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WIND BELL

Monthly Newsletter of Zen Center
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BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

Buddha's birthday is observed on April 8th of each year. The celebration is called GOTANE or more popularly HANAMATSURI (Flower festival). Sokoji temple will celebrate this event on Sunday, April 7th.

We will begin with a procession around the neighboring streets, starting at 12:30 midday and returning about 1:30 pm. At 2 o'clock there will be a special service during which the members of the congregation will be invited to pour amacha (sweet tea) over a statue of the Infant Buddha. Reverend Suzuki will address the congregation at 3 o'clock. At 4 o'clock, refreshments will be served by the women's group of the temple.

In the evening at 7 o'clock a performance of traditional Japanese dancing will be held in the main hall. A group of fourteen dancers from the Japanese Classical Dancing School of Los Angeles are among the performers. They are pupils of the well-known Japanese dancer Kanuma. The dancing will finish about 11 o'clock. There will be no charge for admission, but donations are welcome.

There will be no 11 o'clock service on this date, April 7th.

On April 10th, Reverend Suzuki will be leaving for Japan, where he will spend about three months. During this period we are hoping to meet from Los Angeles will be coming to Sokoji. Zazen will be held as usual, the only change being a temporary suspension of the Wednesday evening lectures. All other services will be held as usual.

We wish Reverend Suzuki a pleasant trip and look forward to his return.

This year's week sesshin will be held August 26 through September 1. Everyone is welcome.

COMMENTARY BY MASTER SHUNRYU SUZUKI ON MODEL SUBJECT #19 FROM THE "BLUE CLIFF RECORDS"

Zen may be said to be the practice of cultivating our minds to make them deep and open enough to accept the various aspects of life as they are. When this kind of perfect acceptance takes place, everything will be doing according to its own nature and the circumstances. We call this activity the Great Activity. Reality can be said to be the bed that is deep and soft enough to accept everything as it is.

When you accept everything, everything is beyond dimensions. The earth is not great nor a grain of sand small. In the realm of Great Activity picking up a grain of sand is the same as taking up the whole universe. To save one sentient being is to save all sentient beings. Your efforts of this moment to save one person is the same as the eternal merit of Buddha.

For a person who wants to understand Buddhism logically, it may be difficult for him to understand why he should study over and over again stories such as are collected in the Hekiganroku (Blue Cliff Records). Yet, when a student realizes how difficult it is to incorporate into his daily life what he learns in these stories, he will acknowledge the necessity of practising zazen and reading. This practice and reading will in turn encourage him to read these stories over and over again. To do this over and over means perfect acceptance. Finding out the significance of everyday activity is the Great Activity.

Today's Problem

In Japan we call this era of civilized life the "instant age" because of the prevalent idea that quick solutions to problems are possible without difficulty. This idea takes many forms — instant coffee, instant Sukiyaki, operations for physical disease, pills for mental illness. In spite of all the benefits from our civilization, it is difficult for people to remain strong enough to be happy physically and mentally. Why? Perhaps because a most important point is missing.

Support from without is sometimes too strong, sometimes too weak, sometimes only partial, and sometimes harmful to other parts. The operation must be successful and in addition the patient must survive.



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The important point is to arrange ourselves from inside. Orientation from our inmost nature is wanted. The problem is how to make use of our civilization and not be ruined by it. The solution to this problem is Zazen: by sitting we have to resume to our own nature and by Great Activity we should acquire absolute freedom.

Main Subject

Attention — Ryuge asked Suibi, "What was Bodhidharma's intention in coming to China"?

Suibi said, "Pass me the meditation chin-rest." (When a Zen monk sleeps in zazen posture, he rests his head on a wooden board called a zenpan or chin-rest.)

Ryuge handed Suibi the chin-rest and then Suibi struck Ryuge with it. Ryuge said, "If you strike me, I will let you. But, after all, that was not the intention of the patriarch coming to China."

Ryuge later visited Rinzai. He asked Rinzai, "What was the intention of Bodhidharma in coming to China."

Rinzai said, "Pass me the meditation mat." No sooner had Rinzai received the mat than he struck Ryuge with it.

Ryuge said, "If you strike me, I will let you do so; but that is not the Patriarch's intention in coming to the west."

Interpretation of the Main Subject

According to the Appreciatory Word of Setcho, the compiler of these stories, Ryuge was struck because he did not understand why Suibi wanted the chin-rest and Rinzai asked for the meditation mat. Their treatment of Ryuge was in the realm of Great Activity and helped Ryuge understand Bodhidharma's Zen. There are no regulations in the Great Activity. A chin-rest and a meditation mat can be used for scolding slaps.

This power of Great Activity should be acquired by meditation (sitting quietly). There was no other intention in Bodhidharma's coming to China.

For Ryuge, who practised Bodhidharma's Zen, there was no need for outside help. He could understand the Great Intention of Bodhidharma, Suibi, and Rinzai; but he knew that these intentions had nothing to do with his own Great Activity. In other words, he was enlightened in Bodhidharma's Zen.

A long time after this event, Ryuge said in his answer to a monk, "I do recognize the Great Activities of those two Zen Masters, but that has nothing to do with Bodhidharma's Zen."

ZEN CENTER was formed to help support a place where people may meditate and receive instruction in Zen Buddhism. The CENTER is a religious, non-profit, organization entirely supported by its members. If you would like to help support ZEN CENTER as an Active or Associate member, please contact Richard Baker, Treasurer, for a pledge form.

ZAZEN AND LECTURE SCHEDULE

Lectures: Sundays at 11:00 a.m.

Zazen: Mornings at 5:45, except Sunday when it is held at 7:00
Evenings at 5:30, except Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday

Note: Zazen is not held on calendar days that contain a 4 or a 9.

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