



Water Wheel

Being one with all Buddhas, I turn the water wheel of compassion.

— Gate of Sweet Nectar

Taking My Place

by Wendy Egyoku Nakao



Heaven is my father and Earth is my mother and even such a small creature as I finds an intimate place in their midst. Therefore that which fills the universe, I regard as my body, and that which directs the universe, I regard as my nature. All people are my brothers and sisters, and all things [in nature] are my companions.

— Zhang Zai's "The Western Inscription (Ximing)"¹

I recite this prayer every day before the light of dawn. Settling into my body, I take my place in the cosmos right where I stand. I affirm my nature and set my direction for the day. Tell me, how do you situate yourself at the start of each day?

The verse is "The Western Inscription (Ximing)" by the Chinese philosopher Zhang Zai (1020-1077). Zai wrote this verse on the western wall of his study, hence the title. It was said to have influenced the neo-Confucian movement and is often criticized by Confucians as being too heavily Buddhist or Taoist. Whatever its provenance, it resonates deeply with me. I have committed it to memory and also enjoy reciting it on my daily walks.

It's essential to take your place in the world upon arising in the morning, affirm your nature, and set the compass of vow. You are already in the world, and yet, you are not quite in it either. Let's be all in. Reciting this verse out loud grounds me in my unique, albeit tiny, place in the cosmos. It's as though the universe welcomes me, and the universe and I seem to agree about my *intimate place in its midst*. When I affirm that the universe and I are of the same nature, this underlying harmony wakes up within me. I feel my own sufficiency and am prepared to live out the day, whatever it may bring.

¹This heavily edited version is in: Karen Armstrong, *Sacred Nature: Restoring Our Ancient Bond with the Natural World*, Random House, 2022.



Mount Taboma (Rainier) at sunrise.

Through many years of dawn zazen, I have grown to love this magic hour. Every morning while it is dark, I step onto the deck of our home, open my arms and face the expanse of the Whulge or "Sea" (the Indigenous name for the Puget Sound) and greet the darkness. I call upon the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Ancestors to witness. I call everything out loud by name—the great beings, the dark, the shadows of trees, the sound of lapping waves, and the stars up above. I greet the great Tahoma, the "Giver of Water" (Mount Rainier) to my left, and the Sun-a-do Mountain Range (Olympic Mountains) to my right, not yet revealed by daylight. I greet the wind and the morning chill beneath my feet.

I speak out loud my prayers of gratitude, creating them spontaneously, but being sure to include the four leggeds, the winged ones, those that crawl, and those

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TAKING MY PLACE *(Continued from page 1)*

that live in the sea. I understand more fully now why the Mahayana sutras, intrinsically inclusive and diverse, always mention every form of life. Consider this line from the *Diamond Sutra* when the Buddha instructs Subhuti, "A Bodhisattva should keep this in mind: All creatures, whether they are born from the womb or hatched from the egg, whether they transform like butterflies or arise miraculously, whether they have a body or are purely spirits, whether they are capable of thought or not capable of thought: All of these I vow to help enter nirvana before I rest there myself!"² No thing and no being is excluded from this *intimate place*. I re-set myself in accord with this fundamental reality at the start of each day.

Zen masters of old have left prayers that aroused their deep faith in life. Zen prayers speak to spiritual aspiration. They harmonize the one praying with the reality that is life. Dogen Zenji appeared to have prayed quite fervently.

"...take your place in the world upon arising in the morning, affirm your nature, and set the compass of vow."

Yamada Koun Roshi, our Dharma uncle through Yasutani Roshi's lineage, strongly encouraged his students to pray. He said that "if we truly wish to attain kensho, we must pray that our eyes may be opened."

Yamada Roshi encourages stating clearly what it is you want to accomplish in your spiritual practice. Narrow your focus so that you can discern your spiritual aim. Make it clear to yourself. Saying my prayer vows everyday clarifies how I proceed throughout my day. When you say a prayer as though you have faith in it, you open yourself to help from any direction. A monk once asked Dogen Zenji about Zen practice, "Do we rely on ourselves (joriki) or on another power (tarik)?" Dogen Zenji replied, "It is neither ourselves nor another power." Yamada Roshi comments: "Of course, to his own efforts, he offered up fervent prayers every day." The more I offer prayers, the deeper it settles in me and clarifies what is most important for my life.

Dawn prayer sets my direction as I take my place in the world for the coming day. After offering gratitude, I recite "The Western Inscription:" *Heaven is my father and Earth is my mother, and even such a small creature as I finds an intimate place in their midst.* As I recite this, I feel the small creature of myself slip into my intimate place in the cosmos. It's a posture of humility. It's a gassho, the placing of right and left palms together to express this fundamental unity of the one body—of me and other, of buddhas and sentient beings, of heart and mind. I take my seat on my zafu, wrap blankets around me, and recite the Gatha of Atonement.

The Gatha of Atonement is a most important prayer. This *small creature such as I* has a great accumulation of karma which has no doubt caused incalculable harm. Everyday it reveals itself to me in tiny and big ways. Affirming that this was the same for the Ancestors, I am sustained by their efforts in transforming their karmic obstructions. I am also sustained by your efforts. Do not be overwhelmed by your karmic accumulation. Just keep raising the heart-mind of atonement and set your sights on how you can step into your intimate place, just as you are, and fulfill the Bodhisattva vows of awakening. We slip and fall, grovel in the mud, get up and slip again. It is not pretty. Do not be deterred: allow the atonement prayer to settle deep into your heart.

Having recited the preceding prayers, my heart-mind is already harmonizing with the universal life force. Now I do zazen. Zai's verse continues: *Therefore that which fills the universe, I regard as my body, and that which directs the universe, I regard as my nature.* These lines fill me with awe. There is no "out there." The life force is all-pervading—it is here, there, and everywhere; it is every being—those I love and those I hate; it is everything, the trees and rivers, the creatures great and small, the buzzing mosquito flies straight for my face. Isn't the life force the very essence of zazen? Zazen is the ultimate at-onement.

At the conclusion of zazen, I chant the Verse of the Robe: *Vast is the robe of liberation, A formless field of benefaction, I wear the Tathagata teaching, serving all sentient beings.* This powerful prayer says, "Now, go about your day with the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, the Earth and all of its creatures, those needing a helping hand, wrapped around you like clothing." Leave aside what it all means; simply rejoice in its aliveness. See the dynamic and intimate patterns of life—the blackberries growing on thorny branches attract tiny flies, the gulls call when day breaks, the bare feet of a child stir the need for shoes within me. The robe of liberation reveals the intimate call and response of the life force. Wear it well! Serve well! Offer whatever you can to benefit another's life; do what you can to save the planet; guard your speech and refrain from going against life.

I go to my home altar and chant the *Hannya Shingyo* and the *Sho Sai Myo Kichijo Dharani*. Zai says: All people are my brothers and sisters, and all things [in nature] are my companions. My prayer list is a mishmash of both the living and dead, including a prayer that leaders—even those reaping havoc—lead with wisdom and compassion. Reciting it feeds my spirit. After a few more prayers, I am ready to begin the day.

Please give careful thought to how you begin your day. Ground yourself in a morning ritual for the Fall Practice Period.

Roshi Egyoku is the Senior Dharma teacher at ZCLA.

²The *Diamond Sutra*, a web translation by by Nikita Shevchenko.

Nothing in this World Frightens Me

by Katherine Daiki Senshin Griffith



One day when Master Joshu was outside the monastery, he saw an old woman hoeing a field. He asked her, "What would you do if you suddenly met a fierce tiger?" She replied, "Nothing in this world frightens me," and turned back to her hoeing. Joshu roared like a tiger. She roared back at him. Joshu said, "There's still this." ¹

- The Hidden Lamp

As we move into the last quarter of the Year of the Tiger, many of us find the world a frightening place: ever new variants of the virus, accelerating effects of climate change, our democracy threatened, erosion of rights, economic uncertainty, political divisions, the war in Ukraine with its global repercussions, increasing exposure of how ingrained and systemic racism is in our culture.

What is it like to be able to say: "Nothing in this world frightens me?" Why was the old woman able to say that and roar so completely?

Chances are she'd spent a lifetime hoeing that very field. Like the women I saw in the mountain rice fields of Japan, who'd spent their lives bent over so they could no longer stand upright. In hoeing her hard dry soil, this old woman was completely doing what needed to be done, serving her family, providing food, perhaps contributing to income. In tune with both its harshness and beauty, farmers engage directly with nature and its inescapable elements of wind, rain, drought, and pestilence.

The old woman knew that soil intimately: the rocks, weeds, worms, bugs. She didn't curse her conditions, just tilled away so it was ready for a new crop. But she also cultivated her mind, so she was ready for anything. Like it says in the koan, "empty-handed, yet holding a hoe."

Isn't that what we are doing in our Zen practice? When we till the soil of our minds, we learn that landscape intimately with its distractions, anxiety, greed, anger, laziness, doubt, perfectionism, impulsiveness, judgement,

confusion, fatigue, irritability, ignorance, earnestness, excitement, restlessness, self-consciousness. Whatever comes up, we just hoe, hoe, hoe.

Like the old woman, we don't curse or judge our ingredients, but just till away and do what's needed, in tune with our inner and outer atmospheres. We too can be empty-handed: sending an email, recycling the trash, looking for work, sitting by a hospital bed, lying in a hospital bed, dying in a hospital bed. When the self is dropped, we are available for creative problem-solving and facing whatever is before us. Even our fear and anxiety.

If I don't accept the process something requires – as in a writing project – it's miserable. But if I accept the process itself, work with what's there, then empty-handed, I can flesh out an idea, rewrite, cut or even throw it all away and grow a new kind of crop. Then all the heaving and hoeing can be joyful. A dear friend of mine fell off the stage and was paralyzed from the neck down. Yet he kept creating, writing, designing, making art, even performing.

The old woman was so empty of self, so completely absorbed in the task, she blended with the whole vista. And yet Master Joshu noticed her. How many hidden lamps do we overlook in our lives? All the essential workers that are taken for granted, teachers unnoticed, elders dismissed.

He asked her, "What would you do if you suddenly met a fierce tiger?" (Be careful when a Zen master asks a seemingly ordinary question.) What did he see that made him question her? Was she so absorbed in her task? Was she just so fascinating he couldn't resist? Was he remembering other impressive old women who had taught him the dharma and revealed their marrow? Did she already seem fearless?

And what is this ferocious tiger? Was Master Joshu referring to himself as a fierce master challenging her? Is the tiger the True Nature of the Dharma? Is the hungry tiger our endless appetite and was he asking how she deals with craving and suffering? Was he asking how do you encounter the Essence of Life? Or did his one question skewer through all these points?

Her answer certainly blasted through all questions. *Nothing in this world frightens me.* What was the source of her confidence? Or confidence in the source?

¹The Hidden Lamp, The Old Woman, Zhaozhou, and the Tiger (China, Ninth Century), compiled and edited by Zenshin Florence Caplow and Reigetsu Susan Moon, Wisdom Publications, 2013.

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NOTHING IN THIS WORLD *(Continued from page 3)*

The *Dhammatthavinicchaya Sutra* talks about how when endowed with the Four Confidences of the Buddha, the Realized One claims the place of the leader, and roars the lion's roar among the assembly, and sets rolling the supreme wheel. The Four Confidences are 1) complete and perfect self-enlightenment; 2) total elimination of all mental fermentation; 3) knowing and seeing all obstructions as obstruction; and 4) teaching a Dharma which unambiguously always leads to the complete ceasing of all suffering. These are the certainty, assurance, safety and fearlessness a Buddha enjoys. So endowed with these confidences the Realized One roared his teaching which still reverberates with us at this very moment. What do we do when we can't yet roar the lion's roar? Hoe, hoe, hoe.



Tigers have been a Chinese cultural symbol for over 7000 years, representing willpower, courage, physical and inner strength. A Chinese idiom says: *"Tiger roaring and dragon singing - the world is peaceful."* It's said a dragon's roar gathers clouds; a tiger's raises winds. Together they are a formidable force, that can create a storm. They represent the opposing polar, yet balancing forces of yin and yang, female and male energies, respectively.

An ancient story tells about the confrontation between a Tiger and a Dragon. One day a hermit saw a large yellow Dragon playing with a pearl in the sky. Then a white Tiger, scared of the dragon's claws, came out of hiding. The Dragon just ignored him. The Tiger, furious over such disdain, declared that he was the King of All Animals and demanded that the Dragon acknowledge that. Enraged, the Dragon said the Tiger was King of the Furry animals and he, the Dragon was King of the Scaley and Symbolic animals. Rather than physically fight, the Tiger began an Oratory Duel, with a magnificent roar. The Dragon spoke with its breath and said that it could bring peace on earth and had done so many times. Their verbal battle over who was the most terrifying and powerful went on for a thousand years revealing the great qualities of both mythic creatures.

The witnessing hermit asked a philosopher what the meaning behind this amazing joust was. The philosopher said two complimentary fundamental principles, Yin and Yang, a combination of heaven and earth, produced these extraordinary animals. The Yin principle represents the Tiger, the Yang the Dragon. In essence, the world is controlled by a cosmic duality of opposing principles or cosmic energies that may be observed in nature, moving and transforming each other.

Indeed, everywhere in the Universe, there is a part of the Tiger and part of the Dragon – intimately intertwined. Our search for perfection or balance requires the participation of both these parts. It is necessary to unite the strength of the Tiger with the spirit of the Dragon. With any duality, we can recognize this complementary aspect and examine the imbalance to maintain equilibrium. However, when these energies become misaligned, we may experience anxiety, inner division and disease.

Joshu roared like a tiger. She roared back at him. Like the Dragon and the Tiger, they were inseparable from each other. Like two arrows meeting in midair, all dualistic viewpoints roared away: existence and non-existence, the myriad and the one, good and bad, fear and no fear.

Then *Joshu* said, *"There's still this."* What is this "still this?" This is the most important aspect. When all the roaring ends, is there anything left? What is the inexhaustible roar? Chi Kuang Sunim, the *Hidden Lamp* commentator asks, "What is the great timeless, inner roar of no sound and where does it come from? Such inquiry points to a deep spacious stillness within, yet demands that we act now."

After their roaring encounter, the Old Woman probably turned back to her hoeing. She had mouths to feed, crops to sew. In our practice, we too can simply return to what needs to be done, without fear. Back to the marketplace and Bodhisattva action. Back to our sitting, cultivating our field, working with whatever comes up. We still have this Dharma to use.

As it says in the introduction to "Suigan's Eyebrows" Case 8 in the *Blue Cliff Record*:

*The enlightened one enjoys perfect freedom in active life.
Like a dragon supported by deep waters
or like a tiger that commands its mountain retreat...*

Here on Great Dragon Mountain, in the year of the Tiger, no matter how frightening the world appears, we can awaken to our true nature and experience:

Tiger roaring and dragon singing - the world is peaceful.

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Enter a Person of No Rank

by Joseph Bobrow



The world is burning. People are destroying it. Some are stoking the combustion by fanning the flames of hate filled violence, amplifying, and manipulating our deepest anxieties, preying on a set of deadly multidimensional crises, exploiting public shock and anguish for private gain. The most toxic and corrosive psychic fuels are intensified and spread like wildfires with purposely false information.

In classical Buddhism, *samsara*, the world of sorrow and pain, is sometimes associated with heat and fire. The heat of the blind passions. But today we are living in a massive emergent *samsara* where we are witnessing and participating in the destruction of our planet and its creatures and the degradation of the finest human qualities. It seems out of control, and at times, it is out of control. We suffer from helplessness, despair, terror, and numbness; the risk, perhaps the increasing likelihood, that the human species and thousands of others with it, will not survive.

In the Four Infinite Vows, Zen practitioners chant “Greed, hatred, and delusion rise endlessly.” These are referred to as the Three Poisons. Although I’ve chanted them for fifty years, today I see more clearly than ever just how toxic the Three Poisons are, unbridled and sometimes masquerading as benevolence, reasonableness, or normality. The richest few have their fortunes balloon as the many struggle to survive. Hatred becomes normalized, with those in power “saying the quiet things out loud.” The psychotic denial of objective reality, along with the cynical and deadly mind manipulation and gaslighting of tens of millions of us, is frighteningly real, if delusional. In the first line of the Four Infinite Vows, we chant, “Innumerable beings, I vow to save.” Saving all beings is at the heart of Mahayana Buddhism. The boat is big, all can come on board as we row to the other shore.

I remember saying to Aitken Roshi early in my practice, “Saving, that has a messianic ring, almost like rescuing beings from original sin; saving their souls.” He responded, “Then think ‘protect.’” I could relate to that and let go of the messianic associations to the word “save.” But today, “save” is neither hyperbolic, messianic, or moralistic. It’s up to all of us to turn the ship around. To save our planet, our fellow humans, and the more than human world. We must shepherd our finest qualities and share them vigorously. Aitken Roshi would sometimes say we are all prac-

ticing Buddha’s dream, cultivating compassion and wisdom for the benefit of all beings. Now more than ever we need to cultivate and bring to bear all our capacities, counteract numbing and despair, and, individually and collectively, unleash wise and responsive action to save the world.

It is to encourage such action that I take a fresh look at Buddha’s vision for an awakened person and her awakened activity. I examine the true self (also referred to as no-self) that is at its heart, and endeavor to untangle some misunderstandings that can hinder us on the path and impede the distinctive, empowered expression of our realization. I delve into a true person of no rank, a Zen expression of no-self, and the notion of an agent of compassion. It takes an insubstantial person of substance not only to survive these dire times but to actively participate in saving the planet and healing the world. It takes a differentiated *person*, an *agent* of compassion, to bring to bear the insights of oneness and radical interconnection at the heart of Buddha’s dream.

In *Zen and Psychotherapy: Partners in Liberation* (Wisdom, 2010), I described how spiritual practice and emotional growth were “partners in liberation.” I used the double helix to represent their interaction. In my new book, *A True Person of No Rank: Awakening Buddha’s Dreams to Save the World* (Sumeru, 2022), I introduce a third interlocutor, social action, to form an emancipatory trio. These threads have been interweaving in my life from early on. We can’t really bring psyche, spirit, and world together; they *are* together. Intertwining, they forge an integrative myth, an ancient dream updated, in which the individual and the collective arise and work in tandem. A story where meditation, insight, and benevolent action, *dhyana*, *prajna* and *sila*, arise and operate in concert.

Person, agent – each is in accord with true no-self. How can that be? Don’t we “let it all go,” once and forever? True self or no-self is not selflessness. It is not even something called “no-self.” It is not on the register of self and non-self, selfish and selfless; therefore we call it “true” or “no-self” or “the person of no rank.” It is dynamic, full of idiomatic human qualities and capacities we must not waste by misrecognizing and discarding them. Open and at rest, it is responsive, like Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva of compassion, to the sounds of the world, the sounds of anguish. Like Manjushri, it comes forth wisely, personalized and in accord with circumstances. With unbridled greed, hatred and delusion running rampant, our world needs the vigor and diversity of our true selves, true persons of

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ENTER A PERSON OF NO RANK *(continued from page 5)*

no rank, agents of compassion, more than ever, just as the Jeweled Net of Indra, the ancient Buddhist image of intimacy and particularity, needs each jeweled point in the goddess Indra's limitless net to shine forth distinctively for the benefit of all.

Let's say (play) that true self or no-self is actually *whole self*: radically inclusive, unfettered, unhindered, and unimpeded in its responsiveness. Unsequestered, undivided, not isolated, fragmented, or permanent. It includes the bombs, the fires, the poison, the greed, hatred, and ignorance; the joy, the pain – all we can see and all we can't see, all of it. Everything "outside" and "inside," conscious and unconscious. All belong. A limitless belonging.

Realizing and living this both requires and helps build an underlying *sense* of self, a sense of agency, of personhood, of intrinsic worth and freedom and empowerment. These are the foundational elements. When they're not there or when they're compromised and inaccessible, they obtrude and we suffer; when they are wellenough established and operating, we don't suffer (so much). "True self," "no-self," and "whole self" are absent, invisible, making no claims.

Old master YuanYu said, "When bodhisattvas who live a householder's life cultivate practices of homeleavers, it is like a lotus blooming in fire. It will always be hard to tame the will for fame and rank and power and position, not to mention all the starting points of vexation and turmoil associated with the burning house of worldly existence. The only way is for you to realize your fundamental, real, wondrous *wholeness* and reach the stage of great calm, stability and rest." And not to stop there.

Old Zen ancestor Linji raised the "poor" person of no rank and saddled him with the unenviable label "true" to boot. He pulled up the rug and flung the door wide open:

There is a person of no rank who is constantly coming and going from the portals of your face. Who is the true person of no rank?

Linji invites us to live freely without cleaving to title or rank or any identification at all. Without dualistic constriction: Enlightened or deluded; Buddha or ordinary person; success or failure; mind or heart; self interest or collective interest. He also subverts fixed role-based identities. But don't think he means anything goes.

True no-self, the root of no rank and no-title, is the most easily misunderstood Buddhist teaching. We formulate it ("no-self, nothingness, emptiness") and then react to it – our own formulation – with confusion, dread, and desire. Some want nothing more than to eliminate all trace of self, thoughts, feelings, and distinctiveness. *To be nobody.*

Maybe then there will be less pain, more gain. Replace an ordinary persona with a Buddhist persona, and then walk around acting the part.

Nothing is not something called nothing.

Far from being literally void of stuff, our true no-self nature is dynamic, emergent, full of possibility, teeming with potential and unformed qualities.

A good no-self is a terrible thing to waste.

Why dredge up an old concept like true person from the scrap heap? We need this person, this agent of compassion now more than ever. In these dark and crazy times, when truth and reality are themselves up for sale, maleficence masquerades as helping, and unbridled greed, hatred, and delusion are rampant and commonplace, it's a radical act to draw a breath freely and exhale long and slow. It's revolutionary to stand up, sit down, laugh, and weep. Buddhist living is not exceptional; it expresses our full humanity. Being human is wondrous and shockingly ordinary. It hurts and delights; it's real. *Real* quickens, nourishes, and transforms.

Poor person of no rank, unholy, unfinished, and done with becoming. Full of holes, he lets in sounds of the world and hears voices sorrowful and aching to blossom, belong and contribute. And he responds. As he transforms his own suffering he naturally recognizes and responds to other beings. We need him. His peace, his pieces richly composting, responsive to humans and other beings near and far. Body and mind unencumbered, heart and soul untethered, available.

Not striving for perfection or pushing away evil, her activity is naturally in alignment with shifting conditions. Unsantimonious and benevolent, she learns from children, animals, and seniors, the annoying prophetic voice, and the subtle impacts of her own conduct. She walks the ancient Way, living Buddha's dream.

Story gets a bad rap these days. "It's just your story, see through your story, let go of your story." Why not eviscerate yourself from your perennial roots while you're at it! *Dream* too finds scant respect, relegated to nighttime, or equated with a distracted drift. Yet,

it is dream that animates what we create
in our wake
as we go about
our nights and days
we wake dream bring it
to life.

Roshi Joe is the director of Deep Streams Zen Institute and practices psychotherapy and psychoanalysis.

The Zendo Practice of the Three Wheels

by George Mukei Horner



*May we with all living beings,
Realize the emptiness of the three wheels:
Giver, receiver, and gift.*

—Sesshin Meal Chant

When I first came here, it never occurred to me to wonder what one needed to know to run the Zendo: how to get the building ready for our arrival; how to hit the woodblock, bells, and clap-

pers to signal what to do next; how to offer incense at the altar, or the *kyosaku*—the awakening stick—to people who are drowsy or whose shoulders ache; how to clean the altar at day's end, making it ready for tomorrow. The Zendo was just there. Like everyone else, I came to sit, but the container that held our practice was mostly invisible to me. Yet, just as the dining hall does, the Zendo reveals the practice of the three wheels.

In the Zen Practice classes I learned how to be in the Zendo:

- I should dress discreetly, respecting this place and what we do here: Keep my legs and shoulders covered, wear nothing with messages, don't wear jeans or anything ripped or torn.
- When entering the hall, I should step over (not on) the threshold, and bow.
- Walk lightly, toe first, not heel first, so as not to shake the floor.
- When walking or standing, I should keep my hands together in *shashu*, unless chanting, palms together, or holding something. Never have my arms down at my sides.
- When going from one side of the hall to the other, I should cross behind the altar, not in front of it.
- At my seat, I should put down my cushion, the label with ZCLA's crest right-side-up facing what will be the rear of my seat when I sit. Then bow to my seat, bow away from my seat, and sit down.
- When someone about to sit next to me bows to their seat, or someone across the hall bows toward me before sitting, I should return their greeting with a seated bow (but only before *zazen* starts, not after).
- I should be upright, balanced, and relaxed during *zazen*, as settled as possible, not scratch my head, rub my eyes, or take my hands from the *zazen* mudra except to cover my face if I cough or sneeze.



*Be aware of the ZCLA crest on your *zafu*.*

- When waiting in Face-to-Face line, I should only move up when the person in front of me goes in, or when asked to move up by the *Jisha* (the teacher's attendant), so as not to interrupt my *zazen* by repeatedly moving unnecessarily.
- Before exiting, I should brush off and straighten the place where I sat, then pick up my cushion and make final bows toward and away from my seat.
- And I should refrain from conversation in the hall, even when the program is over and we're filing out.

These rules applied both to myself and to how I practiced with others. But over time I realized there were also rules for how to practice with the Zendo itself. Do not open or close the windows, or adjust the lights or fans. Leave them as they are. Now, it's not always easy to leave things as they are. Sometimes those who prepare the room misjudge what it will be like in an hour. Sometimes people are just different; it can always be too cold, hot, bright, or dark for someone. The way out of "I don't want it to be like this," is called doing *zazen*. So these rules serve the same purpose as the others. They constrain and hold us while we learn how to be present with What Is.

The fundamental teaching is that we are not separate from anything. At its most basic, the only thing anything is doing is just being as it is. In the midst of all our habit-patterns, likes and dislikes, this is not easy to appreciate. So we practice *zazen*, which means: be present, with a wide open awareness, to the reality of this moment. Then, without resistance, let things be as they are, until even the thought of wanting them another way does not arise. Of course, simply to be in that state is not the goal. Rather, we are gaining the ability to be clear and settled, so that when we get off the cushion, leave the Zendo, and have to act, we discover we can be deeply settled even amid the challenges and difficulties of our lives.

In the Zendo of the three wheels, the practice of the *Jikido* and the monitors is to prepare the hall as a practice space and offer it to us. Our practice is to receive their gift, in whatever form they give it to us. Whatever it is, however it is, just receive.

Sensei Mukei is the Zendo Steward and a resident practicing member.

Beyond the Masks: A Wife's Reflection

by Concetta Getsuren Alfano



It's never easy to say good-bye. Forty-four years ago we had our first date. Sushi! Not my favorite cuisine - but it was a date full of laughter, puns and crazy non-linear conversation. If you have known Daishin, you would expect the unexpected - even though you never expected it. I was mourning the death of my mother and now, at this moment Daishin's 49th day of transition has not yet passed. Two significant

events circuitously collapse in time. They meet where there's "no space in time" (Leon Russell, A Song for You). The full line reads, "I love you in a place where there's no space in time." For me, it fits with the "Guiding Words of Transition."

I was alone with Daishin when he took his last breath. That morning he opened his eyes and gave me a sweet smile. His soft, knowing brown eyes said goodbye. He then closed his eyes and went back to sleep. Sitting alone with him in the afternoon, expecting the unexpected, he took his last breath. Shocking when it happened. Unexpected yet expected.

I want to tell you about my complicated and compassionate renaissance man.

*In the beginning is my end. In succession
Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended
Are removed, destroyed, restored...*

- T. S. Elliot, The Four Quartets - East Coker

Sensei Daishin was born in Hempstead, London, England to devout Hebrew Christian parents of Polish and German heritage. At age one and a half, he survived the Blitzkrieg, Germany's 1940 bombing of London for 57 days and nights. His father, a brilliant biblical scholar spoke seven languages and read and wrote several ancient ones. His mother complimented her husband's quiet demeanor with her charismatic unending energy. They named him John, the name having its ancient Hebrew origins meaning "Jehovah/God is Gracious."

His parents were involved in war efforts to help Eastern European Jews escape deportation to Nazi death camps. In 1941, at the height of the war, the family found passage on a freighter destined for the United States in a perilous journey. John was two and a half when they briefly settled in Brooklyn, New York. He was ill with ricketts

and placed in a rehabilitation center to recover. The center was in Stony Brook, Long Island, New York, coincidentally, near where we/I now live. His father was hospitalized. His mother, ill herself, was only able to visit her son every three weeks during his six months stay. Traumatized, isolated, he was without words to express his fears and loss. (Years later we took the Zen Peacemaker's Auschwitz "Bearing Witness Plunge.")

*"Home is where one starts from. As we grow older
The world becomes stranger, the pattern more complicated..."*
-East Coker

The family settled in Philadelphia, establishing a half-way house in their home for refugees from the camps. In 1942, his father became General Secretary of "The Friends of Israel Missionary & Relief Society, with his wife as his secretary. As a young boy, John was very much part of his family's early missionary work: helping his mother cook and make beds, finding food squirreled away under mattresses. Listening to midnight echoes of nightmares, John retreated under bedcovers, devouring the encyclopedia and books from his father's library, his lifelong ritual of reading and listening to music late into early morning hours.

His father, a serious man who often retreated to his study, was a punster. Particularly at the dinner table father and son engaged in rat-a-tat nonstop punning: a great delight with howling laughter. Being a punster lasted to the end of Daishin's life. The master punster, in his last two years, bewildered his caregivers with his puns and dry wit, until his straight face gave rise to a sly smile, letting them in on his secret. He received relieved laughter and loving kindness.

In his early and teenage years, John was deeply misunderstood by his conservative parents. He was an active and brilliant boy and teenager. A 1955 article written about him had the headline: "John Buksbazen, Springfield High Student, Spends spare time Doing Rocket Research." At 14, he became assistant secretary to the Philadelphia Astronomical Society, doing research on rockets with college students and college graduates. At this time, John made and tested small rockets in his backyard. He won awards in high school speech festivals and was a member of the National Thespian Society and chorus and was assistant editor of the school newspaper."

I believe Daishin was a budding modern renaissance man-interrupted. Significantly, one day he arrived home

(Continued on page 9)

BEYOND THE MASKS *(continued from page 8)*

to find his books burning in a backyard trashcan. His parents had summoned their pastor and they all three reprimanded him on his fanciful ideas of going to the moon. His parents forbid him honoring a theatre scholarship to Temple University, so he enlisted in the Air Force. Three years later, he returned home and graduated from Temple U. in Theatre. He went on the road with the Bishop Company and the Pasadena Playhouse performing plays from Shakespeare to Ibsen.

*"In order to arrive at what you are not
You must go through the way in which you are not,
And what you do not know is the only thing you know
And what you own is what you do not own
And where you are is where you are not."*

-T.S. Elliot, East Coker

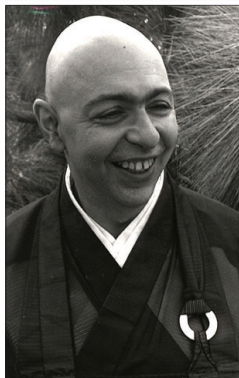
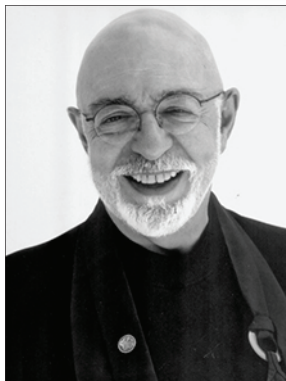
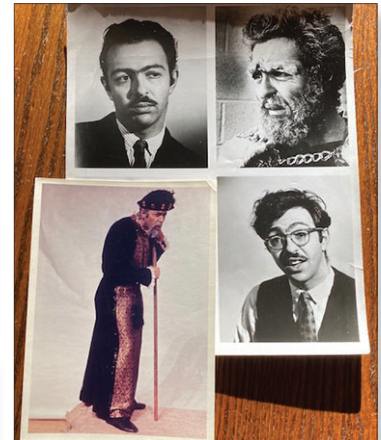
Sensei Daishin could not bear testimony to his parents' evangelical form of Christianity. His father disowned him when he took his first Buddhist vows in the late 1960's with Roshi Soen Nakagawa. He subsequently took up residence

and became a publishing editor at ZCLA. Maezumi Roshi gave him his Buddhist name, Daishin, recognizing his "Big Mind-Heart."

Roshi Bill Yoshin Jordan recalls Daishin's skill with language: "In 1978, Daishin was leading a workshop and I was assisting to a rather mixed group of skeptics along with people who seemed genuinely interested. You could feel the tension in the room. At one point a guy asked, in a rather sarcastic way, 'what's the point of all this, what are you hoping to accomplish with all the ritual and robes and chanting?' Daishin looks at this guy and says, 'We produce good Lutherans.' Boom, no one was expecting that one. The dude immediately lightened up and became engaged."

I cannot describe how the full power of Daishin's early years influenced the trajectory of his life. Suffice it to say, I have intimately known this boy who lived in the man. He was an in-born intuitive; immediate and intimate.

Getsuren, a Zen practitioner, psychoanalyst and co-founder of the Center for Mindfulness and Psychotherapy, was married to Sensei Daishin for over 42 years.



Zen Meditation and Learning a Musical Instrument

by Frank Genku Martinez



Many musicians are drawn to meditation, citing benefits such as increased focus, patience, and creative energy. Beyond these impacts, I see a strong parallel between the actual methods of Zen meditation practice and those used in learning to play a musical instrument. Of course, there are as many approaches to music as there are musicians;

just as one's Zen practice is an expression of a specific tradition and the individual. So, I will speak of my own experience learning to play the tenor saxophone and practicing Zen meditation.

In learning to play the saxophone, I started with the basics: holding the instrument, proper finger placement, forming the correct embouchure to create a solid sound, and breath control. Through many hours of practice, I learned to create different musical tones, play sequences of notes, read music, and eventually play more complex musical arrangements.

So too with the “beginner’s mind” of Zen, I initially focused on the practical aspects of sitting: establishing a practice space, body position, breathing and techniques for calming the mind. Over time I began to deepen my practice to include Koan study, the study of sutras and other writings, receiving Jukai, and participating in services, classes, and retreats.

In both music and Zen, the role of the teacher is critical, providing guidance, correcting errors, and assessing progress. Though the student reflects the teacher, the student must ultimately develop their own “style.” This was my experience in both endeavors.

Once the technical aspects of playing an instrument are mastered, you must get out of the practice room and play with others to bring the music to life. When playing with others you no longer focus on technique (scales, breath control, etc.) – but flow freely with the interplay of the other musicians. Technique, however, is not abandoned as it forms the underpinning of your musical experience. Likewise, Zen practice comes alive when you leave the cushion and bring your practice into your daily life.

Genku is a member of the ZCLA Board and the BIPOC Group.

Development: A Manifestation of Inter-Being

by Darla Myoho Fjeld



Most people, when they hear the word “development,” think of fundraising and money. While it is true that fundraising is a necessary part of stewarding the development of the Zen Center – the sincere practice of all of us is the most important contribution we all make to the development of the Dharma and the Zen Center.

Through our sincere practice of Zazen, we experience more and more the Inter-Being of everyone and everything and a deep gratitude arises for all the beings that have contributed to our lives. Out of this gratitude a great generosity arises that nudges us to contribute in whatever way we can to the well-being of others and to our Sangha.

Another major theme of development is letting the diverse population of Los Angeles and beyond know about the Dharma and the existence of the Zen Center. Before the Pandemic, the Development Circle started working on what we call the Dharma Net Strategy. This involves, in part, better outreach to people of color and younger folks.

The Zen Center could not make its many offerings without the generosity of our Sangha. Two times a year, we offer opportunities for giving to the Zen Center with The Dharma Training Fund and the Annual Fund. Our Dharma Training Fund is especially important in supporting the practice of the new people that are coming to the Zen Center through our outreach to a broader population of people. Our Annual Fund is the biggest fundraiser on the Zen Center’s calendar and is essential to the Zen Center’s functioning. With this fund, we call upon a greater generosity than membership and program fees to maintain our buildings, grounds, staff and programs.

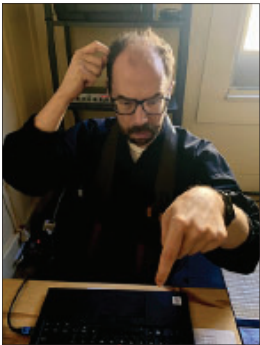
Development involves all of us manifesting the inter-beings that we are – offering generosity to the extent that we can and offering gratitude for all the benefits that we receive from one another. It also involves all of us offering a welcoming spirit to all the new people who enter our gates.

Together, we will ensure the flourishing of the Dharma for many years to come.

Sensei Myoho is a priest, the ZCLA Temple Development Steward, and on the Teachers Circle.

Trials and Tribulations of a ZCLA Zoom Host

by Reeb Kaizen Venners



Wow, what a week of work. So much work. Long days, working late into the night and just sitting in front of this damn computer. I couldn't get away! Just computer, computer, computer. Even in the rare moments of downtime, I would find myself still at the computer, checking the latest news, tweeting some new tweets, and following the current trends.

And now, sesshin is starting. It's going to be a rough transition..but, eventually, it will be great. Finally, some incredibly needed time away from the computer. I'll just be able to sit down, rest my mind and stare at...nothing!...let everything settle and let my mouse-hand rela---

What's that you say? I've been assigned as Zoom Host? And it involves sitting in the zendo in front of a laptop for all of the sitting periods?

NOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!

SESSHIN - DAY ONE

Well, here I am. Staring at a laptop. In the zendo. The Head Trainee is making an announcement. Something about focusing on our samadhi. But the laptop is calling to me. So many things I could Google. Must...stay...focused...You don't think they would notice if I checked Twitter do you? I wonder how the stock market is doing? What's the price of Bitcoin? No, I must be strong. Anyway, Dharma-Joy's sitting six feet away and would probably hear the sound of the mouse clicking and give me one of those LOOKS. OH, that's weird...how did my hand end up on the mouse? I don't remember doing that.

SESSHIN - DAY TWO

Ok...it's not so bad. It's not like I'm actively using the laptop. It's not like I'm staring directly at the screen. It's not like I'm watching Daian fall asleep at his computer in his little Zoom window. Ooo, look at his new wall decoration...looks indulgent.

Focus on the keyboard. Focus on the O key. Or the P key. Maybe the Q? Oh forget that. Let's just go with the asterisk key. How did my hand end up back on the mouse? That keeps happening. Well, let's do a test. I'm clicking and watching Dharma-Joy...can he hear it? Could I tell if he can hear it? Is he reacting? Did he just blink? He's probably

deep in some Zen meditative state. How loud is the sound of one mouse clicking? That sounds like a koan. Here's another koan: How many clicks would it take for me to open Zappos and get some new running shoes?

SESSHIN - DAY THREE

OK, I've settled on staring at the F6 key...so I'm no longer obsessing over the letters. Except hold on a minute. There's a little bar at the bottom of the screen. And there are...updates coming in. BREAKING NEWS. It is... 74 degrees outside. Isn't that interesting? And...there is more information coming in NOW. The pollen count is HIGH...VERY HIGH. So that's a problem. AN EMERGENCY. Maybe we should cancel the sesshin? Maybe I should let the Head Monitor know? Maybe I should stand up and make an announcement? HOW DID MY HAND END UP BACK ON THE MOUSE?!!!

SESSHIN - DAY FOUR

At last...body and mind have dropped away. What keyboard? What laptop? What error message that says, "YOUR ZOOM ACCOUNT WILL BE DELETED UNLESS YOU SEND THE MONEY IMMEDIATELY"?

From my deep state of Laptop Samadhi™, the sesshin is flowing smoothly, everyone working together as the One Body. We sit together. We eat together. We walk together. Even Earth-Mirror, who tripped over the USB cable that I had stretched across the zendo.

AT LAST, I am ONE with it all...the computer...the speakers...the high-pitched, reoccurring feedback that makes everyone in the zendo wince uncontrollably. I have mastered the mouse that takes and gives life (by closing and opening Zoom of course). And to be honest, I do keep closing Kyogen's Zoom window randomly from time to time...hee hee...he looks so frustrated.

And now, as foretold by vacationgirl659 in her recent comment on my selfie...my samadhi deepens. Time slows down. The laptop fan becomes THE SOUND OF THE UNIVERSE. Another message is coming in. Could this be the moment I've worked for these many long years of Zen training?!!!! It's from Sensei Senshin. She must have sensed that I was on the verge of a breakthrough! I lower my Supreme Samadhi Gaze™ and indeed, a message does appear.

"THE ENTIRE ZENDO IS MUTED...WE CAN'T HEAR ANY OF THE BELLS AND HAVE MISSED HALF OF THE DHARMA TALK."

Kaizen is a ZCLA resident and Head Trainee from 2021-2022.

ZCLA Affiliated Groups

The Monday Night Meditation Group (Pasadena, CA)
coordinated by Betty Jiei Cole

The San Luis Obispo Zen Circle (CA)
led by Sensei Mark Shogen Bloodgood

Empty Hands Circle (Campinas, SP, Brazil)
coordinated by Christina Tchoren Carvalho

Wild River Zen Circle (Nevada City, CA)
led by Sensei Jeanne Dokai Dickenson

The Valley Sangha (Woodland Hills, CA)
*coordinated by Marc Dogen Fontaine and
 Michael Jishin Fritzen*

The Westchester Zen Circle (CA)
led by Roshi Kipp Ryodo Hawley

Outreach Groups

**CMC Buddhist Fellowship Group
 California Men's Colony (CMC)
 (San Luis Obispo, CA)**
led by Sensei Mark Shogen Bloodgood

Contact info@zcla.org for information.

The Water Wheel is published quarterly by the Zen Center of Los Angeles, which was founded by the late Taizan Maezumi Roshi in 1967.

Our mission is to provide training and resources for realizing the oneness of life, to maintain the precepts, and to embody the Three Tenets of Not-Knowing, Bearing Witness, and Taking Action. **Our vision** is an enlightened world free of suffering, in which all beings live in harmony with each other and the earth, everyone has enough, deep wisdom is realized and compassion flows unimpeded.

*Founding Abbot: Taizan Maezumi Roshi
 Abbot 1995-1999: Roshi Bernard Glassman
 Abbot Emeritus 1999-2019: Roshi Wendy Egyoku Nakao
 The Three Seats: Abbot Sensei Deb Faith-Mind Thoresen,
 Head Teacher Sensei Katherine Senshin Griffith, and Head Priest
 Rev. Tom Dharma-Joy Reichert*

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Sangha Rites of Passage

In Memorium

*John Plum-Mountain Daishin Buksbazen
 April 22, 1939 - August 13, 2022*

Denbo (Dharma Transmission)

*Sensei Jonathan Baishin Kaigen Levy
 July 29, 2022
 Sensei George Baido Mukei Horner
 August 5, 2022*

Jukai

*Mark Gensha Miller
 July 10, 2022*

Denkai (Priest/Preceptor Empowerment)

*Rev. Christina Tchoren Carvalho
 August 13, 2022*

Dharma Holder Presentation

August 18, 2022

New Members

*Chris Carrowiano, Daniel Meyer,
 William Renner, Alexandra Wintersteller*

A Heartfelt "Thank You!"

To Geri Meiho Bryan, Diane True-Joy Fazio, and John Kyogen Rosania for leading our Day of Reflections; and Hugh Jiken King for his Dharma Chat;

To Roshi Egyoku and Senseis Katherine Senshin Griffith and Darla Myoho Fjeld for leading the Just Summer Sesshin;

To those who supported Sensei Jonathan Kaigen Levy during his Transmission week: Roshi Egyoku, Sensei George Mukei Horner (Jisha), Sensei Myoho (Tenzo), and Shuso Christina Tchoren Carvalho (Altar Cleaner);

To all those who supported Sensei Mukei during his Transmission week: Roshi Egyoku, Roshi Kip Ryodo Hawley, Rev. Dharma-Joy (Jisha), Gemma Soji Barrio (Tenzo), and Tchoren (Altar Cleaner);

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To all those who supported Tchoren during her Denkai/Dharma Holder/Preceptor Empowerment Week: Roshi Egyoku, Rev. Jitsujo (Jisha), Sensei Myoho (Tenzo), and Meiho (Altar cleaner);

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