Male Privilege, and so on dominate over acting in rational ways. There is a large subset of people who “require that faith walk hand in hand with reason” – I would number myself as one of them – but American Zen has poorly served them. Zen, as practiced in America, is often “soft”, descending from the Sixties fascination with the east, and does not demand reason and criticality. Ideas that bear no relation to the practical world are tolerated, even entertained. Where is the demand for a practical foundation? Nyogen recognizes this problem and cites this historical example:

Some sixty years ago H.P. Blavatsky established her Theosophical Society for the practice of the kind of esoteric
Nyogen, working alone at this point, laid the foundations of Zen to avoid these issues. His Zen was based on reason, eschewed these “strange elements” and emphasized practicality, engagement with science and being in the world. But his faith that this being inherent to Zen is I think misplaced when brought to Zen Practice. Anything can be corrupted, people will always bring in “strange elements” and it is the rare person who will shift their beliefs to keep “pace with modern science and philosophy". While Zen itself eschews this kind of thinking, the mere toleration of this kind of woolly thinking erodes its fidelity. What would Nyogen think on seeing “New Age” elements tolerated, or even encouraged in various zendos?

In keeping with their reaction against sacerdotalism, the young thinkers of America are dreaming of a religion of practicality, which is precisely what Zen is. (1, p. 80)

Before I ever came to practice at Chobo-Ji this describes me exactly. I have a file of notes for what I was calling “practical Zen” which married the practical self-reliance of Transcendentalism with Zen Practice (along with the devoted naturalism of both beliefs). Coming to practice in a Zen Center has taught me that self-reliance, while essential, can be overdone, can be another barrier. No one comes to realization on their own. I have also come to understand that a sense of the sacred is essential. Form and ritual are things that people crave which feed their sense of connection to all things. But I’ve also seen a lot of compromises, many of which belie Nyogen’s conjecture of the inherent practically of Americans. Some of the people attracted to Zen are as he describes. But many are not and as noted they can bring many a corrupting influence.

Thus this question of American Zen continues to bedevil us fifty years after Roshi Kapleau tried to work out how to bring his experiences to America and almost a hundred years after Nyogen Sensaki began teaching a small group in San Francisco. We stand at an inflection point right now, where American Zen is in a particularly vulnerable state. Scandals have rocked sanghas across the country, but more damaging in my mind is the soft corruption of low standards. The rigor of Zen practice, if not corrupted by woolly thinking, is a natural preservative. But if that rigor is allowed to be diluted then it is a structure built on sand. I’ll close with a quote from Jeff Shore that emphasizes this point.

Rinzai condemned – and in no uncertain terms! – what he called blind idiots, old shavepates, wild fox-spirits who can’t tell right from wrong. After all, Rinzai Zen only comes to life when one is dependent on nothing, within or without – deceived by no one, deceiving no one. Let us take this opportunity today to truly “know [our own] shame” so that the present quagmire can be cleaned up and the Way made clear.

Then, with the 1,200th memorial fifty years from now, a real and vital Zen will have taken root in the West. Let us open our eyes to what has happened. We cannot afford to hide our heads in the sand. Humbly aware of our own shortcomings, let us dedicate our lives to planting genuine Zen in the modern world and work together to ensure that it takes root. (3)

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(1) Nyogen Sensaki, Like a Dream, Like a Fantasy: The Zen Teachings of Nyogen Sensaki.
(2) Roshi Bodhin Kjolhede, Fifty Years of Change and Adaptations June 26, 2016 Rochester NY.
(5) Conspiracy Theory Pool Results, April 02, 2013.

100 Meals Update and Request for Donations

The 100 Meals Program is one of Chobo-Ji’s most robust and influential social-outreach activities. Click here for an article on the Program in Northwest Dharma News (NWDN).

In the words of Program coordinators, Dee Seishun Endelman, Anne Sendo Howells, and Sally Zenka Metcalf: “Members of the Chobo-Ji Sangha began this program over a year ago. It was inspired by Polly Trout, Executive Director of Patacara Community Services (a local Buddhist nonprofit), who told us that about 25% of Seatleites who went to feeding programs were vegetarian or vegan. Since most feeding programs are not oriented towards healthy, vegetarian meals, we originally conceived “100 Meals” as filling this gap. The NWDN article goes on to say:

Continued on next page…
We committed to cooking a nutritionally-complete vegetarian dish for 50 people twice each month. Volunteers from the Sangha found and adjusted recipes, shopped, cooked, packaged and froze the meals using the Chobo-Ji kitchen. Patacara provided money for the food and distributed the meals to various programs serving homeless and underserved people. At the time of its inception in 2015, two Sangha members were cooking the meals. We were soon joined by a third sangha member. We now usually have at least two additional volunteers each time we cook—recently there were seven of us cooking!

In 2016, Patacara began focusing its attention on serving the homeless living in encampments around Seattle. With this shift, Patacara’s resources are being stretched further, to provide direct services to several camps, e.g. running water and sanitary toilets, in addition to food. To relieve the strain on Patacara’s finances, Chobo-Ji’s Social Action Committee and Board voted that, going forward, food and packaging for 100 Meals will be paid for by Chobo-Ji. The Program has asked Chobo-Ji for $100/month, for a total of $1200 per year.

Rather than simply draw from Chobo-Ji’s general fund, we decided to invite Sangha members to support the Program by making individual donations. We feel that this approach will provide more people an opportunity to feel a personal involvement with the Program, and help promote a collective sense of ownership of 100 Meals as an all-Sangha project. Contributions can take the form of a one-time donation or installments (such as a monthly dues increase earmarked for 100 Meals, as at least one member is currently doing). If you plan to make a one-time or spread-out contribution, specify the date(s) by which you plan to send your donation(s). Checks for the 100 Meals Program should be made out to Chobo-Ji, with “Meals Program” noted on the bottom.

If you prefer to increase your dues payment, with the extra funds earmarked for 100 Meals support, specify the dollar amount you’ll be adding to your regular dues payments.

Please include your name and email address in case we have any questions.

We hope you’ll consider adding your support to this flourishing and much-appreciated extension of our Zen vow to care for all beings. And if you’d like to help with shopping or cooking, one time or regularly, all are welcome to pitch in – see the Temple Happenings e-newsletter for cooking dates and times, and for contact info.

With Gassho,

Chris Zenshin Jeffries
The 100 Meals Program
and the CBJ Social Action Committee

Rohatsu Sesshin
Dec. 3 - 11

Please help us get an accurate count by sending a deposit and application by Nov. 26, earlier if you want to guarantee a reserved spot. Make your deposit check, $75 or more, to Chobo-Ji and leave it the bowl by the zendo entrance or mail it to: Chobo-Ji, 1733 S. Horton St. #7, Seattle, WA 98144.

The cost of sesshin is $440 (less one month’s dues for members). We will leave from Chobo-Ji, on 12/03, by 3pm with informal supper, introductions and orientation to follow upon arrival at the Gwinwood Conference Center in Lacey, WA, near Olympia. Sesshin concludes the morning of Sunday, Dec. 11 around 10 AM. Departure flights should be made for no earlier than 3 PM, 12/11. Please bring a sleeping bag, toiletries, sitting clothes with layers, work clothes and a towel.

From the North:
Take I-5 South to Exit 109 Martin Way. Turn right onto Martin Way and take immediate left onto College St. Turn left on Lacey Blvd (One Way). Follow directions below.

From the South:
Take I-5 North to Exit 107 Pacific Ave. Turn right onto Pacific Ave. Proceed through round-a-bout as Pacific Ave becomes Lacey Blvd. Follow directions below.

From either direction:
Turn right onto Ruddell Rd. Turn left on 25th Ave. Turn right on Hicks Lake Dr follow to end and turn left onto 30th Ave. Gwinwood is at end of 30th Ave on the right.

Jukai Ceremony

On the last day of Autumn Sesshin, Friday, Oct. 30, 2016, Dulcey Simpkins did Jukai (Precept and Dharma Name Ceremony). The celebrant on this occasion was Eshu Martin Osho, as Genjo Osho was incapacitated by his hip going out. Dulcey began her Buddhist training in 1990 with a
10 day meditation retreat in Sri Lanka. She began training with Genjo Osho in 1996, in Ann Arbor, MI, doing four three-day retreats with him there.

Jukai (受戒 – Precept Receiver) candidates need to petition in writing to the Abbot at least one month prior to the ceremony. Jukai candidates usually have attended regular zazen at Chobo-Ji for a minimum of six months (including at least two weeklong sesshins), taken two precept classes or completed a course of equivalent study, must be regular financial supporters of the temple, and feel ready to give themselves to the Three Treasures (Buddha, Dharma & Sangha), working to live our Great Vow to care for all beings great and small, animate and inanimate. At the ceremony candidates take the Precepts and Four Bodhisattva Vows, and receive a rakusu and a dharma name.

Here are some of Dulcey’s own words on why she wanted to do this ceremony...

I’ve been feeling an increasing sense of urgency about “doing something” to live more freely and joyfully, and that has been moving me toward increasing my practice...

My original interest in Buddhism was a naive but sincere attraction to the promise of transcending suffering by attaining an enlightened perspective. Back in those early days, my perspective was “me against the world”: big challenges come from outside ourselves and these practices will help me cope with and rise above them. In addition to that view, I was also motivated by a generally kindhearted but also egocentric goal of helping others in need, not recognizing how truly needy and ruled by my hungry ghosts I was. But in my mid-life trials, I have been able to (and somewhat forced to) pull back the curtain on my internal landscape and finally see that there’s no jumping over or past oneself. Befriending myself as I am – and the world as it is – seem to be both the path, and the precepts are the vehicle for the journey.

I see Jukai as a step toward freedom from the unconscious fearful patterns that fossilize and stagnate life energy. Having taken a closer look at my story to date, I now recognize the root drivers of nearly everything I have done are anxiety, hyper-vigilance and fear covered over by the trappings of achievement and drowned out by addictions of various flavors. The precepts highlight how living an examined, awake life involves recognizing and disrupting these patterns. They foster gratitude instead of succumbing to harmful broken records that kill the spirit. They enable treasuring the time I have on this earth rather than avoiding, rejecting and not being present. They call for being honest about what is rather than numbing out. I see this path leading to acceptance of each moment, understanding that there are no mistakes, and embracing with gratefulness each opportunity as it arises. Stepping onto it, I hope to cultivate loving kindness for all beings, myself included.

So many of Pema Chodron’s pithy spiritual stories could be included here as an influence on me, and this passage from When Things Fall Apart seems fitting as I’m letting go into a mid-life crisis and turning toward deepening practice: “Things falling apart is a kind of testing and also a kind of healing. We think that the point is to pass the test or to overcome the problem, but the truth is that things don’t really get solved. They come together and they fall apart. Then they come together again and fall apart again. It’s just like that. The healing comes from letting there be room for all of this to happen: room for grief, for relief, for misery, for joy.”

When Genjo asked Dulcey about what sentiment she would like her Dharma name associated with, Dulcey wrote a whole page of notes, but these notes start out with, “Befriending, connecting with basic sanity and tenderhearted bravery – these concepts, along with vast heart and vast mind, spacious heart and spacious mind, really resonate.” Seeing this much Genjo Osho gave Dulcey the Dharma Name: Yu - Shin, Courageous Heart.

Holiday Notes...

Toya (Winter Solstice party to “break all rules”) Saturday, Dec. 17th, 6–9pm

Zendo closed for holidays
Evening of Dec. 24 – Jan. 1st

New Year’s Day Celebration and Potluck, 10am – noon
Important Dates to Remember

Daily zazen: M-F, 5:30-6:30 AM; Sat. 7-8:30 AM; M & W, 7:30-8:30 PM; Sun. 6:30-7:30 PM

Dharma Talks, Sundays, 7:30pm: 11/6, 11/27, 12/18, 1/1, 1/15, 2/5, 2/19, 3/5, 3/19

Zen Intro: Tuesdays, 7:30-8:45pm (except 12/6 & 12/27)

Shobogenzo Reading Group ...
Mini-Sesshin with meal, Dokusan and Dharma Talk ...
Board Meeting ...
100 Meals a Month – cook party ...
Dharma Teacher Tuere Sala @ Chobo-Ji...
Faith Action Annual Dinner ...
Rohatsu Sesshin at Gwinwood Center (Zendo CLOSED) ...
Shobogenzo Reading Group ...
Toya Party ...
Zendo CLOSED for Holidays ...
New Year’s Day Celebration and Pot Luck ...
Mini-Sesshin with meal, Dokusan and Dharma Talk ...
Mini-Sesshin with meal, Dokusan and Dharma Talk ...
Winter Odayaka Sesshin ...

Nov. 10, 7:00pm - 8:30pm
Nov. 13, 5am - 11:15am
Nov. 13, 11:30am - 1:30pm
Nov. 19, 9am - noon
Nov. 19, 7-9pm
Nov. 20, 5:30-7:30pm
Dec. 3 - Dec. 11
Dec. 15, 7:00pm - 8:30pm
Dec. 17, 6-9pm
Evening of Dec. 24 - Jan. 1st, 2017
Jan. 1, 10am - noon
Jan. 8, 5am - 11:15am
Feb. 12, 5am - 11:15am
Feb. 24 - Feb. 26

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Dai Bai Zan Cho Bo Zen Ji

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