

# Inside Dharma

*A socially engaged Buddhist outreach organization  
applying Buddhist principles in prison & on the street*

## **The Buddhist Newsletter Serving the Inmate and Ex-Offender Sangha**

*"If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is tied up with mine, then let us work together."* - Lilla Watson, Aboriginal activist

**VOLUME XVI \* ISSUE II**

**April - June 2023**

***The topic posed in our last issue was...***

***"Describe A Moment In Your Life When The Understanding of "Self" Unfolded For You"***

**By Brian Craig – Fulton, MO**

When I realized that I have problems. For self to understand it, I had to be true to self by the unfolding of my issues that I suffer with daily (such as anorexia nervosa).

However, understanding myself that it is a disease, and I could kill self if I am not careful, I reach out to be more mindful of my actions or behaviors I display to self. So, I can be mindful to self.

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**By Daryl Inge – Mineral Point, MO**

The moment in my life when the understanding of "self" unfolded for me stemmed from choosing between being selfish or selfless. The irony of both words atop the other in my dictionary indicates to me that the best use of "self" demands that it be understood. So, I humbly choose to be selfless.

The first thing necessary is to get a clear understanding of the fact that the physical body is not the self, but only a vehicle or instrument

through which the self is being manifested in the physical world. When you understand your self, you understand your Higher Self. The real self is eternal and indestructible. It cannot die or be annihilated, and despite whatever becomes of the body, the real self still exists. Some people call it the "soul". The soul is not apart from you, for you are the soul. Life unfolds from within. The real self is not the body or even the mind of man. These are part of one's personality, the lesser self (or ego as some people call it).

The self creates or builds its own body, and the conditions of the self determine the conditions of the body. Self-direction, self-organization, and inward victories once gained are never lost.

There is a saying in holistic health (mind body): "The body is now what the thoughts were in the past, and the future will be what the thoughts are now." So, essentially, your state of health is a reflection of how you have handled your emotions, or how they have handled you during the past in your lifetime.

If my present self could reckon with my past, I would have ascertained a long time ago to differentiate my limits now that my perception of self has changed radically for the good towards mankind. To subdue one's self and then devote one's self is the secret of strength since one of the things learned is to conquer self. Because true life necessarily begins in the independent self, must it

continue without sheltering of the traditional past? The rush and stir of modern life fairly seems to force us to focus our attention upon self.

Engaging with the past is a daily reality with my memories lurking around every corner. I find myself spending much of my adult life on my adolescent stomping grounds – an experience that leads along the path that unfolded before me and pointed to the value of a natural life in every respect.

The idea of rewriting the self (who I was and who I am now) while the world stays the same is often on my mind. It calls into question relationships to my mind while also challenging myself to reconsider how I truly feel about anything.

Being in confinement has compelled me to face my past self that triggers sad memories. But, I have gained some perspective from such instances since that rendition of time. The soul is self as far as I know. It becomes memories. Therefore, I am the sum of my memories which in turn is the sum of my experiences.

Although I more often than not embrace the monastic ideals, the advantages of an organized religious life are too plain to be ignored. It is reasonable to go to the very verge in order to avail of them, both for a man's self and for his efficiency in society.

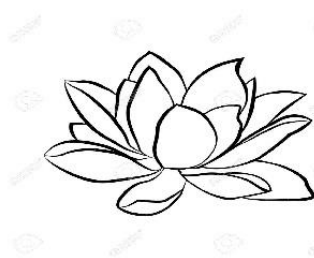
Buddhism exhibits salvation as, first of all, a way of understanding. It is a religion of analysis, which bids man to see life steadily and see it whole, by first taking it to pieces. The Buddhist has no prayer. Their salvation consisting of a self-produced inward change. This could be brought about in various ways, one of which was the kind of meditation referred to as "Kammathana" leading to a firm conviction of the impermanence of all finite things. A successful Kammathana, a

complete realization of the relation of the individual to that sense of brotherhood of holy calm is the "utmost aim" via Nirvana, and involves as a result, the benefit resulting from the completion of the last stage of the path leading to Nirvana itself.

The elements of self, which thus enters in every heart, has different degrees of importance. The direct expression of self for its own sake becomes more usual than one would expect.

Hide and go seek is one of the great games of adults as well as of children. We hide our defects and seek defects of others in order to avoid inferiority and to feel competitive superiority. But, there is a deep contradiction in our nature. We seek to display ourselves as we are to those whom we feel love us, and we hide our real self from the enemy or the stranger.

Below the surface of our carnal self, there is a deepness, and below this deepness, there is a still deeper depth of the human heart, and below that and deeper still is solitude. There is a limit to the possible communion with another. We never completely open our nature to even our nearest and dearest. Yet, in spite of ourselves, something is kept back. Not that we are untrue in this and



hide our inner self, but simply that we are unable to reveal ourselves entirely. There is a bitterness to the

heart with which no stranger can intermeddle. There is a boundary beyond which even a friend can become a stranger. Friendship is a very real and close thing. It is one of the greatest joys in life and has noble fruits. We cannot do too much for each other. There are burdens we can share. Through sympathy and love we are able to get

out of self. And yet, even here, there are limits. Our helplessness in the presence of grief proves this fundamental singleness of human life.

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### ***“What Is Zen?”***

**by James (Kyugen) Bettis – Clarinda, IA**

Bodhidharma brought Buddhism from India to China. Master Eihei Dogen was the founder of the Soto school of Zen Buddhism in Japan and brought these ideas from China to Japan in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. In 1893, the World Parliament of Religions was held in Chicago, IL and several Japanese Rinzai delegates were there to introduce North Americans to the Buddhist traditions of meditation and mindfulness. In the early and middle 1900's, several Zen teachers began establishing small zazen meditation centers (primarily along the western coastline), and Zen took root and spread quickly throughout the United States.

Some say that Zen is a philosophy, a religion, or a way of life. But does it really matter what it is? If it helps us reach what we all are looking for (peace and tranquility), then is it not fruitful despite what we call it?

I heard some people say that it is some form of a cult. Let's look at that. There's no violence sacrifice, or anything similar. And according to the definition of a cult by Britannica dictionary, (*“a small religious group that is not part of a larger and more accepted religion and that has beliefs regarded by many people as extreme or dangerous”*)...Zen definitely does not qualify. Zen is definitely a part of the larger religious classification of Buddhism, and nothing is extreme or dangerous about it. Other religions have violence surrounding them and many have a

history of warring in the name of their deity....Christianity, Islam, Native American, Druid, and others. I'm not putting those religions down by any means. I'm just saying that they could be called cults if extremism and violence are identifying characteristics for a cult. So, by these standards, Zen is definitely not a cult.

Could it be a religion? In my opinion, no. There is no God to worship. The Buddha himself even says that he is not a God. He's just a man. In most religions you worship something. In Zen there is nothing to worship. So, I believe that it is not a religion by this standard. So, what does that leave us? Philosophy, maybe? A way of life. That is what I believe whole heartedly.

It is something that isn't in one spot. Zen is everywhere....in what we do, say and see. Zen is the world, all cosmic particles put together. Zen is who we are. It has been here since the beginning of time. A lot of people just have not noticed it. It is in us...the trees, animals, mountains, sun, sky...everything is Zen.



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***We are what we think.***

***All that we are***

***Arises with our thoughts.***

***With our thoughts***

***We make the world.***

***- Buddha***



***“An Explanation of the  
Fukanzazengi – Part 4”***

**By Reverend “Shindo”  
Tom Bradshaw  
Inside Dharma  
Zen Meditation Center  
St. Louis, MO**

For my last couple of newsletter articles, I wrote the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> parts of a breakdown of the Fukanzazengi. (Dogen’s guide to zazen). Thus, here is the 4<sup>th</sup> and last part.

***Zazen effortlessly goes beyond ordinary and enlightenment.***

Both “ordinary” and “enlightenment” are ideas – there’s nothing behind them. When I say ordinary you have an idea in your head of what that is. The same is true when I say enlightenment – you have an idea of what that is.

In our heads there’s the belief that ordinary is bad and enlightenment is good.

When we sit it’s natural to find our brain saying something like, “This zazen isn’t good. It doesn’t feel special.” Or we could find our brain saying, “I feel like I finally get zazen; I found something special!” Both of those are thoughts based on our ideas about ordinary and enlightenment. When we simply notice those thoughts, not believe them, and return to our posture, then zazen is there. It is effortless.

***Whatever it is that allows an enlightenment to occur has no relation to the thinking mind nor some special or magic ability.  
Enlightenment exists before you recognize it.***

Another word for enlightenment is realization. We all have realizations now and then; some large, some small. A realization or enlightenment is experienced; it is not arrived at by thinking. It is also not some special mind that you get if you sit a certain way. It is also not some magical, mystical, metaphysical, or supernatural thing either. When we have realized something, it means we’ve made it real. The last sentence means that when we think about enlightenment or believe we’ve found it, we can be sure we’ve passed it up! Enlightenment exists before we bury it by thinking about it.

***Keep in mind that being smart or not doesn’t matter as long as one tries wholeheartedly.  
Putting forth effort creates seamless practice-enlightenment. You will realize practice and enlightenment are one as you take care of daily life. This is called everyday mind – which you already have.***

Trying wholeheartedly is what matters with zazen. It doesn’t matter if you believe yourself to be smart or not. Just keep sitting because practice has less to do with your brain than you believe it does. What is “seamless practice-enlightenment?” Practice-enlightenment is maybe the best way to say enlightenment because it’s a practice that is never mastered or perfected. Sawaki Roshi said it like this, “Enlightenment has no beginning. Practice has no end!” Seamless means that we work towards returning to our posture endlessly no matter what happens.

As we endlessly practice, we experience how taking care of daily life is the root of practice. This means there is nothing special – it’s just an everyday thing we commit to.

***Soto Zen practice boils down to devoting wholeheartedly to sitting still. Don't look for it anywhere else.***

This is why many teachers of Soto Zen all insist on two words: Just sit. Sure there is some bowing, incense, chanting, and other things. But when it comes down to it, all we have to do is wholeheartedly sit zazen. That is where we devote ourselves.

***How fortunate it is you are not only alive but you came across zazen – a practice worth doing above the things that only bring temporary relief. Life is short.***

Sometimes I find my brain wondering just how I came to be... I mean there was never a guarantee that I'd ever exist, but here it is – this lump of flesh and bone is that which I call "me." Not only have I found myself in this body, but this body happened to stumble across the practice of zazen – something that has been taught for centuries and has had such a great effect on us, those around us, and society. How fortunate!!

How wonderful that we can spend time on a practice that benefits all beings instead of just a short-lived joy-ride for ourselves.

***Please realize your brain's limited understanding of zazen is a safety net. Dedicate your energies to continually dropping this net. Respect those who've done this. If you engage yourself in zazen as though saving your head from fire (a saying of Dogen's Zenji's), you can't help but walk in their shoes and transmit zazen to others.***

Remember that everything we believe zazen to be is just thought. Zazen exists outside of our understanding of it. It's easy to fall back on our ideas of zazen – like a safety net. When we fall back on our idea of what zazen is, we are not

really in touch with zazen anymore. Zazen is in the falling through our safety net over and over.

Our teachers have worked endlessly towards doing just that. This is to be respected.

If our heads were on fire, we'd do everything and anything to put out the flame. This is recognizing the importance and dedication to zazen that our teachers have. When we find ourselves doing this, we will also find ourselves teaching zazen to others.



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### ***"Tenzokyokun"***

**by James (Kyugen) Bettis – Clarinda, IA**

The Tenzo is the name given to the head cook in a Japanese Zen monastery. The Tenzo has to have a clear mind and heart as they put all of their efforts into what they do. They cannot do it half-heartedly as the entire collective of people at the monastery (or within a sangha) are counting on them to eat. So, they must be mindful of everything.

One must prepare enough food to go all around for everyone in the group and be sure that the quantity is enough so that all are satisfied. One must follow the process, talk to all of the

administrators in charge to understand the budget, the number of people, the available resources and what those in charge would like to see served. When one comes up with what they are going to prepare, one needs to make sure that all of the ingredients which are needed can be obtained. And one must be diligent in all that they prepare.

When you are the Tenzo, it is your job to select and prepare the dishes. Just your job and no one else's. You should whole-heartedly and mindfully use the same effort to wash and care for everything from the main course to the gomashio (Japanese sesame salt; used as a seasoning). At all times use mindfulness.

If you make a mistake, fix it yourself. No one else should fix it since it is your mistake. If the available ingredients aren't the best quality, or if they are rotten, use the portions that are edible and prepare them with your best efforts. But, don't complain about it.

One shouldn't waste anything, not even a grain of rice....for it is all precious food. A large number of people went into the growing and processing of that ingredient. Someone planted, watered, fertilized, weeded the beds, watched over it and picked it. People were involved in the packaging of the food, the transportation of it, and all throughout the steps of the selling process from farmer to factory to warehouse to store.

One must protect all of the food....from rodents, insects or anything that might eat it or defecate in it. That is why you wash it, clean it, sift through it and inspect it. Every step must be done mindfully and not half-heartedly. Throughout this process, pay attention to each grain and if one is dropped, pick it up, wash it and use it as it is still good.

To fix the meals correctly, one must include the 6 flavors: Sweet, spicy, salty, bitter, sour and simple; and must include the 3 virtues for food which are soft, clean, and prepared appropriately.

Don't waste any food, not even the water. There is always something one can use the water for... perhaps a thirsty plant. Be very observant while everything is cooking. Make sure it is all cooked correctly and completely.

Don't be attached to anything. Don't alter your frame of mind. Look and treat all of the ingredients like they are the best in the world. Have a frame of mind like you are preparing food for the Buddha himself (which is actually true since Buddha nature is in every one of us).

As one cooks, one's intention must be sincere and done with a pure heart. Carefully calculate the amount needed to be prepared, so that the portions are equal and substantial to be enough for the entire sangha, but not so much that there will be left-overs.

Don't waste time in preparing the meals. Use every moment to concentrate on the food and what needs to be done. All of the careful preparation and mindfulness should help bring ease to the sangha. One's positive energy should flow out in all directions.

It should not matter a person's age or who they are. If they have the Buddha mind, they can complete the job. It doesn't matter if one is 18 or 68. That is just a number. If one puts their heart and soul in the job, and is mindful of what one is doing, then age means nothing.

If there is something one does not know how to do, then just ask. Don't be embarrassed. That is the only way to learn if there is a question or doubt.



If there is someone in the sangha that rubs you the wrong way, don't judge or give them less. We are all the same. No one is any better or less than another. We are all brothers and sisters. If you don't like someone, then you need to look inside of yourself and reflect on what is inside of you. There is no hatred or envy in real buddha nature....and that, we all have.

We all should benefit each other in the sangha. We should encourage one another to do what is good. Realizing the way that you are one with everything you do is like all of the pieces of a car working together. The sangha should also work as one.

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**Kris (Kyoryu) Ash  
Inside Dharma  
St. Louis, MO**

**EDITOR'S CORNER:**

Dear Readers,

Please remember that our address is now: 4001 Utah, St. Louis MO 63116.

Thank you for your various submissions. Please know that they are deeply appreciated, and I am deeply grateful that they have been written mindfully within the 7 submission guidelines outlined below.

I am extremely thankful to the included authors of this quarter's newsletter. Thanks to those of you taking the risk to share your experiences, thoughts, and beliefs.

I look forward to your continued submissions and deeply appreciate your efforts!

In gassho,

Kris (Kyoryu), Editor

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**Submission Guidelines:**

1. Submissions need to be typed or printed neatly (readable).
2. Submission topic should support the belief in Buddhist values and the connection to the life of an offender.
3. Submission writing needs to be of adequate font/written size. (Not small)
4. Include paragraph breaks between major points.
5. Length **1000 words or less**.
6. **Please proof read** your submissions for sentence clarity. (Know that the audience of your written work can not read your mind. Each sentence thought needs to be clear. If not, I will edit this.)
7. **NOTE: Submissions will not be returned.** (Whether used for publication or not. Sorry!)

Reminder: We will publish once a quarter in **2023. Deadlines for submissions: 1<sup>st</sup> quarter – Feb. 28<sup>th</sup>; 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter – May 31<sup>st</sup>; 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter – Aug. 31<sup>st</sup>; 4<sup>th</sup> quarter – Nov. 30<sup>th</sup> deadline.**

Reminder: **Our next issue deadline for submissions is August 31st.**

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To request copies of the resource directory for St. Louis, please write to:

Heartland Zen  
9648 Olive #364  
St. Louis, MO 63132

***Note: There is only ONE directory  
and it is only for St. Louis.***

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***For our 2023 July-Sept. Issue  
We will publish your thoughts on....***

***Your Favorite Zen koan,  
Zen story, belief or  
tradition that helps you  
retain mindful awareness.***

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