

Zen Heart Sangha

Issue 32

Summer 2020 Newsletter

Special Upcoming Events

Guest Speakers – TBD

Retreats & Special Events

- Sept 7: NO MEETING (Labor Day)
- Oct 2-4: Fall Sesshin (virtual)
- Nov 2: Segaki (Hungry Ghosts) Ceremony
- Dec 7-11: Rohatsu Week (virtual)
- Dec 14: Last evening of 2020 Celebration (virtual)

Sangha Meeting – July 18, 9:00am

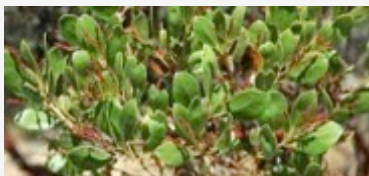
Dharma School – TBD

Tea Ceremony Lessons – TBD

Practice of Dana

In the Buddhist tradition teachings are given freely because they are considered priceless; in the Buddhist tradition we also practice Dana, or generosity, by making monetary offerings for the teachings. Dana is not a payment for goods or services rendered; it is given from the heart.

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Oak Tree in the Garden

*A monk asked Joshu, "Why did Bodhidharma come to China?"
Joshu replied, "Oak tree in the garden."
From the Mumonkan, Case 38*

Nature has always figured centrally in Buddhist practice. Monasteries and hermit huts were traditionally placed in forests and mountains to provide solitude in which to meditate without distraction. Chinese paintings depicted vast landscapes with one small human to remind us of our humble place in this natural world. Koans and teaching stories like the one above used the natural world to remind us of the fundamental point of suchness, of what is.

In asking about Bodhidharma, the monk is really asking about the nature of reality, of self and no-self. Joshu could have answered in many different ways, but he chose an oak tree. Perhaps the oak tree was directly in front of him and he was encouraging the monk to simply see *'things as it is'* as Suzuki Roshi used to say. Perhaps he was trying to help the monk see the tree as the entire universe, as a way of experiencing the entire Buddha-body in this one thing. Or perhaps he was expressing the truth that the tree is both itself and everything—that there is no abiding separate self of anything, only the interconnection between.

When I was a child in Southern California, I was fortunate to live in the foothills at the base of the San Gabriel mountains. Manzanita, creosote, sycamore and oak trees were an everyday part of my life, and I spent long afternoons and weekends with one or two friends exploring every trail and creek enjoying a freedom most children do not experience today. But sometimes when I had no one with whom to play, I would go to the vacant lot that was next to our property. There was an enormous storm channel behind my house that went underground right under that lot, so the city said that no one could build on it. To my parents this vacant lot was an eyesore—just dirt and weeds and one large oak tree—but to me it was a refuge, a place where I could go all by myself, free from my troublesome sister and brothers who, fortunately for me, were not interested in it

