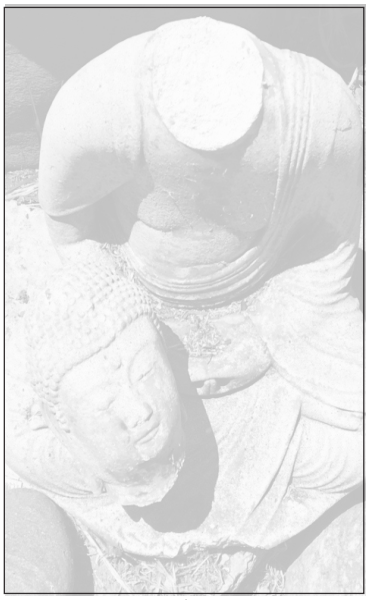
Monterey Bay Zen Center News

Summer 2017

LIVING WITH AN OPEN HEART

My garden Buddha's head fell off – but not to worry, it is resting comfortably in her lap. This image has acted as a powerful metaphor, pointing to the possibility of living life in a more embodied way. As I take on the role of guiding teacher for the next six months and as we explore this Bodhisattva path together, One Thing I Know to Be True: The journey we are on is not about thinking more, judging ourselves more, or doubting ourselves more, but is about coming back to our bodies, our hearts, and our breath again and again.



What gets in the way of living with an open heart? This was the question that was asked during a recent nine-day, silent retreat entitled "The Body Loves" at Dharma Ocean in Crestone, Colorado. This question has become an ever-present personal koan that continues to be so alive for me on this journey.

Every Tuesday evening our sangha chants the Bodhisattva Vow:

> Beings are numberless,
> I vow to awaken with them.
>
> Delusions are inexhaustible,
> I vow to end them.
>
> Dharma gates are boundless,
> I vow to enter them.
>
> Buddha's way in unsurpassable,
> I vow to become it.

This is a serious vow we make in the Mahayana tradition – to awaken with all beings. Waking up requires courage, curiosity, and tremendous compassion. But Buddhism is good medicine and helps illuminate this path we tread together. In Zazen, our posture of pure awareness, we start to recognize our delusions and habits of mind. As we vow to end our delusions, we allow ourselves to acknowledge the entirety of who we are and make room for the light and the dark within ourselves and in our shared humanity. Brene Brown, a research professor at the University of Houston who studies vulnerability, courage, authenticity, and shame states, "In order to practice compassion, we have to know our own darkness well enough so that we can sit in the dark with others."

To enter our dharma gates means to face our lives directly. We develop the intention and courage to sit on these very hot seats regardless of how intolerable it seems. We learn to view the difficult emotions that arise as portals of transformation. In the study of Nonviolent Communication, these "red lights on the dashboard" can serve to inform us and to point us in the direction of our deepest intentions and unmet needs. To do so necessitates tremendous loving kindness – first towards ourselves and eventually rippling out to others. *Maitri* is a Sanskrit term meaning "being in a friendly way." Reggie Ray, founder of Dharma Ocean, Buddhist teacher, and author, reminds us that in order to love anything – other people, our children, the world – we must first open our hearts to ourselves. The practice of *maitri* is to make room for and to allow whatever arises. As we recognize that we are continually airing our version of "fake news," we start to let the constant ongoing judgments, criticisms, and opinions that fill our heads be as a radio on in another room – we hear it, but it doesn't have to take all our attention. We can keep saying YES and . . ., while realizing we are so much more than these habitual thoughts.

Becoming Buddha's Unsurpassable Way makes meditation practice our ultimate healing ground, where we start to experience life unmediated by our stories. We remember to "brush away the fabrications of our mind." Our beloved Katherine Thanas used to remind us that our practice is a body practice. Our bodies experience life directly. We realize that as humans we can be discerning without being judgmental; we start to recognize the punitive and habitual nature of our perfectionism. We learn to listen in a different way. Buddhism teaches that enlightenment is in our bodies. We keep coming back to our hearts – allowing them to break open again and again. We keep coming back to our breath, our intention – opening ourselves to the wisdom and love inherent in every cell of our bodies. We can let our heads rest comfortably in our laps.

— Patricia Wolff

DIVING INSIDE VASUBANDHU'S YOGACARA

Sundays July – September, 10 to 11:30 am

Everything conceived of as self or other occurs in the transformation of consciousness.

Vasubandhu is one of the most important ancestors in our Mahayana lineage. He and his half-brother Asanga worked assiduously in the 4th century of the common era developing Mahayana Abhidharma and a school of Buddhism called Yogacara or "Consciousness-Only," a practice unifying body and mind. Further teachings on the Buddha's Dharma (i.e., Abhidharma) arose in the centuries following the Buddha's death in scholarly monastic com-

munities interested in theoretical and practical systems of thought that organized the Buddha's various teachings into concise lists of mental and physical phenomena. In spite of the Buddha's teaching of no-self, these phenomenological events, called dharmas, came to be considered by the Sarvastivada sect as something akin to fundamental elements that existed inherently on their own. The early Mayahana prajnaparamita texts, distilled down to the Heart Sutra that is chanted daily in Mahayana temples around the world, denied the fundamental existence of these elements and stressed the emptiness of all phenomena.

Vasubandhu's Thirty Verses is a succinct teaching that harmonizes and reconciles these two, otherwise disparate, teachings. The first half of the 30 verses expresses the earlier teachings on the relative truth and how to work with afflictive emotions. The second half guides the practitioner to see through the illusion of self to the path of letting go.

The Buddha once said to Ananda, "… good spiritual friendship, companionship, and camaraderie is the whole of the holy life."

Join us every other Sunday in good spiritual friendship from 10 to 11:30 am at 29 Ford Rd. in the Carmel Valley Community Park Activity House as we study, discuss and inquire into Vasubandu's Thirty Verses in our own lives. We will be using as a guide Ben Connelly's book *A Practitioner's Guide Inside Vasubandhu's Yogacara.* Each meeting will consist of sitting zazen, discussing the previous meeting's three verses that we've been working with, as well as setting up the course of inquiry for the next two weeks for the next three verses. Suggested donation of $10. Call Shōgen at 831-659-5381 with questions. Upcoming meeting dates are July 3, 17, 31, August 14, 28 and September 11, and 25.

— Shōgen Danielson

ORDINARY RECOVERY: 20 YEARS AS A WAY IN SERENITY

There has always been a resonance between Buddhist meditation and principals of 12-Step Recovery. Those affinities have been explored every Saturday morning for the past twenty years in "Ordinary Recovery," an hour-long meditation and 12-step group established by the Monterey Bay Zen Center to understand and practice the principles of recovery through the lens and teachings of Soto Zen.

"Ordinary Recovery" is part of nation-wide Buddhist meditation network that is part Bill Wilson and part Shunryu Suzuki. At first glance, it might seem to be a curious pairing: the asceticism of a Japanese-based Zen lineage and the sometimes raucous exuberance of Alcoholics Anonymous. However, the two traditions are rooted in similar missions: the acknowledgement of suffering and the alleviation of suffering. The significance of the Four Noble Truths is made all the more forceful through the sometimes gut-wrenching suffering and craving incurred through addiction.

The Saturday morning programs—which are open to anyone and financed by donations—begin with 20 minutes of meditation, followed by a talk and finished with comments and discussion. Participates range from early 20s to mid-70s and cover the spectrum of addiction types—from drug users and alcoholics, to co-dependents and family members affected by substance abuse, to food and relationship addicts. Lacking any specific group affiliations, "Ordinary Recovery" has also become home for those with no apparent substance issues, but rather who find solace through meditation and the profound intimacy 12-step groups have become known for.

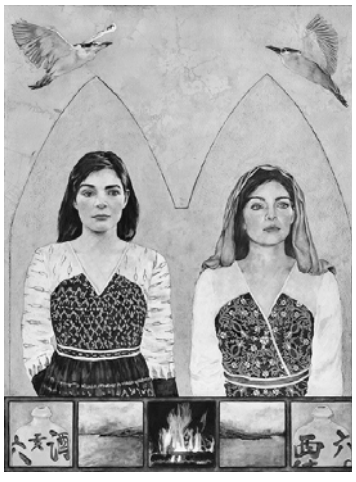
If the style of the sessions is distinct from most meditation groups, the core tenets of Soto Zen are still explored, starting with premise that the release of suffering is an inside job and not contingent upon substances, people, places or things. The group's name, "Ordinary Recovery," derives from the koan collection, *Gateless Gate,* Case 19, *Ordinary Mind is the Way,* following the principle that recovery from addiction is a naturally occurring phenomenon given the right conditions, and that what is actually recovered (or uncovered) is *nothing but* ordinary life—which turns out to be a rare and extraordinary thing.

Joshu earnestly asked Nansen: "What is the Way?" Nansen answered: "Ordinary Mind is the Way." Joshu asked: "Should I direct myself towards it, or not?" Nansen said: "If you try to turn toward it, you go against it." Joshu asked: "If I do not try to turn toward it, how can I know that it is the Way?"

"Ordinary Recovery" meets Saturdays, from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. at the Carl Cherry Center, Fourth and Guadalupe, Carmel. Information: (831) 920-8303.

CH'IEN AND HER SOUL ARE SEPARATED
An Evening with Allison Atwill, Roshi

Wu-tsu asked a monk, "Ch'ien and her soul are separated. Which is the true Ch'ien?"



The primary source of creativity is uncertainty. Resting inside not-knowing makes a place for the images beyond our limited view to find us. If we were to stop deciding beforehand what the next moment should be, exerting all our life energy trying to will it into existence, the next moment might arrive larger, more surprising, alive and whole than any of our ideas about it.

Art and koans rely on not-knowing, inviting us into the imagination, a realm where our inner and outer lives can begin to correspond. From where does the next line in the poem, image for the painting, and our own awakening

come? Every night dreams arrive from an imaginative source both vast and inexhaustible – every waking moment the vastness is dreaming us.

Allison Atwill, Roshi, teaches with Pacific Zen Institute and leads Coral Moon Zen in Santa Barbara. A visual artist, her work emerges from an intimate and embodied conversation with koans. The placement of the image in the painting, the medium, and even the size of the artwork are also an expression of her immersion in the lived and dreamed field of the koan as a way to open to life. Allison has taught art to children in Montecito for more than twenty years.

7:00-9:30pm, Friday, July 14 at The Carl Cherry Center, Fourth and Guadalupe, Carmel. Donation: $10-20. Information: (831) 920-8303

BREAKFAST WITH POETRY

Get your reservations now!

The annual Breakfast with Poetry event, featuring Elliot Ruchowitz-Roberts and Alison Atwill, will be held on Saturday, July 15, 2017, from 10:00 am to 12:00 noon. As participation is limited to 50 adults, please contact Mark Orrisch at the number or email below, if you have not yet returned an invitation. This event is always one of the highlights of the year for Monterey Bay Zen Center. Donations are also welcome if one cannot attend.

Earthbound Farm, 7250 Carmel Valley Road, Carmel, CA (3.5 miles east of Highway One). Donation: $35.00 for each adult and $10.00 for each child, children under 6 are free. Please RSVP to Mark Orrisch at 831-659-7138 for advance invitations or email: mbzc.pres@prodigy.net

---

MOUNTAINS AND RIVERS

Half-Day Meditation Retreat with Dr. Patricia Wolff
Saturday, September 16, 10am-2pm

Please join us for this embodied meditation retreat in a Carmel Valley home by the river. We will take refuge in the bounty of the natural world as we do walking, lying down, and sitting meditations – experiencing the stability of the mountains, the fluidity of the river, and the openness and curiosity of the child. We will begin at 10am and end at 2pm. Please bring a dish to share. To reserve or for information please contact Patrish at patrishw@yahoo.com or 831.659.3042. Suggested donation: $45-65.

WILD FLOWERS: FIVE HAIKU

Wild Flowers

Blackberry, lilac,
iris, morning glory, rock-
rose, oh, poison oak

First Tick of the Season

Sorry, little friend.
No meal here. Wait for the deer.
They use this trail, too.

Valerio, in the Hospital

He is close to death,
his hand in mine, warm. We talk
Neruda. His eyes shine.

Late Afternoon Walk, Point Lobos
--after Ch'ang Sha

First, I follow long
shadows; then, returning, sun-
lit, glowing grasses.

Peregrine Falcon

You; Basho; me, too.
A chill sea-wind. Frost on bridges
morning sun will melt

— Elliot Ruchowitz-Roberts

Monterey Bay Zen Center
PO Box 3173
Monterey, CA 93942

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
MONTEREY, CA.
PERMIT NO. 333

To be removed from our mailing list, please call 831-648-1890. and leave your name and address. Thank you!

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

For event information, photos, and more, go to MBZC FACEBOOK

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

We meet Tuesday evenings, Monday and Thursday mornings at the Cherry Center, 4th and Guadalupe in Carmel.

Tuesday evening schedule:

Zazen	6:30
Kinhin (walking)	7:10
Service	7:20
Lecture/discussion	7:30-8:30

Monday, Thursday mornings:

Zazen 7am
(followed by service and soji)

Zazen instruction first Tuesday of each month at 5:30pm
Ordinary Recovery, Sats, 9-10am Cherry Center, Carmel
Fearless Fathers, Tuesdays, 5:30 p.m. (415) 531-2090
Brown Bag Zen, Fridays 12:15-1:15 St. James Church, Monterey
Mountains and Rivers Meditation, 2nd & 4th Weds 7-8:30pm Patricia 659-3042
Chicken Coop Zendo, Thursdays 5:30-7:00pm - 659-2365

Vasubandhu's Yogacara	Sun. July 2, 16, 30	10:00-11:30, CV Park, Activity House
Compassionate Communication	Sat. July 8	6:00-8:00, St. James Church
Allison Atwill Talk	Fri. July 14	7:00-9:00, Carl Cherry Center
Breakfast with Poetry	Sat. July 15	10-noon, Earthbound Farm, CV
Training in Zen Forms	Tues. July 18	5:30-6:15, Carl Cherry Center
Full Moon Ceremony	Tues. Aug 8	6:30-8:30, Carl Cherry Center
Compassionate Communication	Sat. Aug 12	6:00-8:00, St. James Church
Vasubandhu's Yogacara	Sun. Aug 13, 27	10:00-11:30, CV Park, Activity House
Training in Zen Forms	Tues. Aug 15	5:30-6:15, Carl Cherry Center
Compassionate Communication	Sat. Sept 9	6:00-8:00, St. James Church
Vasubandhu's Yogacara	Sun. Sept 10, 24	10:00-11:30, CV Park, Activity House
Somatic Meditation Workshop	Sat. Sept 16	10:30-2:30, Location to be decided

Art Credit: Vasubandhu (unknown); *Two Monks* by Allison Atwill