

the Floating Zendo News

For the students and friends of Angie Boissevain, Sensei

Winter 2007



Julian devours a hungry ghost at the Segaki ceremony on October 27 in San Jose. Also pictured are Diana Deering, Angie Boissevain and Wendy Graham. Our multi-talented donnalynn chase baked the ghost cake, arranged the altar, led the chants, and took this picture.

Business Meeting 12-11-07

San Jose Sangha members conducted their quarterly business meeting this month after the Tuesday zazen. First item on the agenda was a Financial Review by outgoing Treasurer, Wendy Graham. She reported an anticipated bank balance of \$5,000 at year end. The sesshin ended in the black this year. Scholarships totaling \$600 were funded by special donations. You may request a copy of the financial report from wendygra@ix.netcom.com.

A format for functional e-mail addresses using Yahoo accounts was approved. Dan Miller, Web Master will im-

plement these accounts and publish the addresses on the website: floatingzendo.org.

Outgoing Sangha coordinator Jane Macdonald presented a slate of "officers" for 2008 and thanked the 2007 staff.

Coordinator-	Wendy Graham
Secretary-	Britt Walsh continues to serve and Jane Macdonald will assist her
Treasurer-	Russ Dworkin
Ino-	Open (our gratitude to outgoing Inos- Samia Clark and Julian West)
Web Master-	Dan Miller continues to serve
Outreach-	donnalynn chase will revive this existing role that has been vacant

After a thorough examination of the pros and cons of Jikoji and Villa Angelica, it was voted to hold our August sesshin at Jikoji. Jikoji will allow for more participants, a quieter energy, reduced rent and a dokusan room. Jane will reserve Jikoji for August 18 - 24. It was then voted to list the Floating Zendo in the directories of *Shambala Sun* and *Buddhadharma* magazines for a discounted rate of \$225 per year. donnalynn will write the directory entries and submit them to the publications. A proposal to support our Sensei, Angie, with a fixed amount of dana was distributed for our consideration by donnalynn. This will be discussed and voted on at a short meeting on 12/18/07. The complete minutes of both meetings will be published on our website floatingzendo.org.



The bodhisattva vows are not in here per se. What Shantideva says is that: -

In every way I will undertake activities benefiting others
I will do no act to compromise the Buddha's lineage
Today I take my birth in Buddha's line
And have become the Buddha's child and heir.

Not quite what we say. Kobun's version is

Beings are numberless, they will save themselves.
Desires are inexhaustible, they will come to an end by themselves
Dharma gates are boundless so there's always learning
Buddha's way is no above, so there's no attainment.

Hui Neng, the 6th patriarch wrote a great deal about the 4 vows. Hui Neng's take on saving sentient beings is to see them as "the sentient beings of my mind." The way to keep the vows, the bodhisattva vows, is just to set the mind straight over and over again. If you're full of evil thoughts, well, change them, find something else for a while. If you're making a lot of mistakes, stop them and see if you can do something else. Our practice is actually extremely simple, it's not some vast philosophical monument. In a sense, it's just about how to be. How to act our life. How to be our life. How to bring ourself completely 100 % into our life as our life wants to be. So vowing is really important. We already do vows, marriage vows, vows to be a doctor-- many professions include a vow. All of our ordinations are about vowing, including the bodhisattva vow, and keeping the Precepts. Very simple.

So that's the very beginning. These first 3 chapters create the situation, and are about becoming aware of ones own situation, becoming grateful for it, beginning to see how huge the universe is, and how beautiful the world is, how complicated & interesting, and how one's own life and self & body can be of active use in every moment. Opened to the world, opened up to the universe. And Shantideva being Shantideva is very romantic, passionate about it. Take me. Take all of me! *Transcribed by Wendy Graham*

Floating Zendo

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Sewing our Rakusu

Angie's students in the Bay Area who are sewing their rakusu in preparation for their *Jukai* ceremony have formed a sewing group. We meet twice a month at the home of Jane Macdonald, who is also our sewing teacher. Jane is also visiting Jikoji occasionally to offer classes there to students of Michael Newhall. For more information about either class, please contact Jane at janemacdonal@gmail.com, or 408-507-8558.

Return of the Saturday Study Group

Our exploration of Buddhist literature continues with Pema Chodron's, "No Time to Lose" Pema offers this teaching as a guide to and interpretation of Shantideva's "Way of the Bodhisattva." Having discussed the first five chapters, our next meeting on January 26 will study Chapters 6-7. Discussions are led by a Sangha member, with Angie present as a resource person. We meet at Sangha members homes, which is announced in advance. A schedule for subsequent meetings in 2008 will be posted on the Yahoo group calendar next year. This event begins at 9:30 with a ½ hour sit, followed by the 1 ½ hour discussion. For those who would like to join the discussion via telephone, the dial in number is the same as for previous study groups: (985) 425.2622, ext. 318. For more information on this event, contact Julian West at tipper184@yahoo.com.

Keeping Informed About Events

From time to time we send out announcements on events the Floating Zendo is offering, as well as updates on Angie's schedule such as public talks she might be offering. If you are not currently receiving these announcements and would like to, or if you would like to give us your change of address (email or mailing address) please contact our secretary in charge of our mail lists. We do not and never will share this list with anyone.

Our website, www.floatingzendo.org is another way to stay up to date with the sangha and Angie. Check it out! You will find many talks of Angie's posted on the site – her teaching is a click away. *Jane Macdonald*

The Practice of Dana

The Floating Zendo and its teacher, Angie-san, is supported totally by the traditional practice of dana. Dana, "generosity" or "giving," is the practice of giving with delight and joy; the cultivation of spiritual awakening. Dharma teachings are given free of charge and we can reciprocate by deepening our practice of dana by giving to our teacher and sangha; it can be not just money but also service and goods. Dana, the first paramita, is not for exchange for the teachings nor a tip. It is the practice of the expression of love and compassion for the teachings, all beings, and an eagerness to integrate the Dharma into our daily life. If you want to contribute dana, please direct your inquiries or giving to our Coordinator, Wendy Graham, 1200 Lick Av, #306, San Jose, CA 95110. Please indicate if you would consider acknowledgement (by name only) in a future newsletter edition. Thank you ALL for your earnest support of the Floating Zendo. *donnalynn chase*

Book Review of "Each Moment is the Universe" by Dainin Katigiri

This is a beautiful, short, deep, soft-tone book. The talks span San Francisco Zen Center and Minnesota. Katagiri Roshi addresses many topics (one topic!)- Time/Space, the present moment, Karma, emptiness, and YOU. The book would not be complete without Dogen. Katagiri Roshi provides insights into Shobogenzo's "Uji" and devotes a commentary chapter to "Zazenshin", a key chapter on zazen.

This is not a book read once or twice; it is lived every moment, in the midst of practice. As he says, "When you practice with no gap between you and what you are doing, simultaneously there is a passage to freedom and you realize emptiness.

Reviewed by Dan Miller



Dharma Talk Given by Angie on "The Way of the Bodhisattva" Chapter 3 by Shantideva
San Jose, May 29, 2007



Pema calls this chapter "Transcending Hesitation." I like that a lot. We can think about a vow as a kind of grip, or a knot in your stomach, a gritting your teeth thing. "I'm going to make this. I will, I will." But this kind of vowing isn't like that. This is about aiming the mind, you could say. Aiming your whole body and your whole mind in one direction. Or, commitment, to simply be 100% for whatever one is doing. In this case, 100% for everyone. 100% for all beings in the world.

So, in terms of bodhicitta, this is when after having gotten some idea about enlightenment, or about one's own position and role and place in the world, one wakes up to the big question, "What is this?" and then to a deep sense that there's something here, and perhaps now and then a feeling of the bigness of it. This is the last stage of preparing the ground for practicing bodhicitta. To actually begin to commit. Shantideva goes through the process to rejoicing, following a formula, an ancient one, to rejoice in your mind and give away everything. Your whole body, everything you own, everything you gained, all attachments. You dedicate it all to the welfare of the world. Of course it isn't literal, it's a state of mind. You don't shed your clothes and your house & walk in the streets with nothing. It's being willing at any moment to drop attachments for the benefit of whatever is actually happening, to continually try to create & to benefit wholesome situations. It's like keeping the Precepts. It's not a perfect practice, it never gets perfect. But the intention is there. And that's what the vow's about. One intends and fails and tries again and goes on.

So there's first the rejoicing and the giving of everything & then there's determining to be whatever is needed. And Shantideva goes through a whole list- He vows to be: a boat, a raft, a bridge, an island, a lamp a bed a slave and food. It's a wonderful list. It's true. We can't be the same in each situation. Sometimes something needs a bed. Sometimes someone needs a lamp, a little light. So a great deal of our life always anyway is trying to intuit what's needed in each situation. How can I enact myself, my life in this situation? What's needed now? What needs to be said? What needs to be *not* said? It makes life very rich and interesting because it's different all the time. So then the possibility of the vow comes, and you vow all of it, because our life is all and everything. And then he names it: it's butter, it's sun, medicine; it's a ridge, a brick, it can be anything. Anything can serve.

So it's a very positive stance. It's being willing to let the positive be the default position, even though sometimes we are full of doubt or very grumpy and find life very difficult. The vow is to maintain as much of a positive state of mind, as we can, for the benefit of everything and everyone. That's what bodhisattva practice is, rejoicing in other peoples' good fortune and generating good will, even towards—especially toward our enemies. It's important to include not just the sweet, easy, pleasant part, but even the dankest and darkest and most difficult part. It's all of a piece with us.

Pema talks about the 3 kinds of bodhisattvas. These are ways of describing different types of enlightenment practice. There's royalty, the king and/or queen, who wake up first and put the kingdom in order, and then are able to include all beings in their domain. They create a whole lineage of enlightenment as they meet with people. Some are like the ferryman, who takes people across, riding along with everyone. The ferryman is the kind of person who is always reaching out and bringing people in. The last one is the shepherd who is coming up behind, saying, "You go ahead, it's ok." You can see how it's a typology, a very simple typology. Often I think, we take turns being these different modes depending on different situations and the kind of mind we bring to them.

At the end Shantideva talks about taking birth in Buddha's mind. Having transcended hesitation, he's willing to take birth, willing to be Buddha's child. Interesting metaphor. It takes us out of our personal practice and puts it in a much more universal place, which is indeed where it actually lies. He also talks about having found the precious gem. There is a story in the Lotus Sutra about a man who had a gem sewn into his cloak, and went about in extreme poverty not knowing he had plenty. A wonderful metaphor for us and our sometimes poverty-stricken sense of ourself. We fear we're not there yet, there is something we long for. And yet, it's already here.

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