

Zen Heart Sangha

Issue 20

Spring 2012 Newsletter

Special Upcoming Events

Guest Speakers:

- May 14: Rev. Jill Kaplan (ZHS)
Jun. 25: Guest (TBA)
Jul. 9: Rev. Jill Kaplan (ZHS)
Jul. 16: Rev. Jill Kaplan (ZHS)
Jul. 23: Lidia Luna (Way-Seeking Mind Talk, ZHS)
Aug. 27: Rev. Les Kaye (Kannon Do)

Special Events:

- Sacramento Buddhist Meditation Group Retreat**
Jun. 23, in Sacramento
Vajrapani 3-day Retreat
Oct. 19–21
Segaki Ceremony
Oct. 29

Monthly Schedule

Monday evenings*

Welcome/Instruction	6:30 pm
Zazen	7:00
Service	7:40
Lecture*	7:50
Final Bows	8:45
End Evening	9:00

* except 1st Mondays

1st Monday retreat

Welcome/Instruction	6:30 pm
Zazen	7:00
Kinhin	7:40
Zazen	8:00
Three Bows	8:40
End Evening	8:45

1st & 3rd Saturdays:

Zazen	5:50 am
Kinhin	6:20
Zazen	6:30
Service	7:00
Community breakfast	7:20
Soji (Cleanup)	8:00
Zazen	8:40
Study/Tea	9:15
End program	10:15

Zazen – sitting meditation
Kinhin – walking meditation

Practicing Alone, Practicing Together

“[Yasodhara], you understand me more than anyone else. If in the near future I must leave and travel far from you, I know you possess the courage to continue your work... and raise our child well. Though I am gone [and] far away from you, my love for you remains the same... with that knowledge you will be able to endure our separation. And when I have found the Way, I will return...”
—The Buddha (*Old Path, White Clouds* by T. Nhat Hanh)

One of the most puzzling and disturbing aspects of the story of the Buddha involves him leaving his wife and baby to seek the Way of Awakening. In most versions of the story, he leaves without his wife’s permission as befitted a man of his time; in Thich Nhat Hanh’s above, he and Yasodhara seem to have a mutual and beneficial agreement. In all versions, however, Siddhartha’s departure puts his spiritual journey ahead of his commitment to wife and child. On the surface, this decision appears to be the antithesis of right action and makes us question his example as an enlightened being.

Today we are fortunate to be able to practice as householders in a committed way, but in Siddhartha’s time one had to choose between being a householder or a monk—one could do both, but not at the same time. When we view Siddhartha’s decision with our ordinary mind of preferences and attachment, it makes no sense. It is only when immersed in Buddha mind that we can understand his noble purpose—the awakening of all beings—and accept his difficult but necessary choice as the only way to understand and end suffering.

However, the question remains: can we seriously practice this way within the confines of lay life? Lay practice means remaining faithful to our original commitments while *at the same time* committing ourselves fully to the Buddha Way. It requires constant adjustments and compromises in our lives that inevitably affect everyone around us in large or small ways. Whether we are practicing as a single individual or as a couple, practicing together in a relationship or practicing alone, practicing with children or without, we are always trying to make our own true way in each moment. As Suzuki Roshi said in *Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind*, “*The best way is to understand yourself, and then you will understand everything...when you try hard to make your own way, you will help others, and you will be helped by others.*” Practicing alone, practicing together—how do we express the Buddha’s noble purpose of awakening all beings (including ourselves!) right now?

In gassho, Misha Shungen