



*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 I

January - March 2023

The topic posed in our last issue was...

***"Your Favorite Buddhist Resources That Have
Helped You Find Inner Peace & Joy"***

by James Hochschild – St. Petersburg, FL

Some of my favorite Buddhist resources that have helped me find inner peace and joy have been the following:

- Inside Dharma
- Metta Forest Monastery, PO Box 1409, Valley Center CA 92082
- FPMT, 1632 SE 11th Ave, Portland OR 97214-4702
- Chapel Hill Zen Center, PO Box 16302, Chapel Hill NC 27516
- Dharma Friends, PO Box 7708, Little Rock AR 72217-7708

Metta Forest is a Theravadin tradition monastery that provides books free to prisoners and will also provide replies to questions about any of their many books. FPMT is the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition.

Originally founded by Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche of the Tibetan tradition. Dharma Friends is a newsletter similar to Inside Dharma. Chapel Hill Zen Center was a volunteer outreach that visited Federal facilities when I was at Butner, North Carolina. I have maintained contact with them since.

"Zazen and Precepts"

**by Matthew Burchett (Nguyen Hai) –
Navasota, TX**

I'm torn between two responses to the prompt, but I think that I can cover both in 1000 words or less. My most previous Buddhist resources are zazen and the Buddha's teachings on ethical discipline.



Shunryu Suzuki said, "Actually the best way to relieve your mental suffering is to sit in zazen... In other restless positions you have no power to accept your difficulties, but in the zazen posture which you have acquired by long, hard practice, your mind and body have great power to accept things as they are, whether they are agreeable or disagreeable" (Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind, "The

Marrow of Zen"). The buddhadharma can surely be engaged in any of the four postures and in countless activities, but when I'm blindsided by craving and ignorance in response to some life situation (i.e. everything my mother suffered from chemotherapy and then died a few years after) to dealing with the surprising degree of frustration and disappointment that can arise from something as simple as missing out on outside recreation because the officer insisted "they only said 'up and ready' they haven't called it yet" (which happened the morning of this writing) – absolutely nothing is as effective as a good long sit for helping me detach from conditioned storylines and reactions, and then acceptance of the whole of the experience. No source on this, but I believe that I read Kosho Uchiyama quoted as saying, "When you're being boiled in the demon's caldron, that's where you need to sit zazen."

Then there's the Buddha's approach to and outlining of ethical action. Philosophies or moral absolutism had always left me unmoved while relativism left me unmoored. I was not favored with the karma to incline easily to the Mahayana motivation "for the sake of others", either, especially for acts rationalizable as victimless. But, then I read the simple declaration in the Pali Suttas (can't remember exactly where) that, "discipline is for the sake of freedom from remorse".

That was the Middle Way in the wild thicket of moral philosophies that I needed. The practice of the buddhadharma empowered me to see the patterns in unskillful action that lead to suffering and remorse...and, looking deeper, to see the restlessness and agitation (read: suffering) that already underly every thought and impulse to unskillful action. Once I came to trust that truth in actions with which I already struggled and

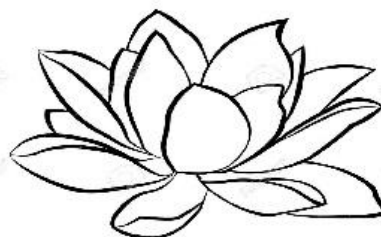
recognized as a problem, changing my conditioned habits and reaping a harvest of peace and joy, I started studying what the suttas had to say about other unskillfull acts as well, ones which I had previously thought of as not really that big of a deal. But when I started trying to refrain from those too (i.e. idle chatter, the little thefts of "state property" considered natural in here, every little lie), I invariably discovered greater serenity in letting go of those actions rather than having to try and justify them as acceptable. They don't offer any benefit or reward worth my peace of mind.

"Finding Peace With Others Even When I Don't Agree With Them"

by Daryl Inge – Mineral Point, MO

I have learned to be at peace with others/one another whom I don't agree first and foremost by finding peace within myself. Then I am able to move onward with the will I need to withstand any harmful motives or ill intent because of differing opinions or sinful discord. Perfect peace can only swell where all vanity has disappeared.

Buddha taught mankind the right use of sentience and the right application of reason. And, he taught mankind to see things as they are, without illusions, and they learned to act according to truth. He taught righteousness and changed



rational creatures into human beings...just, kind-hearted, and faithful.

They who do not agree, let them keep and perform worldly acts separately. But he who knows the nature of self and understands how the senses act, finds no room for selfishness, and will attain peace unending. The world holds the thought of self and from this arises false apprehension.

Blessed is he who has understood the Dharma. Blessed is he who does no harm to his fellow beings. Blessed is he who overcomes wrong and is free from passion. To the highest bliss has he attained who has conquered all selfishness and vanity. He has become the Buddha, the perfect one, the Blessed one, the Holy one. The 'Buddha Law' (Dharma)

For reasons as stated earlier was the fact that I've learned to obtain a peaceful state while dealing with others. Should I not agree with anyone on any level would mean that we're far from living under harmonious conditions. Therefore, when I personally look at what causes me to experience separations, dividedness and discord, I consider the source of the situation at hand. Usually it is a conflict and then there's a point in time of who will bear the burden.

It is probable that if disputes and/or disagreements upon burning questions occurred, they rarely lead to serious conflicts, but are confined to particularly amicable mutual terms.

Followers of the Way, if you want insight into Dharma as is, just don't be taken in by the deluded views of others. The faults of others are easily seen; one's own faults are difficult to see. Examples from the Dharma-pada: "By oneself is one injured; by oneself is evil left undone; by oneself is one purified; no one purifies another."

In the Dharma-pada it is said, "Not nakedness, not matted hair, not dirt, nor fasting, nor lying on the ground, nor smearing with ashes, not sitting motionless can purify a mortal who has not overcome desires."

I think that I can claim for my own work an individuality which separates my distinctive character from that of other – an individuality which may probably commend it to thoughtful students of Buddhism.

The bottom line is that I found throughout my life through trials and tribulations that if I just think through my point of view and make the necessary re-assessments and adjustments, it too brings me peace of mind. Then I won't have to bother with someone making derogatory statements towards me or posing as a heretic, expecting me to go against my better judgement, or pushing an issue which doesn't warrant taking on the responsibility which doesn't make them a bad person if I don't agree.

As I engage in a disagreement with someone, I would give or lead by example to show a better way of looking at our behavior and if my actions are wrong, I would accept the fault. And, if it is the other way around, I would truly and humbly embrace my sense of calmness with compassion.

And when the enemy is overcome, the Dharma-raja, the great King of truth, will bestow upon his disciples the most precious crown which jewels bring perfect enlightenment, supreme wisdom and undisturbed peace.

The aim of one's discipline should be to produce a self-governing being not to produce a being to be governed by others.

In closing, I considered in the best sense morally it seems unlike the vagaries of contemporary writings indicating how deeply I'm affected by the

lives of people I know or hardly knew, and how widespread were my sympathies despite the odds of reaching an agreement with someone with whom I have disagreed. This article contains a few thoughts which may prove helpful as I have learned much from my socialization disagreements with others and these opportunities have provided me with many consolations which I can still draw from...these memories of my past peaceful life.

We are what we think.

All that we are

Arises with our thoughts.

With our thoughts

We make the world.

- Buddha

“Someone Worse Off”

by James (Kyugen) Bettis – Clarinda, IA

I woke up one morning, made some coffee, and then promptly spilled it. Boy! I wanted to say a few choice words. But I didn't.

Where would it get me? So, I just cleaned up the mess and made another cup. I still was sort of perturbed. But, in life there will always be bad days.

Sometimes it seems like there are a whole lot more bad days than good days. But, that is just life. What we consider bad may not be as bad as what someone else has to deal with. There will always be someone who is worse off!

Today I might spill my coffee while somewhere else somebody wrecks their car or cuts you off in traffic. If we would let it, all sorts of situations can make us upset.

Try to look at it this way. You or your child spills a soda pop on your newly replaced carpet. You get upset. But in some countries, they have dirt floors...and they are alright with that. They never had the luxury of having a rug and might not even know what a rug is.

So, next time something happens, just remember that there is always someone else who may be worse off than you.



***“ An Explanation of the
Fukanzazengi – Part 3”***

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

For my last couple of newsletter articles, I wrote the first and second parts of a breakdown of the Fukanzazengi. (Dogen's guide to zazen). Thus, here is the third and last part.

***Now that you are in posture, breathe in
and out deeply. Like a boat settling in calm
water slowly rock your body side to side
until you are motionless and upright.***

In our daily lives our brains are on the move, always heading towards the next item to digest. “Do I have everything I need for the interview?” or “I have to make plans with my friend.” When we sit on our cushions (or chairs) it’s good to tap on the brakes to begin bringing attention to just this moment (Rev. Shoken Winecoff’s phrase). Dogen is showing us that bringing attention to breath and body is a good way to do this.

Thoughts occur naturally. Adding to those thoughts is called thinking. Trying not to think is called not-thinking.

The brain’s job is to think, so we can expect to find it thinking almost all the time. It’s like a river. Sometimes the river of thought entertains or worries us, so we hop on a boat and float downstream; we’ve added to the brain’s natural flow. If the thought, “I’ll never get that job” flows by and we add “Maybe I shouldn’t even go to the interview” – that is thinking; that is **not** zazen.

Similarly, zazen isn’t building a dam to stop the river of thought. If our brain stops thinking, that means we are not alive any more.

(As a side note, sometime zazen feels like a peaceful, soft flowing creek. It’s natural to believe we’ve finally found true zazen. This isn’t the case – we have to remember sometimes our brain is a river, sometimes a creek and sometimes a tidal wave. We just have to sit through them all the best we can.)

Zazen is non-thinking; neither adding to nor trying not to think – just letting thoughts go as best you can. Endlessly open the hand of thought (Uchiyama Roshi’s phrase).

So, with the river of thought, what is zazen? Zazen is watching the natural flow of thought and noticing when we have jumped on a boat or built

a dam. Then all we have to do is return to our posture endlessly.

This non-thinking is treating the creation of thought (adding to thoughts) and suppression of thought (trying to stop thoughts) as one thing to go beyond.



Zazen is not learning concentration or a technique to become enlightened. It is enlightenment.

Like many people I came to zazen believing zazen was a laser of concentration. “If I could only focus hard enough, I’d get it” I believed. Zazen is a flood light of awareness. We try our best to notice what is coming through our senses and treating them equally: the sound of traffic, the taste of toothpaste, the smell of incense, the cold air, the color of the wall, the thought about lunch. We will get caught up in that flow, but endlessly returning to our posture is zazen.

This non-thinking of zazen liberates us from thoughts as bothersome and we find ourselves returning to a reality that we never truly left. Zazen is the home of clarity we return to.

The first time I visited the monastery for a long sesshin I had a panic attack and decided to leave after one day. The long drive home was interesting practice. As I drove, one voice in my brain said, “You really messed up. When will you

be able to do this again?” Half an hour later a second voice in my brain said, “It’s ok. I wasn’t ready. Things will work out.” This back-and-forth happened for hours until the argument seemed different. I said to myself, “You both fight about it – this issue doesn’t matter.” Even though the second voice sounded kinder, both voices were trying to be right – they were bothersome.

When we work towards letting our brain fight it out without weighing in as much, we find ourselves with clarity that neither voice is right; it’s just the brain thinking. My teacher Rev. Kalen McAllister taught me long ago that looking at thoughts with this kind of interest is wonderful practice and ties in deeply with zazen.

Don’t get up from zazen carelessly. Move slowly and calmly because zazen and daily life are one; don’t treat them differently. Respect this one bridge that connects zazen to daily life.

This is the flipside of settling the mind and body when we sit down to zazen. Whether we’re aware of it or not, zazen brings about mindfulness. If we jump up from the cushion and into our daily life, this mindfulness is easily lost. If we get up slowly and calmly, we are really building a mindfulness bridge to daily life. This is the only opportunity that we have to make this bridge, so it is best to do it carefully.

“Whether Good Or Not”

by James (Kyugen) Bettis – Clarinda, IA

I’m not a real political type of person. One such previous presidential election seemed like a total

joke. Hardly heard anything about what the candidates would do if they made office. Just a lot of mud-slinging. The person who got elected was putting people and nationalities down.

In my opinion, neither candidate was any good. But, we have to realize that the one that was picked is our president and he is in charge of the country.

It could also be a lot worse. Some countries are a whole lot worse off than our country.

There is a saying out of Master Chen Yen’s book called Jings: Aphorisms – “Rather than worry about the condition of our society, why not replace it with confidence and with dedication to contribute with loving-kindness.”

Well, even if we don’t like someone in power, we still need to keep a kind heart. A kind heart can build temples.





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

EDITOR'S CORNER:

Dear Readers,

Please note that any mail sent to our old "PO Box" address will not be received by us. Please use our new address which is located within the new Laughing Bear Bakery building (and listed below).

Thank you for your various submissions. Please know that they are deeply appreciated but should follow the 7 guidelines below in order to be published.

I am quite thankful and humbled by articles offered by 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 (Kyuryo), Editor

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: 1st quarter – Feb. 28th; 2nd quarter – May 31st; 3rd quarter – Aug. 31st; 4th quarter – Nov. 30th deadline.**

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

Our NEW ADDRESS:

INSIDE DHARMA
4001 Utah * St. Louis MO 63116

RESOURCE DIRECTORY –

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 April - June. Issue
We will publish your thoughts on....***

***Describe a moment in
your life when the
understanding of "self"
unfolded for you.***

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