

BUDDHISM * MEDITATION * LIFE

LION'S ROAR

TED LASSO: Hero for Our Time?

The Inner Work of **WORK**

The **MARAS** of Privilege Attack

Explore Buddhism: **DOGEN**



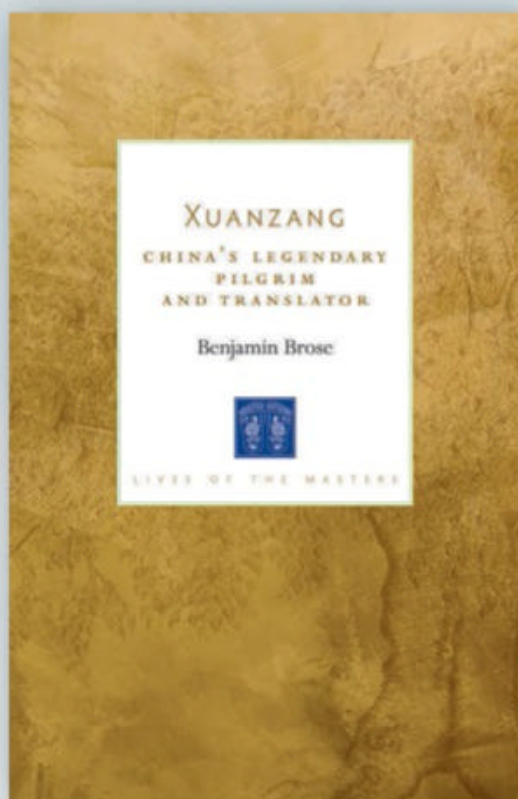
How Awareness of
Death
Transforms Your Life



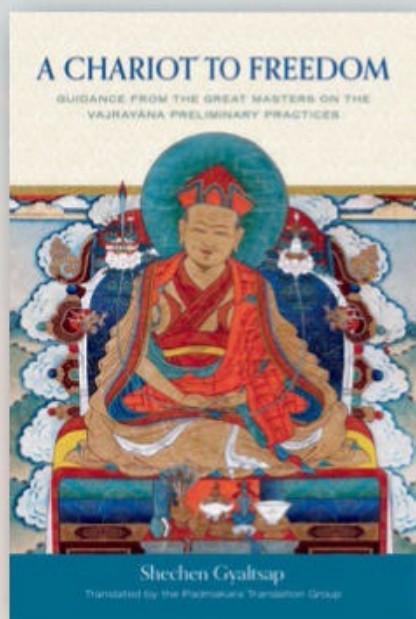
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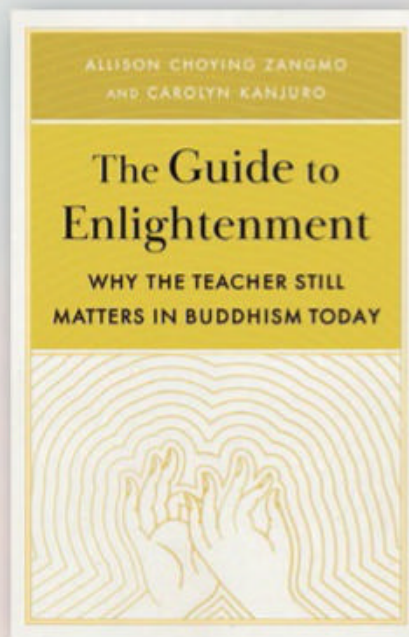
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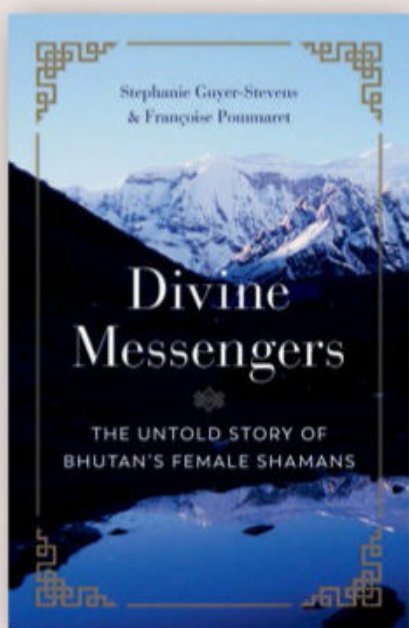
In this comprehensive and engaging account of the extraordinary life and work of Buddhism's greatest traveler, Brose charts a course between the early Xuanzang biographies and the fantastic legends that later developed, such as those in the classic Chinese novel *Journey to the West*. Xuanzang remains one of the most consequential figures in the rich history of Buddhism in East Asia.



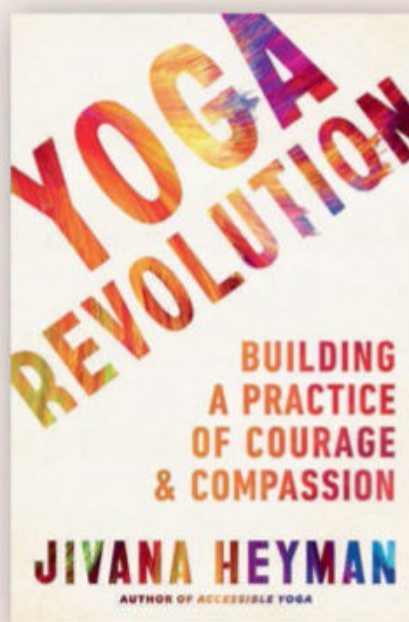
One of the most beloved presentations of the preliminary practices, or ngöndro, that form the foundation of the Vajrayāna Buddhist path with commentary from Shechen Gyaltsap. This commentary applies to all ngöndro systems and is not lineage specific.



A celebration of the transformative potential of the student-teacher relationship with advice and personal stories from two female Buddhist teachers with decades of experience working with spiritual guides.

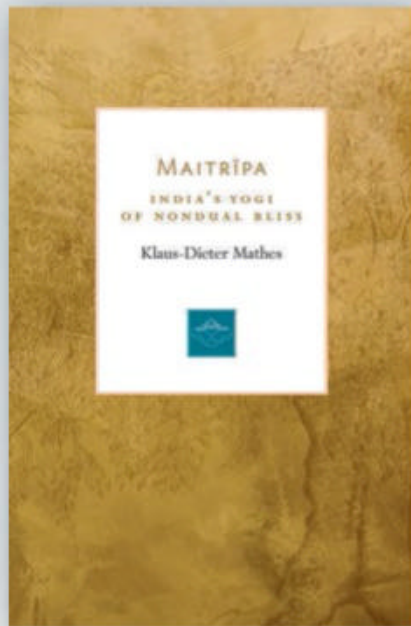


Journalist Stephanie Guyer-Stevens and anthropologist Françoise Pommaret traveled to the Himalayas to meet seven living Bhutanese female shamans, and this intimate narrative shares these shamans' spiritual experiences and important roles in society.



Heyman illuminates the yogic mandate of seva—or acts of service that see, care for, and uplift those around us—as a way to serve the world without losing your way and how to serve through your yoga practice.

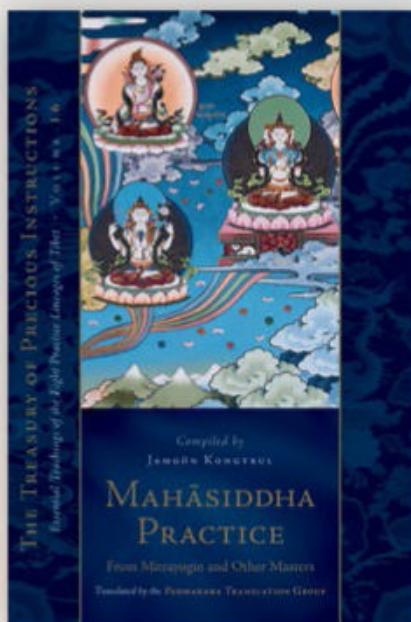
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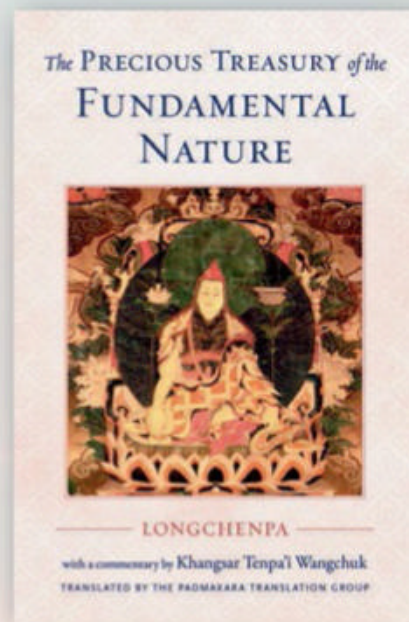
Drawing on Maitrīpa's autobiographical writings and literary work, this comprehensive portrait of the life and teachings of this great yogi and teacher of the Tibetan translator Marpa Lotsawa. Author and professor Mathes offers the first complete English translation of his teachings on nonconceptual realization, which is the foundation of Mahāmudrā meditation.



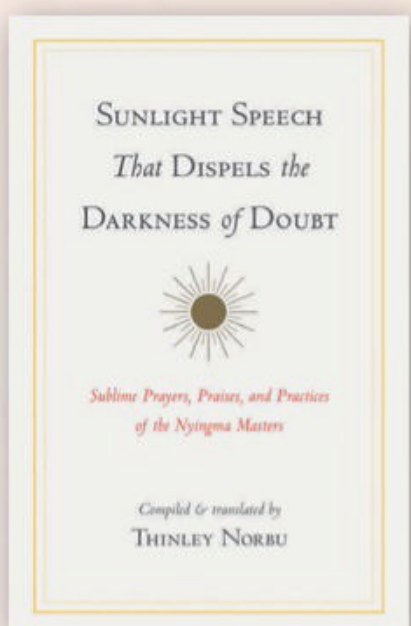
This biography of one of Zen's most prominent figures illuminates thought-provoking perspectives on Dogen's character and teachings, as well as his relevance to contemporary practitioners.



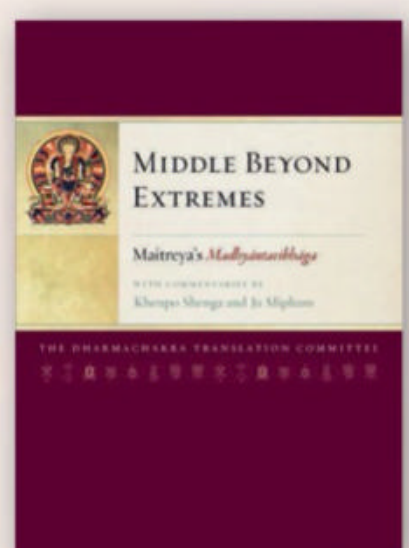
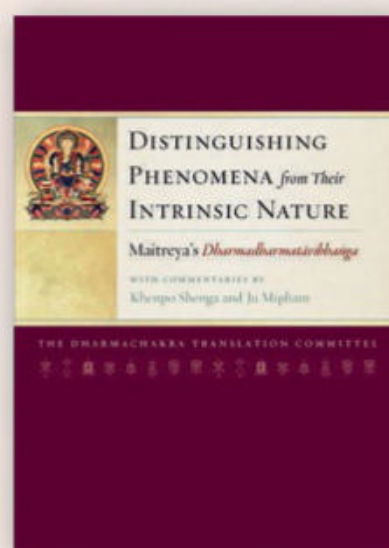
In this volume of *The Treasury of Precious Instructions*, Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Taye compiles teachings and practices by and about the renowned Indian Buddhist masters known as mahāsiddhas, recognized in all eight practice lineages of Tibetan Buddhism. The work of Mitrayogin forms the largest section of this volume.



The first and only commentary on the Buddhist master Longchenpa's essential text on Dzogchen by modern scholar and Nyingma master Khangsar Khenpo Tenpa'i Wangchuk.



A selection of wisdom teachings from Kunkhyen Longchenpa, Kunkhyen Jigme Lingpa, Patrul Rinpoche, Mipham Rinpoche, and Kyabje Dudjom Rinpoche, translated by Thinley Norbu Rinpoche into direct and simple English that retains the power of the original writings and their emphasis on practice.



Mipham Rinpoche and Khenpo Shenga on the Maitreya texts.

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HOW AWARENESS OF DEATH TRANSFORMS YOUR LIFE

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ANDREA MILLER profiles Tami Simon, founder of Sounds True. She brings the spirit of enlightenment not only to her company's products but to its culture. (Plus, dogs.)

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HERO FOR OUR TIME

In a world of antiheroes, says television critic **JENNIFER KEISHIN ARMSTRONG**, Ted Lasso embodies what we need right now: goodness.

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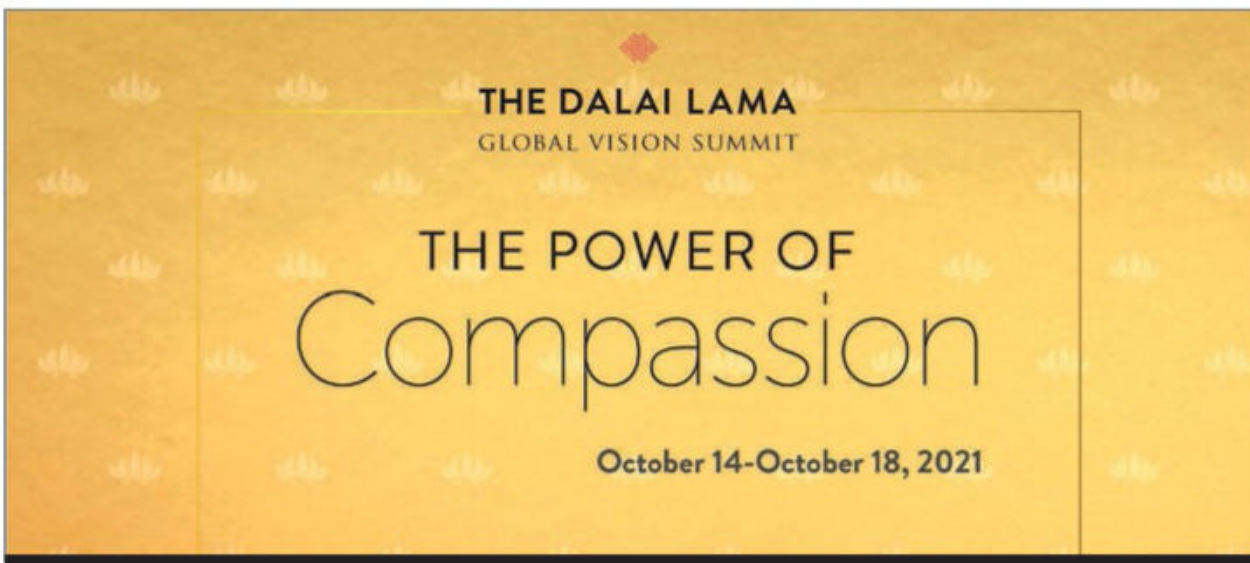
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“Laughing in the Face
of Stupidity” by Tashi
Mannox.



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BUDDHADHARMA: THE PRACTITIONER'S GUIDE—INSIDE THE FALL 2021 ISSUE

Four times a year in our other publication, *Buddhadharma*, leading Buddhist teachers and scholars explore tradition, practice, and the challenges and opportunities facing Buddhism today. The fall issue, "What Is the Future of Sangha?" explores community, Buddhism's third jewel, in all its beauty and complexity. Topics range from the nature of spiritual friendship (*kalyana mitra*) and the act of taking refuge to the Buddha's teachings on how to respond when a woman accuses a monk of sexual misconduct; authors include Willa Blythe Baker, Vimalasara Mason-John, and Bhikkhu Sujato. On newsstands September 21. The fall issue's cover was a collaboration between *Buddhadharma's* art director, Seth Levinson, and photographer Marvin Moore. Taking inspiration from



Spanish photographer Xan Padron, they photographed local practitioners in Halifax, Nova Scotia, then stitched the photos to create a new sangha.

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Monthly donations provide a stable and reliable base of support that allows us to reach out to new audiences in new ways. Our sincere thanks and appreciation to all our new and existing monthly donors and to all who participated in our Monthly Donor appeal in August. You and all of our readers lie at the heart of all we do. Sharing our connection to the dharma, your support and your kind words of encouragement, mean the world to us. Do you want to see how we put your support for Lion's Roar into action? Read our Report to Our Community at lionsroar.com/report2021.

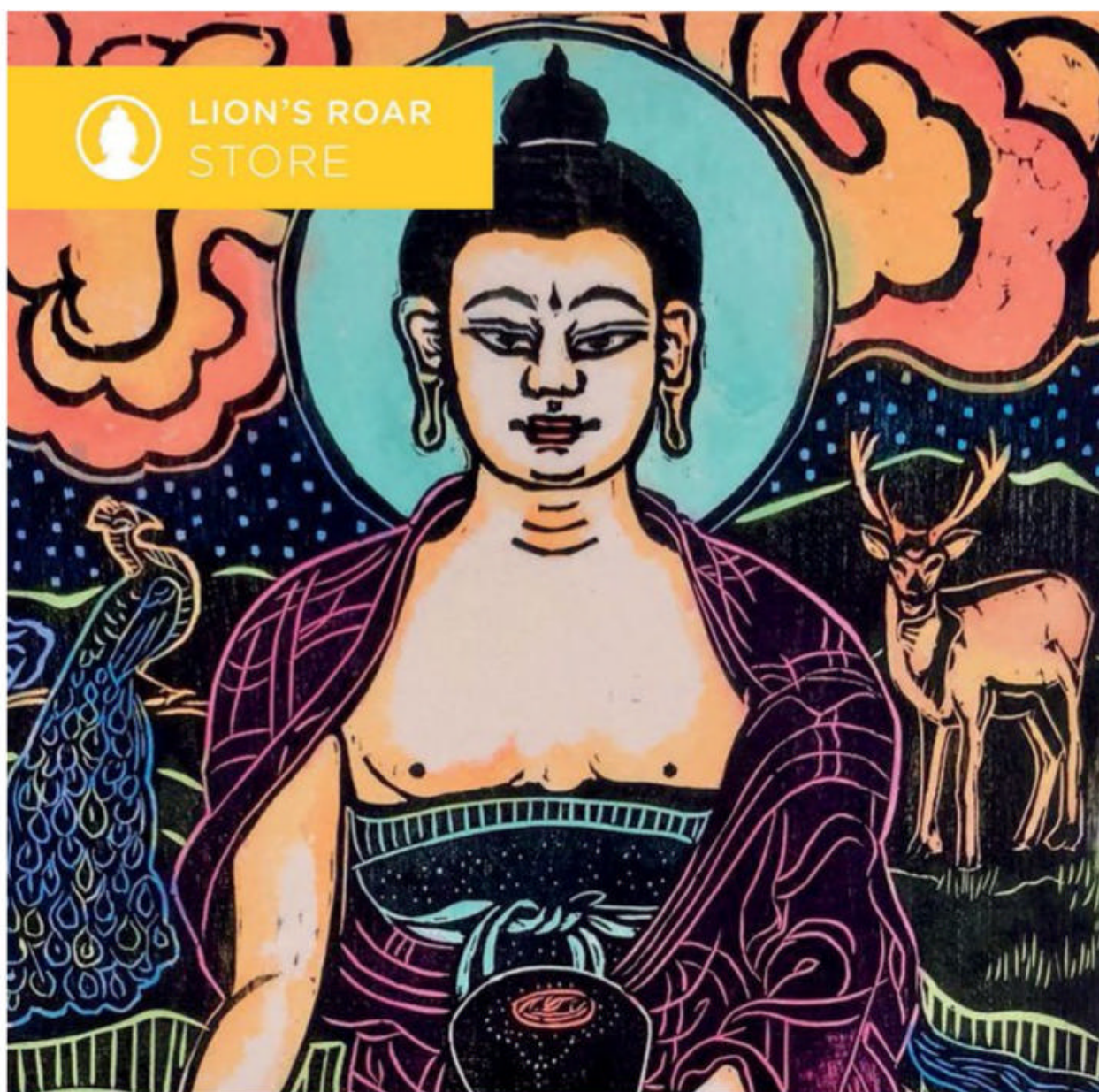


LION'S ROAR EN ESPAÑOL

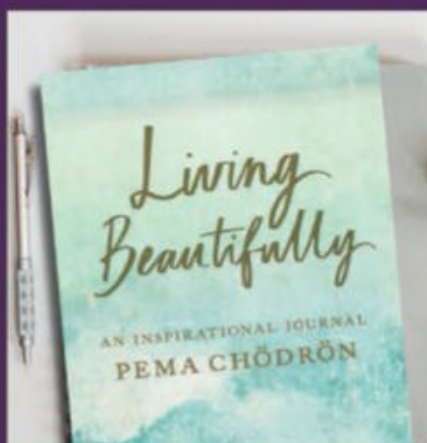
Our Dharma en español webpage makes available select articles in Spanish, translated by ratna dakini, a translator living in Puebla, Mexico. There you'll find teachings by Jack Kornfield, Judy Lief, Norman Fischer, Tsokyni Rinpoche, and many more; sign up there to be notified as new articles are translated. Please visit and help spread the word!

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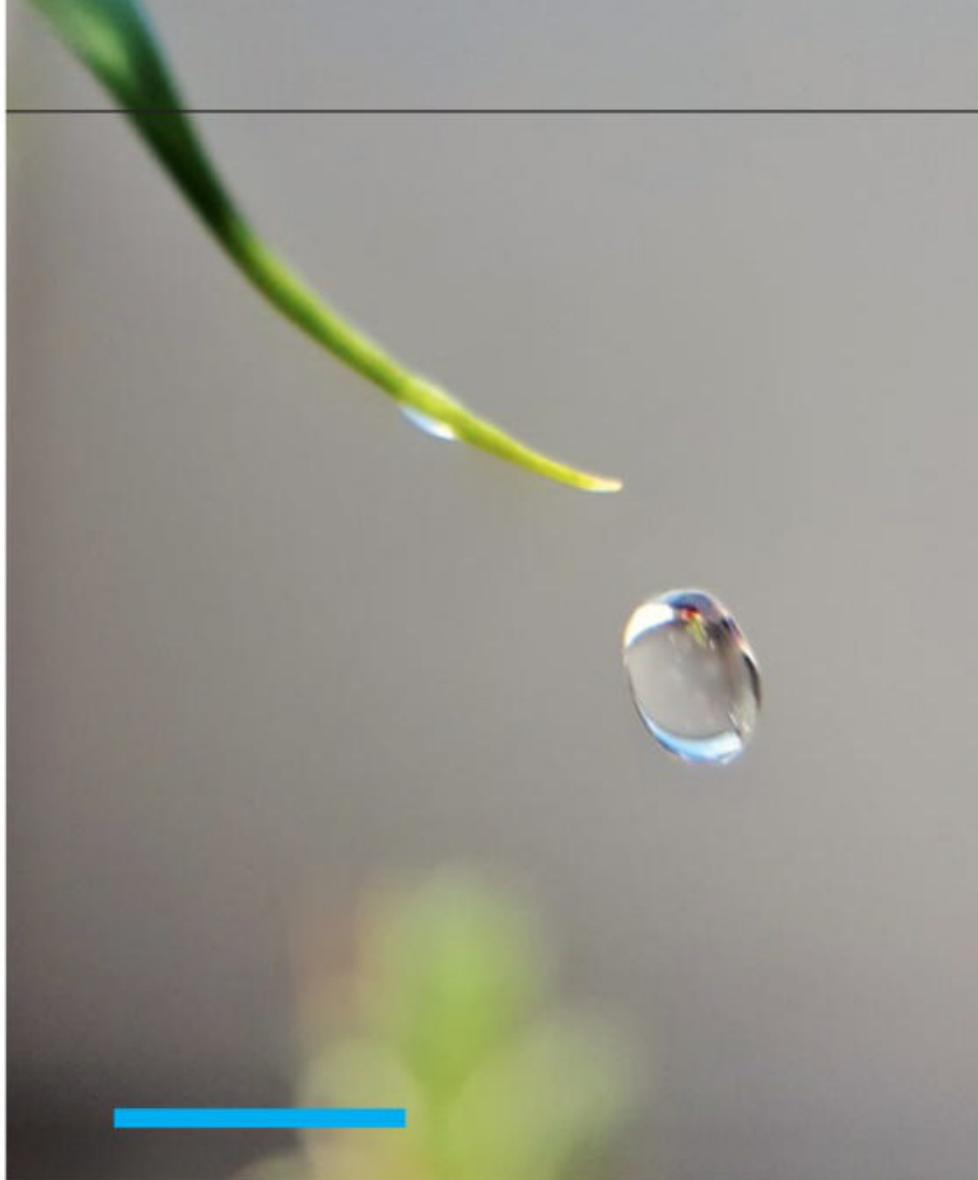
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THIS WORLD OF DEW

MANY PEOPLE SUGGEST the Buddhist path all boils down to one particular thing. The Buddha famously said it was spiritual friendship, community. Other people say it's all about wisdom. Or compassion. Or meditation.

I think it all comes down to death.

Look at Buddhism's foundational principles. Although we use all kinds of different euphemisms, they're pretty much all about death.

"Everything is impermanent," said the Buddha. That means they die.

"All compounded phenomena fall apart." Everything breaks. And then they die.

Anatman—no soul. There's no self inside us that doesn't die.

Suffering is caused by ego—by the illusion of a self that doesn't die and all the things we do to protect it.

Or by attachment—trying to hold on to things in spite of the fact that they will die and so will we.

Basically, the four noble truths come down to the fact that we and everything else will die, and we suffer because we don't want to accept that. We could go so far as to say that *samsara* is nothing but the denial of death, and enlightenment is accepting it.

In Buddhism, the fundamental cause of suffering is said to be ignorance. That means we don't understand the true nature of ourselves and our world. But it's more

that we don't *want* to understand the true nature of reality, and so we create a false reality we prefer. One that allows us to deny death.

This ignorance is a kind of solidification, one that gives us an illusion of permanence. We freeze our perceptions and build a false reality called *samsara* in which things are separate, independent, and have some permanent identity at their core. As Chögyam Trungpa pointed out, our ignorance is actually extremely intelligent. It enables us to create a self and a whole world whose seeming solidity allows us to do what we most want—deny the reality of death.

An old Zen admonishment goes, "Don't put a head on top of your head," meaning don't put a false self on top of your true self. And don't put a false reality on top of true reality. Because in a terrible irony, denying death deadens life.

The very nature of life is change, impermanence, birth and death. To deny that, we must make things fixed, diminished, immobile—dead. We can't deny death without denying life. But when we accept the reality of death—or change, if you'd prefer—we open up to life in its complete, true nature. That real life, the one inseparable from death, is vivid, dynamic, interconnected, open, and sacred. It is life worth living. Life worth loving.

In that lies our broken hearts. Love and loss are inseparable. We cannot have one without the other. Reconciling the two is the task of the broken human heart, and no philosophy, Buddhist or otherwise, will do that for us. For as even a Zen master like Issa wrote after the death of his young daughter, quoted by John Tarrant in his marvelous teaching in this issue:

*The world of dew,
is the world of dew—
And yet, and yet.*

—MELVIN McLEOD, Editor-in-Chief

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THE MOMENT

BUDDHIST GUIDE TO MINDFUL LIVING



Holly and her husband share a moment by the ocean on their way to Boston for his medical treatment. Five years later she lost Bill to Alzheimer's.

GIFTS FROM BEYOND

When **HOLLY STOCKING** discovers an unopened present from her late husband, she contemplates what it really means to be gone—and the things he's still giving her.

THE GIFT TOPPLES

from the top shelf in my late husband's bedroom closet. It is a grey wool hat, wrapped in used red tissue paper and fastened with a lopsided piece of scotch tape. On a pink Post-it note, penned in Bill's nearly illegible scrawl, are the playful and puzzling words: *You da one, and you da two!* My heart drops in my chest.

I call a friend. "I found a gift from Bill," I tell her. At first, she thinks it's another of the "signs" I've been looking for in recent weeks—signs that he could somehow be trying to reach me from Beyond. After all, I'd been asking for that after more than a year of steeling myself in the knowledge that he was gone.

"No," I say, "this is a real gift."

A convert to Buddhist teachings on reincarnation, I'm not much of a believer in communicating with the dead. I have come to think that when people die, they move on. Which is why, after Bill died, I had begun referring to him as "The Being Formerly Known as Bill." And also why, more than a year after his passing, I turned over a favorite picture of him meditating. In the photo, one of his arms is raised to the sky, his unique way of expressing joy during his dharma practice. *Gone*, my action had said with what I thought was finality. *Gone, gone, gone—for good.*

My interest in Signs from Beyond arrived unexpectedly when rancorous divisions were tearing our nation apart and I could no longer easily sustain my acceptance of



The simple wool stocking cap that Bill intended to give to Holly for Christmas, but never had the chance.

Bill's "goneness." I longed to connect—no, I *needed* to connect—to my departed's deep, embodied wisdom. So one day, my steely resolve dissolving, I tearfully asked The Being Formerly Known as Bill for access to that wisdom. *I don't know if you are there and can reach out at all. But if there is a way, I sure could use a sign.*

To my surprise, a sign appeared almost immediately. My friend called and wanted to tell me about a time when she had been deeply upset, sitting across a table from Bill in our Buddhist monastery's dining room. At the time, he was entering the later stages of Alzheimer's, his knowledge of people he'd once been close to, including even me at times, erased. Sensing upset, he had looked kindly at this other being sitting across from him and asked how she was doing. Telling me of the memory, my friend choked back tears. She sensed there was

a lesson in there for all of us.

I shared that only hours before I had asked The Being Formerly Known as Bill for a "sign." She pondered this coincidence, then agreed: perhaps The Being Formerly Known as Bill was reaching out in the only way possible—through her.

If nothing else, I thought later, the memory of Bill's kindness was a reminder that when we erase the distinctions we make between ourselves and others, we no longer

know stranger, friend, or even enemy. With such distinctions gone, it's easier to meet heart to heart, offering whatever it is we have to give, even if just a gentle inquiry. My friend's thoughtfulness in telling me this memory touched me. Perhaps it was indeed a sign of Bill's once-embodied wisdom, offered by her own.

A second sign arrived a day or two later in the obituary section of our local newspaper. Bill had had two girlfriends in the Alzheimer's unit he lived in during the last six months of his life. This was the obituary for Girlfriend #2, whom I had judged as "not Bill's type." Not only was she from a deeply red part of our state, but unlike Bill, she could be pushy and mean. I told myself her unkindness might have been her disease speaking. But for all I knew, she could have supported the insurrection on Capitol Hill. Still, Bill had reached out to her, offering comfort when day

after day she wailed to go home, and soon they were walking hand in hand through the corridors. In the end, sensing that their friendship brought comfort to Bill too, I'd reluctantly accepted her as his companion.

When I texted my friend about this latest possible "sign," she texted me back: *Gone, gone, gone beyond*. I took it as a joke, but maybe it was not. The nondual mind pointed to by these lines in the *Heart Sutra* is not attached, as our own minds are, to appearances or labels. It reaches out to all suffering beings, without discriminating between girlfriend and wife, or red and blue, or even kind or mean. In a deep sense, we are one, as The Being Formerly Known as Bill appeared to be reminding me yet again.

But what about this belated Christmas gift, this warm winter cap from our local fair trade store? It is from Bill himself, hidden away and long forgotten.


"How does it feel?" my friend asks when I call to tell her of this latest, more tangible gift.

"Sweet," I say.

"No, really," she presses. "Because if I had found that, I'd be sobbing."

But I am not sobbing. I'm not sure why. Perhaps because it strikes me as a gift from both the Being Formerly Known as Bill and the Bill who was my beloved. It's no longer easy to distinguish between them.

Rereading the words on Bill's makeshift gift card with that in mind, I have to laugh: *You da one, and you da two!* Ah yes!

Then I spy other words in his familiar scrawl, words that I want to say myself right now: *Thank you for being here.* 

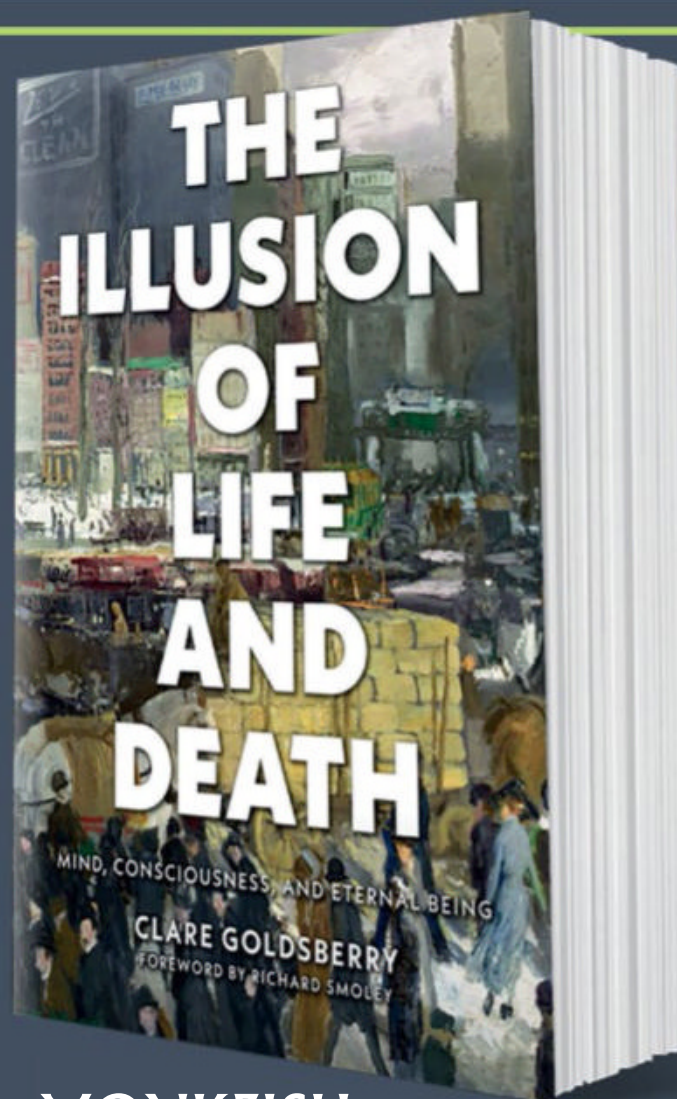


HOLLY STOCKING is a retired journalist and educator living in Bloomington, Indiana.

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THE MARAS OF PRIVILEGE

Scholar and practitioner ANN GLEIG on the backlash she and others experience against their work for racial justice in Buddhism.



The demons of Mara, portrayed attacking the Buddha before his enlightenment, symbolize the three poisons of aversion, ignorance, and greed, which Gleig says drive the fight to maintain privilege.

“ARE YOU STUDYING the religion of wokeism or the religion of Buddhism?”

“Perverting the dharma with identity politics.”

“Keep playing the victim.”

“Sheer nonsense.”

This is some of the blowback I’ve got from my work challenging racism and promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in Buddhism. While much of the response to my research has been positive, it has also been the target of defensiveness and derision from some white Buddhists, and resentment and rage from others.

I have been attacked personally and accused of being a “pseudo-scholar” and of “attempting to pervert the dharma by means of identity politics.” Self-identified alt-right Buddhists (yes, there is such a thing) have gone as far as creating a podcast

ridiculing me and two other Buddhist Studies scholars for our work on racial justice in American Buddhism.

The white backlash against my scholarship on racial justice echoes many of the responses that Buddhists of color encounter when they attempt to make their communities more inclusive. Buddhists of color who are pioneering racial justice initiatives report that some white Buddhists denied that racism existed in American Buddhism, and told them they were imaging racial harm and exclusion. Others declared that Buddhists of color were not real Buddhists and accused them of being “too angry” and trying to “divide the sangha.”

In other words, as feminist Sara Ahmed explains, racism and white privilege aren’t the problem. It’s the people who name racism and white privilege who are the problem. For me, the experience of being at the



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receiving end of white resentment and rage has only strengthened my connection with Buddhists of color and empathy for what they experience, and deepened my commitment to anti-racist work as an essential part of both my scholarship and Buddhist practice.

To understand the backlash against racial justice initiatives in American Buddhism, we only need to look at larger social and cultural patterns. In her award-winning book *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide*, African American historian Carol Anderson shows that African American advances toward inclusion and equity have been met with white reactivity and resistance ever since the passing of the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865. From the replacement of slavery laws with Jim Crow segregation laws to the replacement of Barack Obama by Donald Trump, white Americans have sought to preserve and reproduce their cultural dominance and power.

So, it would be a surprise if Buddhism in the United States were completely free of this backlash against racial equity and inclusion. Yet many non-natal Buddhists come to the tradition with romantic and naive ideas. They imagine that Buddhism is a peaceful spirituality free from conflict, and that meditation practice will be a solution to all of their problems. Such practitioners often find it hard to accept, let alone confront, the reality that racism, sexism, and other forms of abuse exist in their communities.

The late John Welwood, a Tibetan Buddhist and psychologist, coined the term “spiritual bypass” to identify how many practitioners use Buddhist practice to avoid psychological developmental issues and emotional conflicts. Insight Meditation teachers Sebene Selassie and Brian Lesage extend Welwood’s concept to identify “cultural spiritual bypass”—the use of Buddhist practice to avoid the social realities of racism, white supremacy, sexism, and gendered violence.

The Buddhist resistance to racial justice work shows us the three poisons in action. The backlash—*aversion*—to Buddhist racial justice initiatives makes visible both white Buddhists refusal to see things as they are—*ignorance*—and their refusal to give up how they benefit from systems of whiteness—*greed*. But while Buddhism is not immune to racism, it does offer us the potential to respond differently.

Joy Brennan, a fellow Buddhist scholar-practitioner, and I recently gave a collaborative workshop on “Collective Liberation: Theory and Practice,” at Zen Mountain Monastery, which explored racial justice work from a Buddhist perspective. We identified whiteness as a manifestation of the demon Mara, the personification of the three poisons. We talked about the importance of naming Mara in its multiple, evolving forms, and how the Buddhist philosophy of Yogacara provides helpful tools for recognizing and being liberated from the harmful conditioning of whiteness.

The white backlash to racial justice progress inside and outside of Buddhist communities has reminded me as a Buddhist scholar and practitioner that Mara doesn’t give up without a fight. Like Siddhartha sitting under the Bodhi Tree resisting the threats and temptations of Mara, we must remain firm in our resolve and name Mara’s armies for what they are—reactionary forces rooted in ignorance, aversion, and greed that aim to maintain the status quo and keep us ensnared in cycles of suffering. ○



ANN GLEIG is an associate professor of religion and cultural studies at the University of Central

Florida and author of *American Dharma: Buddhism Beyond Modernity* (Yale University Press, 2019).



HERO FOR OUR TIME

TV character Ted Lasso embodies what we need right now: goodness. In a world of antiheroes, says television critic **JENNIFER KEISHIN ARMSTRONG**, he just wants to make us better people.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW about Ted Lasso as a character is that he is capable of going viral by simply dancing with glee. He's just led a subpar American college football team to an important victory, and he's caught on camera celebrating with his players by doing an enthusiastic running man, along with a few other choice dance moves. A sports announcer showing the clip describes it as "celebrating a moment of joy with his team that you really have to see to understand, and then even when you see it, I don't necessarily know that understanding is what we're doing."

But, in fact, we are understanding. It's just the kind of understanding that goes

beyond words. Those dance moves? They are the understanding. This is the koan of Ted Lasso.

Ted Lasso was one of those quarantine TV saviors, like *Tiger King* or *The Queen's Gambit*, but with a major twist: a truly inspiring title character, without an ounce of cynicism. Ted wasn't here to shock us with his lack of morals, or intrigue us with his dark side, or wow us with his stellar smarts. In fact, he was here to do the opposite. He wanted to show us there was good in the world, at exactly the time we needed it.

As it turned out, this felt far more startling than the pileup of animal cruelty, shady dealings, and maybe-murders

that defined our first national quarantine obsession, *Tiger King*. In fact, *Ted Lasso* felt downright revolutionary.

I started watching after two friends whose taste I trust *begged* me to check it out, despite a premise that offered me absolutely nothing on its surface. It's a show, they explained, based on an NBC Sports promo, about a goofy American football coach from Kansas who's recruited to coach a British soccer team. He's basically set up to fail, but he begins to make progress through the first season mainly through his guileless approach to people. Like the title character, the show shouldn't work. But it does, and that's the miracle.



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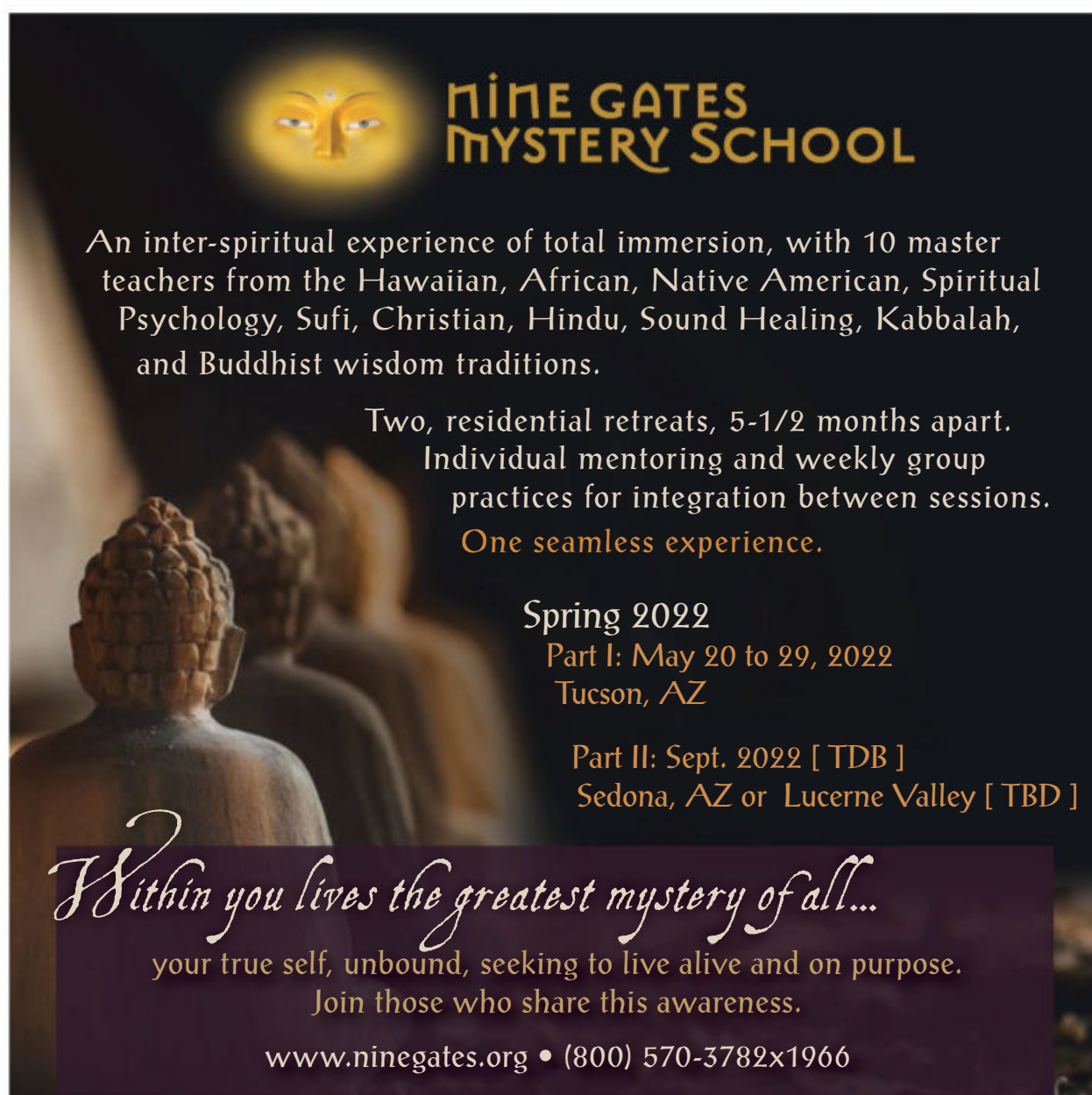



It premiered last summer on Apple TV+, and slowly built word-of-mouth to the point of near absurdity. It was the new *Schitt's Creek*, everyone wanting to tell everyone else it was so good. This only intensified after Jason Sudeikis won a Golden Globe for his performance and the show won a prestigious Peabody Award heading into its second season this summer.

Like *Schitt's Creek*, *Ted Lasso* taps into something that's been mostly missing in TV in general, an absence that became even more glaring during the darkest pandemic days: goodness. For more than twenty years, our prestige television has been rife with *Sopranos*-style anti-heroes—Walter White of *Breaking Bad*, Don Draper of *Mad Men*, the women of *Orange Is the New Black*, even Kate Winslet's riveting main character in the recent *Mare of Easttown*. These are people we root for despite their massive moral failings, and they've made for some high art on television.

But we're ready for genuinely good heroes now, even more so after a grueling year of witnessing the cruel capriciousness of life. *Ted Lasso* offers a perfect bridge between Tony Soprano and pure, unearned, goody-two-shoes-ness. The writing and supporting characters allow enough cynicism and wit to balance Ted, but it's refreshing to see someone rewarded for kindness and empathy. One of Ted's signature moves is looking into someone's eyes and saying, "I appreciate you." One of the miracles of the show is that, as played by Jason Sudeikis, we believe him.

Nothing in the show explicitly references Buddhism (in the very first episode, Ted is reading a well-worn, vintage edition of Jack Kerouac's *The Dharma Bums*). But *Ted Lasso* exemplifies a number of Buddhist values. His viral dance is one of true expression, a character trait he displays throughout



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the series. He is in tune with his emotions and often shares them with startlingly skillful means. He is, however, hardly perfect, and he lashes out when he's devastated by his impending divorce.

Ted's superpower is that he's unafraid of intimacy and vulnerability, and this disarms everyone around him. When a cynical British journalist named Trent Crimm spends a day with him, intending to do a hatchet job story, he instead comes away from the experience baffled and charmed. Ted explains to him over dinner that his coaching strategy is to help the players become better people, nothing more. "In a business that celebrates ego, Ted reins his in," Trent Crimm writes. "And though I believe that Ted Lasso will fail here ... I won't gloat when it happens. Because I can't help but root for him." What people at first read as weakness—look at this rube!—is strength. He is Mr. Rogers coaching Premier League.

It's the kind of soft gentility we need after the last year-plus. Ted Lasso is who you'd want on your side in a quarantine, and perhaps even more so as we continue to recover to whatever extent we can. He would tell us that we can do this. He would tell us that he appreciates us, at whatever level of effort we can give right now. He would know we're doing our best.

This is not the kind of character who makes us think, "What Would Ted Do?" Instead, I find myself thinking, "What would Ted say to me right now? What's the pep talk he would give me? What strengths do I have that I take for granted, that he would sincerely point out to me right now? How can I be a better person? How can I be the person Trent Crimm roots for, in spite of himself? How could I make Ted proud?"

Whether facing a wife who wants to end their marriage or a boss who has been purposely undermining him, he manages to flip the situation—and evoke audience tears—with presence and grace. He doesn't lash out. He doesn't argue. When he forgives his boss for her treachery, we understand that it comes from his empathy for her own traumatic and public divorce. It comes from a place of strength, the kind of strength we can only hope to have.

The kind of strength, that is, that Tony Soprano and Walter White could never even dream of. The kind of strength the world needs more of right now. [O](#)



JENNIFER KEISHIN ARMSTRONG is a Zen practitioner, journalist, and writer on popular culture. Her new book is *When Women Invented Television*.

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WAVES OF CHANGE

From menopause to emotional upheavals to contemplating mortality, TRACY FRANZ recommends new books to help us navigate life's changes.



AGING, AND THE CHANGES that come with it, are a natural part of life's journey—and they bring challenges. Psychologist Francesca Dupraz-Brossard's ***The Mindful Menopause Workbook: Daily Practices*** (Wisdom) is a resource for exploration, growth, and discovery for women entering or going through menopause. The bulk of this workbook is a year's worth of thoughtfully composed daily journal prompts—and space to write—on topics ranging from mood issues, to weight gain and tiredness, to hot flashes and sexuality.

Many of the prompts point to the two supporting sections of the book: one focusing on relevant mindfulness meditations and the other on yoga poses. Women entering the second half of life will find this book a valuable resource for bringing mindfulness and joy to their experience of change.

"A really happy person is one who feels real streamings of bliss and satisfaction

in their body and mind, and automatically wants to share that with others," writes Buddhist scholar and leader Robert Thurman in his new book, ***Wisdom Is Bliss: Four Friendly Fun Facts That Can Change Your Life*** (Hay House). Drawing on his own experience as a seeker, Thurman presents accessible, in-depth teaching on the four noble truths and the eightfold path—the essential "curriculum" that the Buddha originally offered to his adherents. Chapters are organized according to this curriculum, moving from science to ethics to mental practices. "Welcome to the path," he writes. "I hope you are pleasantly surprised by just how real and applicable these teachings can be."

The late Buddhist scholar and novelist C. W. "Sandy" Huntington Jr. was diagnosed with terminal cancer in the winter of 2020. ***What I Don't Know About***

Death: Reflections on Buddhism and Mortality (Wisdom Publications) is a collection of profound and deeply moving essays from his final months. "I am dying," writes Huntington, "and what I don't know about death has become a metaphor for what I don't know about life. As I'm compelled to give myself over to this darkness of unknowing, I'm finding a new and deepened understanding about what it means to come to terms with what I've been given—with what Buddhism calls the 'suchness' (*tathata*) of things." Drawing on scholarly and creative works as well as personal experience, Huntington's writings are a powerful and illuminating meditation on our brief human existence.

Three new books on Zen are out this season. ***Zen Conversations: The Scope of Zen Teaching and Practice in North America*** (Sumeru Press), by Richard Bryan McDaniel, offers in-depth



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conversations with forty-two Western Zen teachers. The interviews reveal both shared and differing Buddhist backgrounds and experiences, but all point to a central cohesive theme of Zen as a path of unflinching honesty. Each chapter focuses on a compelling topic: practice and intention, meditation, adherence to tradition, social and environmental activism, and how each teacher came to Zen.

You Are Still Here: Zen Teachings of Kyogen Carlson (Shambhala), edited by Sallie Jiko Tisdale, is a collection of talks given over several decades by Dharma Rain Zen Center cofounder Kyogen Carlson (1948–2014). As he illuminates the heart of Zen practice in these beautifully edited selections, Carlson reveals his humor, humility, and unwavering dedication to the path. He once told his dharma heir Tisdale, “There’s so much to learn and so much to know. It’s good to keep moving forward. And yet whatever we have is, in a very profound way, absolutely complete and always enough.” Many topics within this volume are organized according to Dharma Rain’s liturgical calendar, with themes that arise through the seasons around traditional Buddhist holidays and practice periods. Some selections include question-and-answer sessions between Carlson and his students.

Thich Nhat Hanh’s ***Zen and the Art of Saving the Planet*** (HarperOne) presents a comprehensive Buddhist approach to environmental activism. The book begins with his teaching on the radical insight of the *Diamond Sutra*, which is meant to “cut through” delusion to realize ultimate reality. This is followed by a series of teachings on “the action dimension”—ways in which we can embody mindfulness in our daily being. The final selections focus on seeing and being together in communities of resistance. Sangha, he says, is essential: “To succeed on our path, we have to take refuge in a community.” Throughout the book, insightful commentary by Sister True Dedication—Thich

Nhat Hahn’s student and the editor for this volume—provides additional reflections, stories, and observations of life with him in Plum Village Monastery.

“What would happen if we thought about animals—all animals? Would we change the way we source our food, the way we treat the natural world, and the way we look at animals in zoos?” asks journalist Henry Mance in the introductory pages of his new book ***How to Love Animals in a Human-Shaped World*** (Viking). Mance aims to deliver an argument that he says combines the sometimes at-odds values of animal ethics and environmentalism. Early chapters examine the evolution of human attitudes toward animals and the various ways in which humans justify their destruction; this is juxtaposed in the second half with the ways in which humans show their love of animals. The closing chapter offers pragmatic suggestions for “how we, as individuals and as societies, can build a world that is better not just for us but for other sentient beings.”

Learning to manage strong emotions can be challenging—especially for children. In Jaimal Yogis’s ***Mop Rides the Waves of Change*** (Parallax), the second installment in this charming picture book series, the mop-haired surfer dude joins his bandmate friends, Ipo and Sammy of the Coconut Heads, as they ride real and metaphorical waves. Mop gets angry at school when he’s told it’s time to clean up after ukulele practice, and then again later, on the beach, when he encounters people littering and endangering wildlife. His Uncle Kimo reminds him of how to more skillfully ride these stormy seas. Once Mop returns to still waters, he discovers how to bring that equanimity to addressing problems in appropriate, meaningful ways. Parents may find this book a helpful tool for starting conversations. My daughter read it and said, “I learned how to find my calm when I’m angry and think of solutions instead of getting mad.” ○

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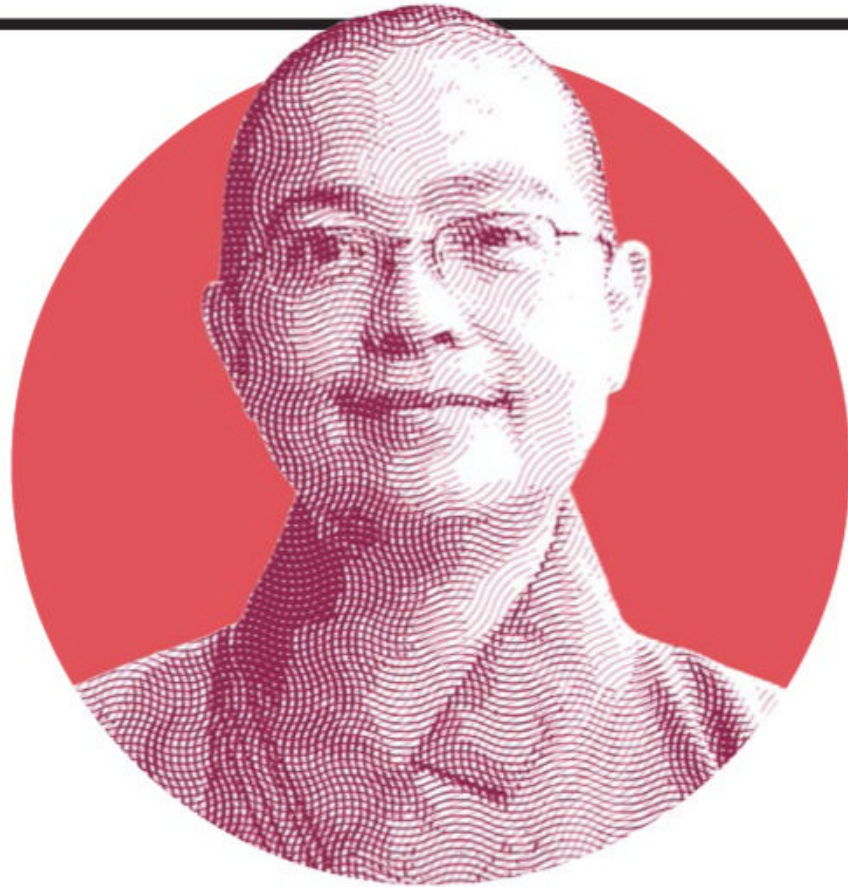
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VEN. DR. JUE JI

I GREW UP in Taipei, Taiwan. Born in the Year of Rat, I was a street-smart person. Since I have practiced Buddhism, I have tried to take off the secular layer of me and be a selfless monastic. But it is hard to beat that inborn nature!

Like most families in Taiwan, we practiced folk religion at home, worshipping all kinds of gods and goddesses out of fear instead of respect. It was not until I started attending Buddhist dharma lectures in my mid-twenties that I saw religion from a different perspective.

Buddhism helps people find inner peace and see things as they really are. Having learned we are born again and again in the cycle of the six realms, based on the karma accumulated life after life, I became a vegetarian immediately. That decision was a turning point in my life. I began to befriend vegetarian dharma brothers and sisters from the Buddhist

communities and they encouraged me to explore the dharma further. So I quit my job in the corporate world and renounced my household life. I was tonsured under Venerable Master Hsing Yun of the Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Order in 1990 and became a fully ordained Buddhist bhiksuni in 1991.

For the past three decades, I have dedicated myself to the study and practice of Humanistic Buddhism. I am currently a dharma teacher and the director of Fo Guang Shan Xiang Yun Temple in Austin, Texas. I feel blessed in choosing this path so I can serve others and help them understand the Buddha's teaching. It is very rewarding when I see visitors appreciate the beauty and serenity of my temple. I believe that the bodhi seeds have been planted in their minds by their visit, and those seeds will sprout and grow somewhere, someday. ►

What is your practice tradition?

Chinese Mahayana Buddhism in the Fo Guang Shan Order of Humanistic Buddhism.

Primary teacher?

Venerable Master Hsing Yun.

What is your current project?

“Vege Plan A,” introducing a vegetarian diet to Buddhists and non-Buddhists. This is a project of Buddha’s Light International Association, an affiliated organization of Fo Guang Shan. Through food sales, we introduce various vegetarian food items to our community members.

Favorite meditation practice?

I like chanting. What could be a better meditation practice than the integration of body, speech, and mind in communication with the Buddha?

What dharma books do you recommend?

Buddha-Dharma Pure and Simple, by Venerable Master Hsing Yun.

Your favorite virtue?

Honesty. Be true to oneself and others.

Your chief characteristic?

Sharing, joyful, positive.

Your principal poison?

Vulnerable in front of food, especially potato chips.

Your idea of happiness?

To appreciate my duty.

Your idea of misery?

Joblessness.

What’s the worst job you’ve ever had?

Tutoring math in my college days. I was not good at math.

If not yourself, who would you be?

An ocean that can travel all over places and meet all kinds of people and beings.

The natural talent you’d most like to have?

Mentoring teenagers.

Your favorite current TV show?

America’s Got Talent.

What’s for dinner?

Dumpling + noodle soup.

A motto that represents you?

Every day is a good day.

Guilty pleasure?

Afternoon tea. ○



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Retirement Living: The Next Generation.

HAD SOMEONE TOLD Susan O'Connell, President of The San Francisco Zen Center, when she started her Zen journey over thirty years ago, that one day she would manage a retirement community, she would have politely questioned their sanity.

And yet today that very same Susan O'Connell is spearheading one of the most audacious Life Plan Communities ever imagined. Set in the heart of Sonoma County, Enso Village will be the first of its kind—an inclusive retirement community where Zen practice will influence every aspect of living from design and architecture to healthcare, cuisine and community culture.

“Our focus is on mindful aging, experiencing the joys of nature, participating in environmental stewardship, and providing contemplative care for adults over the age of 60,” said O'Connell.

Enso Village is a collaboration between the San Francisco Zen Center and Kendal Corporation, a Quaker-based leader in transforming the aging experience that has pioneered the federal model, a benevolent management approach that emphasizes personal growth and community engagement to seek out the best in each person and the joy in every moment.

“The idea of Zen-inspired senior living has been on our mind for years. As our practitioners were aging, we saw there was no retirement community that catered to a Zen lifestyle,” says O'Connell. “When we met the team at Kendal, we were immediately impressed by their experience, but it was their values that made us feel confident they were in tune with our vision.”

Building bridges before walls.

CONSTRUCTION STARTED in June 2021 and a vibrant community has already formed around the vision behind Enso Village. Interest in the concept extends well beyond the Zen Center community, and

indeed, beyond the Bay Area. Before any formal marketing had started, more than 4,000 individuals had placed their names on an interest list, eager to learn more. Enso Village is now taking reservations for its 200 independent living residences, although the majority are already reserved.

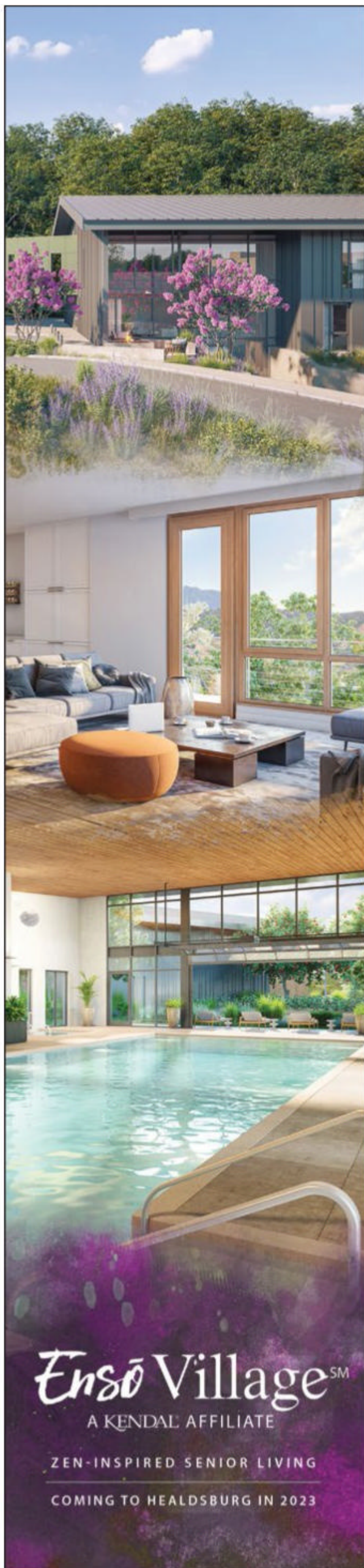
“The overwhelming response shows there is appeal to a Zen-inspired life that extends beyond those currently practicing,” said O'Connell. “The growing cultural popularity of living a more mindful lifestyle has people hungry for options outside of conventional senior living communities.”

Enso Village will offer all of what you might expect to see in a modern Life Plan Community. Residents will have access to a pristine fitness center, tranquil community spaces, and access to onsite healthcare. But Enso Village will also feature a meditation hall and farm-to-table dining operated by the staff of the renowned San Francisco-based Greens Restaurant. Enso Village will present a creative and ever-changing menu of freshly-prepared meals, sourcing local ingredients including some grown in their own gardens.

Like the values it is rooted in, Enso Village will inspire a spirit of connection, compassion and mutual respect that embraces residents of all backgrounds and beliefs. While Zen practice is welcome here, so are all faiths and philosophies. Enso Village is open to all who are open to aging mindfully and living joyfully in a beautiful and sustainably-designed environment.

“We knew this was a special project when we started. Seeing the interest from such a wide variety of people provides validation for all the years we put into planning,” said O'Connell. “We believe that Enso Village will set a new standard in retirement living and we're so grateful to be a part of it.”

Enso Village will open in 2023. For more information on the community please visit <https://enso.kendal.org>.





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"KENCHOJI TEMPLE IN THE RAIN" BY KAWASE HASUI

His Dharma Heir

*Zen nun Aikon's late teacher—a sexist—doubted she'd be able to keep his temple going. Now, in the flourishing zendo, she settles herself into his old seat. From **RUTH OZEKI's** new novel, *The Book of Form and Emptiness*.*

A SHARP CLACK ECHOED through the garden, and she looked up. The timekeeper, a novice who had just taken her vows, stood on the walkway, holding her wooden mallet, getting ready to strike the wooden plaque again to signal time for zazen and evening service. Aikon could hear people arriving, taking off their shoes and heading toward the zendo. Ever since her book hit the bestseller lists in Japan, people had been showing up to the little temple. Some came once or twice out of curiosity, but others, mostly office workers from nearby companies, had started coming regularly to sit zazen, listen to her dharma talks, and attend daylong retreats. A few of the women, refugees like Aikon from the corporate world, asked to stay, to be ordained and live there as her students, so now there were three nuns in residence, too. The temple was doing well, but sadly, her teacher had not lived long enough to see this.

She closed down her computer. The rest of the emails would have to wait. She stood up slowly, stretching her legs, and then changed into a more formal robe. At the altar, she lit candles and a stick of incense. A framed portrait of her teacher rested beside the Senju Kannon. He was dressed in his finest ceremonial robe, the one she'd mended so often because he could not afford a new one. He gazed at her from the frame, and even though his mouth was stern, his eyes were smiling, as if at some private joke, one that he expected her to share. She touched the stick of incense to her forehead, but before she made the

offering, she paused and looked at him, meeting his gaze and holding it—something she had never done while he was alive.

Well, she asked him silently. Are you satisfied?

She'd never known whether her teacher had believed in her or not. When, bubbling with excitement, she had told him her idea about writing a book, he'd sat there with his eyes closed, patiently listening as she explained how tidying was very trendy, and the magazine she used to work for published many lifestyle articles about clutter, and books on the subject had even become international best sellers, and when she was finally done, he just sighed. If you think your book will help a few people, you should write it, he said. She remembered how dull his eyes were then, all the brightness gone out of them, and how his head drooped like an old camellia blossom on a wilting stem. I must lie down now, he said. I'm very tired.

That was the last time he had sat upright. In the months that followed, she had watched over him, working feverishly on her book and listening to the sound of his labored breathing. She knew he didn't have much time left, and she wanted to finish the book so that his spirit would be at peace when he died, knowing his temple was safe. Every morning, noon, and evening, she performed services in the abbot's quarters, lighting incense at the altar, chanting sutras, and making prostrations. Sometimes while she was chanting, his lips would move. Sometimes he pressed his palms together over his heart. And all the while, the Senju Kannon

watched over them. She was very beautiful, sitting on her lotus, the manifestation of the Bodhisattva of Compassion, whose job it was to watch over the Realm of the Hungry Ghosts. Aikon, who had dusted each of her arms and heads, felt very close to her, and as she sat at her teacher's side, writing late into the night, she would gaze up at Senju Kannon and think about the Hungry Ghosts, with their great, big bellies that were always empty and their insatiable appetites and never-ending desire for more. Their mouths were as tiny as pinholes and their throats were as thin as a thread, so they could never consume enough to satisfy. Aikon understood their torment. Dear Senju Kannon, she prayed. Please help me write this book. Please let my book be of help to others who suffer like I did. Please let my book be a huge best seller so I can pay for the new roof.

On the day her teacher died, the roofers still hadn't been paid. With a heavy heart, she sat with him and watched him as he struggled to breathe. She had failed to finish the book in time and failed to fulfill her promise to bring in income for the temple. He must be terribly disappointed in me, she thought. If he died disappointed, would he become a hungry ghost, too? It was a dreadful thought. And the old temple, what would become of it? Would the land be sold and the temple torn down to make room for office buildings and high-rise condominiums? In the last month of his life, her teacher had given her dharma transmission and made her his dharma heir, but without the temple, there was little to inherit or pass on. Would his lineage die as well?

And what would become of her? Where would she go?

It was as if her teacher could hear her thinking. He had been unresponsive for days, as his breathing slowed and the silence between each inhalation grew longer. But just then, he opened his eyes and looked straight at her, and his eyes were bright and burning with intensity. He didn't say anything, but he didn't need to. She knew what he was thinking.

Okay, she whispered. I won't give up. Somehow, I'll keep our temple going. I promise.

It seemed like he heard her. The light in his eyes seemed to flicker in response, and then he blinked and closed them forever.

Now she still felt his eyes on her from inside the portrait frame, watching her with that quizzical expression. The curl of smoke trailed from the tip of the incense as she reached forward to make the offering, planting the stick firmly in the bowl of ash.

"You thought I couldn't do it," she said. "But I did." Her assistant, another novice named Kimi, slid open the door, bowed, and then stood aside to let her pass. Aikon stepped out into the hallway that led to the zendo, bowing to the timekeeper as she passed and glancing at the graceful calligraphy painted on the wooden plaque. It was an old Zen poem, written by her teacher in archaic Chinese characters:

Great is the Matter of Birth and Death.

Life is transient. Time will not wait.

Wake up! Wake up!

Do not waste a moment!

The verse, while admonitory, always made Aikon perk up and pay attention. In the zendo, she settled herself in her teacher's old seat and looked out over the room at the rows of meditators who were settling on their cushions, turning to face the smooth, white walls. On one side were the guests and parishioners, and across from them were the nuns. She ran her eye down the row, checking her students' posture, pleased to see that their backs were straight and their heads cleanly shorn and gleaming in the dim twilight. It was a lineage of women, Aikon thought. That's what her teacher got. None of them were looking at her. They were sitting with their eyes downcast, deep in meditation, but if they had been watching, they would have seen a tiny smile, like a shadow, flicker across her face. Strong, competent women, the abbess thought. The old man got what he deserved. ○

From The Book of Form and Emptiness by Ruth Ozeki, published by Viking. © 2021 by Ruth Ozeki Lounsbury.



The Creative Force

In Conversation with Novelist Ruth Ozeki

*RUTH OZEKI is a Zen priest and the acclaimed author of My Year of Meats, A Tale for the Time Being, and the new novel The Book of Form and Emptiness. Lion's Roar's **NANCY CHU** talks to her about her creative process, the transformative power of grief, and what it's like growing up mixed-race in America.*

NANCY CHU: *The Book of Form and Emptiness is about a boy, Benny, whose father dies. In response to that tragedy, Benny begins to hear voices, while his mom, Annabelle, develops a hoarding problem. What does this novel say about loss?*

RUTH OZEKI: Grief sensitizes us, it opens us up. With Benny, his grief and his confusion over his father's death make him more receptive to things that perhaps the rest of us can't perceive. Annabelle, too, is a deeply receptive person who sees the beauty in everything, and this is why she hoards. She's drawn to objects and their histories because they have an animate presence and energy for her.

During the funeral, Benny hears his father calling his name. This not an uncommon phenomenon. People frequently report hearing the voice of a loved one who has passed away, and in fact this happened to me after my dad died. I'd be doing something, washing the dishes or getting dressed, and suddenly I'd hear him calling my name. It sounded like a voice, his voice, outside my head, and my heart would leap. Then I'd remember, *Oh, no, he can't be here*, and I'd relive loss and grief every time this happened. Eventually, after about a year or so, his voice faded, or I stopped hearing him, and I kind of forgot about the experience.

Then, years later, during a reading I was giving at a library, I was talking about how fictional characters come to me as voices, and an older man in the audience raised his hand and asked if I heard the voices with my ear, or if it was more like I was hearing them with my mind. He explained that the reason he was asking was because his son heard voices—heard them with his ear in the same way I'd heard my father's voice calling to me—and found it very disturbing.

These two experiences started me thinking about voice hearing and its relation to grief and creativity, and this is where the character of Benny came from. What if a child hears his dad's voice after his dad dies, but instead of fading away, like my father's did, his voices proliferate? What happens if he starts to hear not only human voices, but also the voices of things in the world? At the time, too, I was thinking about the Zen koan about insentient beings, and the question,

"do insentient beings speak the dharma?" I wanted to investigate this koan in fictional form.

How is your new novel about the interplay between form and emptiness?

The phrase "form and emptiness" comes from the *Heart Sutra*, one of the core Mahayana Buddhist texts. The line we chant is "Form is emptiness, emptiness is form." Emptiness, in this sense, refers to impermanence, and the way all things, all beings, are impermanent and exist in a perpetual state of interdependent flux, or dependent co-arising. None of us—human beings, animals, insects, books, stones, trees—has a fixed, essential self or identity independent of everything and everyone else, and this sense of interconnectedness is, I think, what Benny comes to appreciate in the novel. His relationship with his mother. His relationships with his friends. His relationship with his book.

So as I was writing, I was thinking about impermanence, interdependence, and the way



PHOTO BY DANIELLE TAIT

being flows in and out through time and space, but also about books and stories. About the ever present, creative, generative force in the world that sparks all of us into being and is the source of all the stories we tell.

Your works explore growing up mixed-race, cultural fluidity, and transnationalism. How do you see your work in the context of Asian American literature?

I was born in 1956, on the East Coast, and when I was growing up, there was no Asian American literature that I was aware of. I loved reading, and in particular, I loved novels, but it didn't occur to me that somebody with a face like mine could write them. It seemed culturally inappropriate somehow. I tried to write haiku, but I'm a verbose person, and the haiku thing didn't work out. It wasn't until much later, after Asian American women writers like Maxine Hong Kingston and Amy Tan started publishing, that I felt it might be possible to write a novel.

All of my novels have mixed-race characters, and I think this is because I write about cultural hybridity and outsiders. Benny is an outsider, too, and so it made sense for him to be mixed-race. When you're mixed-race, you're always an outsider, neither here nor there—or at least that's how I felt when I was growing up. I didn't know any other mixed-race people. When I was in the U.S., people saw me as Japanese, and when I was in Japan, they saw me as American. This sense of displacement, of not belonging, was something I'd always felt, and I've shared it with all my characters.

What's your meditation practice and how does Zen inform your writing?

My relationship with Zen meditation started when I was three years old and saw my grandfather sitting on the floor meditating. It was weird because this was in Connecticut, and in Connecticut, back then, adults didn't sit on the floor, and they didn't meditate. He and my grandmother had arrived from Japan late the previous night. In the morning, I went to their room to call them for breakfast, and I opened the door, and there he was, cross-legged, sitting upright. It was the first

time I'd ever seen him. He opened his eyes and looked at me. Because he was sitting on the floor, we were the same height, and our eyes met, and I was amazed and probably terrified, too. That is my first memory and my introduction to meditation.

Later, though, in the 1960s, everyone started meditating—the hippies, the Beats—and I was attracted to it. I remember trying to meditate when I was seven or eight, and then later, too, when I was a teenager.

But I didn't get serious about meditation and Buddhist practice until I was in my late thirties, and naturally it was my encounter with sickness, old age, and death that prompted this. My father was old and sick, and I was confronting the fact of his mortality for the first time. I was living in New York and started practicing at the Shambhala Center. I liked Tibetan Buddhism, and I think I was attracted to a tradition that wasn't Japanese, because I'd had experiences in Japan with Zen monastics that were problematic. I was turned off by Zen.

Later I moved to the West Coast, where I met Norman Fischer, who is a writer and a Soto Zen priest and teacher. I sat a sesshin with him, and felt a powerful sense of connection with his teachings. I knew that he was a teacher I could trust. I was really struggling at the time. My dad had just died, and I was in a lot of pain. Sitting that sesshin was a turning point. It felt like coming home, and even though this teacher was a Jewish guy from Pennsylvania, the Japanese Zen forms felt familiar—the chants, the language, the kimono and robes.

Norman is a writer, and Zen has a long history of disparaging writing. It claims to be a “special transmission outside the scriptures, not founded on words and letters,” so as a writer, I was reassured to find a teacher who loved words and letters as much as I did. When I first started practicing Zen seriously, I wondered if the practice was going to interfere with my writing. But the more I practiced and wrote, the more I realized they're not incompatible. They're two different expressions that arise from the same place. I no longer worry that they're at odds. I try to sit in the morning, although when I'm deep in a novel, there are mornings when I get out of bed and go straight to the computer and start writing, and that's fine, too. ○

Everything Dies



It's the Buddha's basic teaching. It's life's universal truth. It's what we most want to deny. **SALLIE JIKO TISDALE** on how this hard but liberating truth can transform your life.



MOST BUDDHISTS PUT FLOWERS on the altar. We know flowers are beautiful, but that isn't their purpose here. Flowers begin to die as soon we cut them; we carefully lay death in the place that symbolizes our awakening. We bow and make offering to this crucial truth, built into the bones of the world.

The Buddha spoke volumes of words, an immense canon, but most of what he said comes down to this: Things change. Change cannot be avoided. Change hurts. The fundamental teaching of all Buddhism can be stated as *everything dies*. The Buddha taught this, it fills the sutras, it is repeated by our teachers. But most of all, we learn this from our own daily lives.

You have probably learned a traditional formula or two for this insistent teaching about the transitory nature of all things:

Anicca vata sankhara: "Impermanent, alas, are all formations!"

Sabbe saokhara anicca: "All conditioned factors of existence are transitory."

In the *Maha Satipatthana Sutta*: "[One] abides observing the phenomenon of arising...abides observing the phenomenon of passing away..."

As a new practitioner, I learned the catechism this way: "All compounded things are subject to dissolution." The language was strange when I first heard it, and as a young practitioner I found myself parsing the words: *Compounded*. *Dissolution*. Notice, I was told, how everything is put together from other things and will be taken apart. I began to notice. A table, a house, a nation—I could see this.

But if *all* things are compounded and will dissolve, then *I* am compounded and I will dissolve. And this was not something I could easily accept.

I pretend to accept my own death. Most senior practitioners do; many of them may even believe they accept it. Buddhists have their own peculiar points of pride, outside the usual stream of things we pride ourselves on, like humility and asceticism. Plenty of us are proud of our equanimity in the face of extinction, at least until we see the headlights bearing down.

So how deep does this acceptance really go? It's not just Buddhists who kid themselves about being prepared for death. It's people. It's all of us who don't want to admit that we are organisms fighting for life, that we can sagely repeat, "*Anicca, annica*, all compounded things are subject to dissolution," without really confronting what it means.

Do we believe that we will dissolve? No. Not deep down in the root of the small self, because the small self plans to live forever. When we say that "Everything dies," we mean *everything dies but me*. And we can get kind of fancy about this point: *Everything dies, including my body (but not my awareness—not me)*. *Everything is subject to dissolution, but something passes through to a new form and doesn't ever go away (that's me)*. In a thousand ways, most of them not entirely conscious, we hold on to the hope that something of this self, somehow, will remain, and we hold on to that even as everything we touch slides away like sand in running water.

Why should we pretend to more confidence than we feel? Everyone is a beginner when it comes to death. We can't practice it. When my mother died, it was the very first time that my mother died, and I didn't know how to do that, to be a daughter whose mother was dying, to be

FLOWER ART BY TASHI MANNOX; PHOTO: ORIGINAL FROM WIKIMEDIA COMMONS. DIGITALLY ENHANCED BY RAWPIXEL

Death and Life
by Gustav Klimt

Do we really believe that we will dissolve? Not deep down in the roots of the small self, because the small self plans to live forever.

a daughter whose mother had ceased to exist. When my best friend died—when my teacher died—I didn't know how to do it. Each death I've known has been the very first one of its kind. Even with experience—I know how grieving feels, I know the altered state of a vigil, I know a lot about that—I can't entirely prepare. And when I die, it will be the first time this particular *me* dies, and I will be a beginner.

Yes, I know that we are all dying all the time. That's what it means to be a compounded thing dissolving—this self, this moment, gives way to the next as the girl gives way to the woman who gives way to the crone. I know that the *me* of today is not the *me* of yesterday, and I was also taught that *if you die once, you never need to die again*. But the real teaching of that formula, the falling away of body and mind for a ceaseless moment, is that *you are already dead*. I know this, but I don't think my body does.

Slay the demons of hope and fear. My teacher would say this to me at a time when I was knocking up against deepening anxiety. My stubborn refusal to submit to the meaning of that anxiety made me more anxious still. The stronger I resisted, the deeper my anxiety became, until I sank well into true fear. How could I slay that demon when I was afraid to walk out the door?

WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT DEATH bluntly, honestly, and often.

The original Pali word for aversion, *dosa*, is various and shaded. It can be translated as anger or hatred, denial, projection, distortion, aggression, repulsion, even disgust. That is how it can feel to talk about death, about *our own* death. But I want you to think about it and I want you to talk about it. Even if you have considered your own

death deeply, how often do you talk about it? Do you talk about your private conflicts or confusion, your questions, your plans?

How do we begin?

Begin with the fear.

Begin with the resistance. We know the question. It is why we begin to practice in the first place: *Why do we suffer?* And we know the answer. It is why we keep practicing: *We suffer because of change and resistance to change.*

But knowing the answer does not stop the question from being asked, and knowing an answer today doesn't mean we will remember the answer tomorrow. Ignorance is the first link in the twelve-fold chain of causation—ignorance of impermanence, of *anicca*, of *anatta*, of no-self. This chain feeds itself endlessly—our ignorance of the ephemeral nature of the self building a self over and over. The chain is broken only by the transformation of that first mistake, being ignorant about the compounded nature of the self, which is not separate or bounded at all.

What do you fear about death? Make a list. Be honest. Autopsy? Being alone? Pain? Loss of privacy? Do you fear soiling your bed? Do you fear needles? For what do you hope? Make a list. Be honest. Do you want to see it coming? Do you want to be asleep? Do you want to be very old?

Ask the question again. Why am I afraid? Because I will die. What does that mean? (Wait a minute. *Will* I die? Do I have to die?) Ask yourself: Are you ready to die? Don't answer too quickly, because that last one is a doozy. Even people who have made great strides in accepting the fact of their own inevitable dissolution will be flooded with adrenaline when the headlights bear down. The body has its own hopes.

Talk about death. Talk about everything. Imagine it. Write a description of the scene of your death. Where are you? What do you see? What do you smell, taste, touch? Who is there? Are you inside or outside? Is it warm or cool? Is there music, or words?

PHOTO: ©EZIOGUTZEMBERG / DREAMTIME.COM



*Vanitas Life, Death
and Resurrection by
Ezio Gutzemberg*



CLOSE TO DEATH

“Then I Had a Wonderful Experience”

Even a renowned Buddhist teacher like **YONGEY MINGYUR RINPOCHE** was transformed when he came close to death.

DURING MY FOUR-YEAR “wandering retreat,” from 2011 to 2015, I went anonymously from place to place in India and Nepal, living on the streets and not staying anywhere for too long. In the northern Indian town of Kushinagar, where the Buddha is believed to have died, I got very sick with vomiting and diarrhea from the water I was drinking. This lasted for two or three days, and one morning my health got so bad I was sure I was dying.

This near-death experience was actually the best experience of my wanderings.

As a Dzogchen practitioner, my main meditation is to rest in the nature of mind. The main advice in Dzogchen is to simplify—to really, really let go. When I got sick, I felt like I went through some kind of a wall—a wall of subtle stone, of solid attachment to my body, my comfort, my robes, and even the idea of Mingyur Rinpoche. I slowly let go. I thought, “If I’m going to die, okay. If I’m dying, no problem.” At that moment, I didn’t have any fear.

Then I had some kind of dissolution experience, as they call it in the texts. I saw different colors, and then slowly I could not hear or see. The elements of the body were dissolving, and I lost touch with my physical body altogether. I watched this process happening.

Then I had a wonderful experience. There was no thought, no emotion, no concept. Mind was clear and wakeful, like a blue sky with the sun shining, transparent and all-pervasive. There was no inside and outside, no subject and object, no sense of body, and no ordinary senses. At the same time, mind was pervasive, knowing, and very clear. I knew what was

going on, but it was not like normal experience. Difficult to describe, it cannot really be put into words.

I don’t know how long that was in normal time. But at a certain point, something stirred in my mind. I felt the movement of compassion and thought, “Okay, this is not the time for me to die.” This thought was somehow related to compassion mind. First, there was the thought, then it became compassion, then the compassion got stronger and stronger.

I could feel my body again. Slowly, mind narrowed into my body, no longer all-pervasive. I heard a sound: SSHHAAAA. When you first hear sound, it’s like SSHHAAAA, but normally we don’t hear this subtle level of sound. Then I could hear many normal sounds around me. I opened my eyes.

Feeling thirsty, I stood up to get some water, but as I was going to the well, I suddenly became unconscious and collapsed.

I woke up in a local clinic with a glucose drip in my arm. For one day, they gave me injections and some medicine. The next day, I recovered and left the clinic.

After this experience, my mind felt so fresh. My meditation really improved. My boundaries and hesitation were totally gone. I could appreciate being alive. I could appreciate everything. All resistance was gone, and I felt like I was one with the environment. I could go on the streets, rejoicing in everything. ○



YONGEY MINGYUR RINPOCHE is founder of Tergar Meditation Community. His most recent book, *In Love with the World*, tells the story of his wandering retreat.



Imagine it. Write it down. Then tell everyone who needs to know—your family and friends and teacher and doctor—what you want. Make a record of your wishes and don't forget to decide how your body should be handled after you're done with it. Make copies and pass them out.

Then tear it up. Let it go with all your heart. This will be the work of the rest of your life.

We can do all this. We can make a plan, buy a plot, fill out the advance directive, decide what music we want to hear as we go. But we can't plan not to die. The essence of dying is the loss of control. This is the hardest part for many of us—not that death will happen, but that it will happen without our hand on the controls. It will happen as it happens, when it happens, where it happens, and chances are it won't go according to plan. The only thing we can control, and only with practice, is how we face whatever happens.

These days it is common to talk about a "good death." (There are many official, even government-issued, definitions of a good death.) A good death is usually defined as one where a person is comfortable and at peace.

For myself, I want to think about a right death, a death that fits the life I'm trying to live. Most deaths include what anyone might call good moments and bad moments, desired and undesired consequences. So it is with our lives, and so it is with death. Right deaths are all different; you can't define the details. For me, it means a death unhidden—from me and from those who love me. It means a death met with grace and willingness when the time comes. Achieving this will be the work of the rest of my life.

IF WE CAN FACE IT, recognizing the reality of death will transform our lives.

Flowers are beautiful because they are brief. Beauty is a measure of fragility and brevity and transformation, created in part by our awareness of the precious value of this moment—this moment is what we love. Death is utterly natural, shared by all; it is also heartbreaking. That equation isn't dissonant; it's the nature of love. With

our eyes open to change, each thing we meet is luminous and sparkling. To love means to lose. To lose means to love. The last breath allows us to cherish another without reservation, holding nothing back.

Slay the demons, my teacher told me. That meant accepting my anxiety, my fear. It meant coming to see that hope and fear are one thing: fantasies of the unborn future. Hope pulls and fear pushes and together they keep us stuck in what has not happened, living a half-life of imaginary events. I exhausted myself on that mountain, until I gave up. Giving up was the key. Accepting the demons of hope and fear until they slew me, which was what my teacher had been saying all along.

The parable of the burning house told in the *Lotus Sutra* is a familiar one. The children do not know the house is on fire, so they won't leave until their father tempts them with carts full of treasure. So we are with our own suffering, our ignorance. The Buddha offers us treasures, including one so great we couldn't even imagine it.

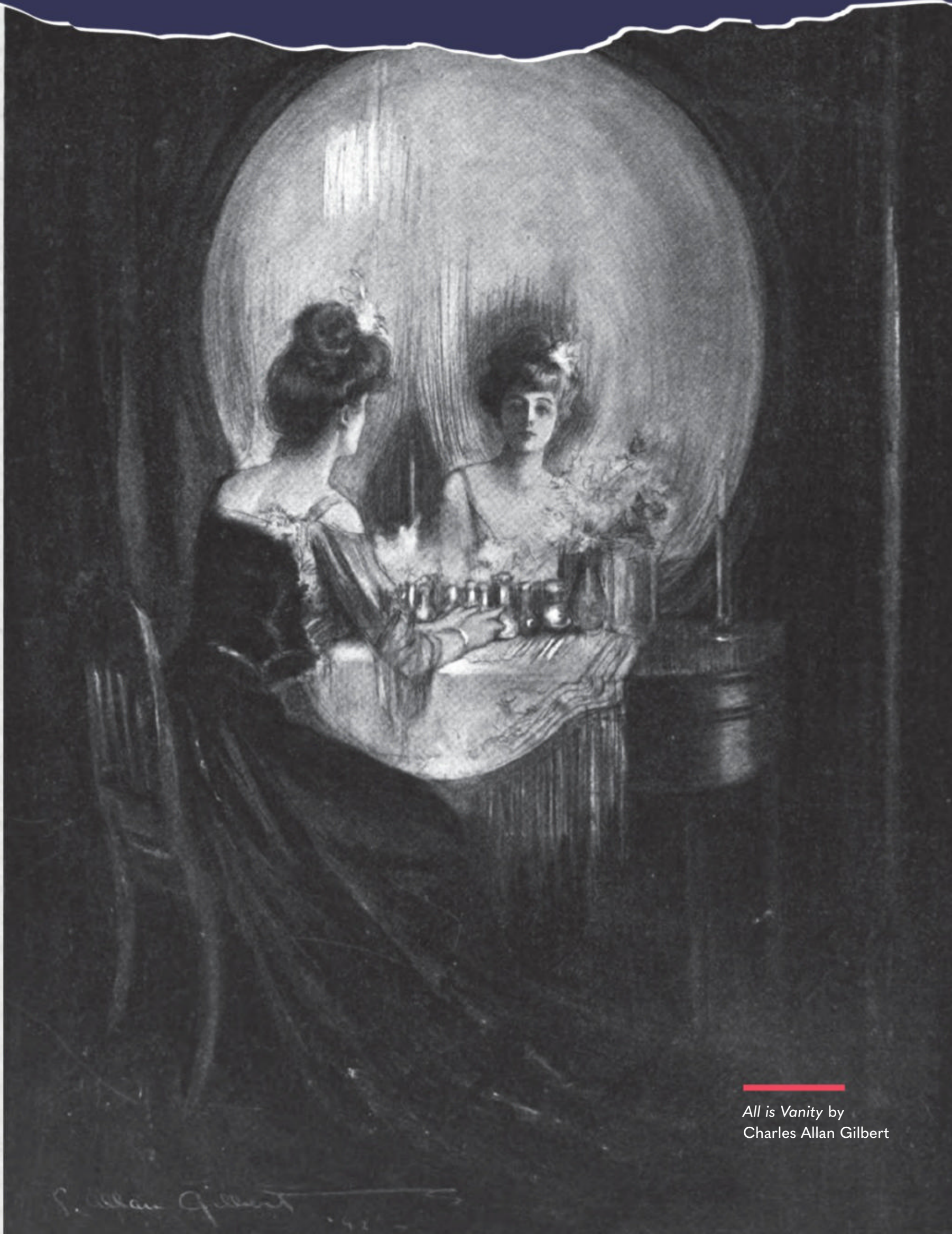
Some years ago, I had a brief, vivid dream. I saw a room completely engulfed in flames, and several people were walking calmly through the room, smiling. One turned and looked at me and said, "I can't tell you how safe I feel in this house."

When I begin to truly accept myself as this compounded thing—a dewdrop, a bubble, a cloud—when I really believe for a moment that my precious *me* is a passing sigh in the oceanic cosmos of change, then I begin to find safety inside the burning house. I don't need to escape if I know how to live inside it. Not needing to escape, I no longer need rewards. I just walk through it, aware of dissolving. ○



SALLIE JIKO TISDALE is a lay dharma teacher at Dharma Rain Zen Center in Portland, Oregon. She is the author of several books, including the recent *Advice for Future Corpses (and Those Who Love Them)*.

Where, Oh Where Will I Go?



All is Vanity by
Charles Allan Gilbert



“When the body has dissolved into the four elements, where will you go?” asks the koan called Doushuai’s Third Barrier. Vastness into vastness, concludes Zen teacher **JOHN TARRANT**.

THIS IS A TIME of great peril and hardship. To see this clearly without panic—just to see, and to know also that there is a practice and a path that is not every-man-for-himself—is an endlessly helpful thing. The old Chan masters of China were in just such a situation, when the known world was ending and danger was at every turn. They took this into account in their practice and left instructions for us. To find a way where there is no way, we turn toward those old teachers and toward the great matters of life and death.

Here in Northern California, wildfires are burning on schedule, the garden roses are cantaloupe colored in the yellow, diffuse, and scattered light, and water is in short supply. Friends are telling me about the Permian extinction event that made the one in which we lost the dinosaurs look half-hearted. It was 250 million years ago, and came courtesy of volcanic eruptions. My friends find long views consoling; life, consciousness, will continue, if not here then somewhere else.

UM, ARE YOU ALRIGHT?

In Whole Foods yesterday, someone was holed up in the women’s bathroom, a huddle of sympathetic employees gathered outside. “Are you alright?” they asked every few minutes. “Yes, yes, I’m fine.” It had suddenly become all too much and the young woman had gone to ground. “The masks are back, the smoke is back, I’m not leaving this bathroom.”

Every manifestation wants to persist in its being. This includes oceans and planets and galaxies. Meanwhile, the changes are always at work.

The Zen poet Issa loved his young daughter. Here she is caught indoors on a wet day:

*Little girl you’ll never
teach that cat to dance.
Spring rain.*

Less than a year later she died of smallpox, and he wrote:

*The world of dew,
is the world of dew—
And yet, and yet.*

Ah yes, the intense sorrow and the feeling for the eternal are layered together. We don’t seem to have a choice about this, either the sorrow or the feeling for eternity. Grief is involuntary, the illuminated quality in our lives, also involuntary. When I look, that mysterious light is always present—under, within, on top of, throughout. The interleaved moments shine, they fill the galaxy—the sound of night rain, the cry of the geese in flight, the temple bell, the smell of toast.

But really anything will do. “What is Buddha?” “Three kilos of flax,” goes an ancient conversation.

Eternity is in everything. We’re stuck with it. It’s even in dying, which can be unpredictably full of intimacy, beauty, comedy, pain, boredom, awe—all in all, truly something not to be missed. Wiping the brow of a dying person, wiping the brow of a child with the flu—these are complete actions, revealing and justifying the universe.

“The entire meaning of your life is contained in the current matter,” said Mazu, the grand Chan master. Sooner or later, death is that matter.

WHERE TO THEN?

When the body has dissolved into the four elements, where will you go? This koan is called “Doushuai’s Third Barrier.” I encountered this enquiry when I was a student in the Maui Zendo, trying to fend off the endless changes, hoping to give a coherent shape to my life, or at least to my consciousness.

I panicked at questions that couldn’t be answered, which meant most of the things that are interesting to consider. The questions were difficult because I was looking in the wrong direction, as we so often do—that is, away from life. Questions about death and the after death are a part of the

traditional Chan koan curriculum. Dignified by their antiquity, they are the primordial instance of that which cannot be negotiated with. “I’ll never get anywhere with that,” ran through my mind. “I’ll give up and become the gardener.”

When I stopped panicking, and decided that gardening has a lot to be said for it, I understood that I could just go ahead and fail. With this consoling thought I turned toward the question. It was like a demon in a dream. I formed a relationship with it. It was enormously encouraging that I didn’t have to win through to the answer, but could be welcomed and included.

When we sit on into the night with impossible questions, that sitting is already a kind of answer and a path. We have no answer except by going to the place where we are free, beyond gain and loss, understanding and confusion. There, even if we are afraid, we are not afraid—the light is inside our fear.

Another traditional Chan way to approach the question of death is to stroll, stumble, hurry, struggle, fall accidentally, through the gates of *samadhi*—the deep concentration of meditation—and look around. This is to go to the place that doesn’t have a place or a time. It’s before you can do or say the wrong thing. And when you really enter this moment, it has no end, no beginning; it is older than the universe that seems to contain it. Then it will inevitably occur to you: “I’ve always been here.”

It’s happening now as you read and I write, and the cool, foggy, west wind has risen and drifts through the apricot and cherry trees, along with the sounds of the birds settling for the evening. “We’ve always been here,” is something you might notice. We were not born and we do not die. This is a profound expression of the reality of the emptiness at the bottom, the not-knowing that we are always moving though. That is always the ultimate thing.

WHO DIES?

An Australian poet told me of climbing a tree as a six-year-old, looking out over the Falls Country in New South Wales where water tumbles off the plateau heading east for the Pacific. She looked at her hands and her green sleeve with flowers on it and her dress, and thought of all the things she had in mind to do, and with this moment of ambition became a self, a me.

When we become a self we imagine there are parts of the universe that don’t belong to us anymore and we have to grab them. And that there are parts of the universe that are threats and not ourselves, and we have to fend them off. A

lot of portcullises and barricades are involved. The self is primarily effort. Awakening is forgetting to try so hard. You just stop working. There is nothing else to gain; everything is already here.

The universe seems to like both the process of making the self and the process of undoing the self. It’s awfully fun in both directions. The self that we put on so long ago is really like a dream—and what’s wrong with dreaming and waking up, and falling asleep, and dreaming and waking again?

There is a story that the Buddha in the first watch of the night of his awakening went deeper into the vastness, into great silence, into understanding many things. He remembered his childhood, and the mother who gave birth to him and who did not recover and died within a week. Then he remembered that he had lived before—remembered the first life, the second life, the tenth life, the hundredth life, the hundred thousandth life, through the countless formations of the universe and the countless destructions of the universe. He remembered what his names had been, what pleasures and sorrows he had experienced. He remembered lives that were not his own and could see no significant difference.

Well, what are we then?

A piece of the vastness. And each piece of the vastness is all of the vastness.

One night in retreat I dreamed some tribespeople are weaving the universe. They sit together on the ground, men and women in a forest clearing, weaving, weaving. Great trees surround them. It’s an intricate and fine pattern they are making and it is a very long piece of cloth. They have no thought other than of weaving, but the cloth extends without end.

The Chan masters used to say the world is one strip of white silk.

If you understand this, you are free to walk among flames or twining roses, while the birds call to each other. According to the Chinese version, the bodhisattva of compassion Guanyin walked happily in hell as flowers grew and fountains played, and the children clung to her skirts, until the demons in all kindness begged her to leave. We can die. It’s okay, really.

We just change places with the night sky. ○



JOHN TARRANT, ROSHI, directs the Pacific Zen Institute, a community where koan meditation, the arts, and deep conversations meet daily practice and life. He is the author of *Bring Me the Rhinoceros & Other Zen Koans that Will Save Your Life*.



CLOSE TO DEATH

The Long Haul of Covid

Zen meditators are told to “die on the cushion.” This way of letting go helped Buddhist teacher **KRITEE** when she was facing the real thing.

As long as you do not know how to die and come to growth again you are but a poor guest on this dark earth.

—Goethe

WE'D BEEN SHELTERING IN PLACE for over two weeks when the texture and sound of my breath became rough. It was the first day of my covid-19 symptoms.

My blood oxygen dropped after a few more days and I ended up needing oxygen support at home. Given my wild range of symptoms—breathlessness, chest pain, lips that turned blue from time to time—my husband and I kept our bags packed for the ER. For months after, I felt crushing fatigue and a sense of heavy rocks burning in my chest. In the early days of the pandemic, no one knew there was something called “long haul covid.” The fear of physical death was real, even though I had “died” many times before.

In years of Zen practice, I've frequently heard or repeated the phrase “Die on the cushion.” It calls on students of Zen to completely drop their body sensations, thoughts, emotions, and stories. For people who have not experienced this kind of “death” on the meditation mat, it might feel unbelievable that you can let go of your senses entirely. But this death is liberating and an essential doorway to our true interconnected and interdependent self.

When I experience this *deathness*, I feel a deep trust in life even if things are falling apart in the

physical realm. My job as a practitioner and teacher of Zen is to keep “dying” like this. And this deathness kept me going during my sickness, despite being harder to access in the midst of deep uncertainty.

About a year later, my family and friends in India faced catastrophic circumstances. Everyone I knew there was either fighting covid in their household or struggling to honor their dead during India's second ferocious wave of the virus. By that time, I had more completely inhabited the paradox of surrendering to the reality of death while energetically trying to reduce the pain and suffering of my loved ones. I would be up all night pleading with medical personnel I knew in different parts of India to arrange oxygen and life-saving drugs for my friends and relatives in Delhi. I cried many times when people I loved died, but the deeper truth of endless life was very present amidst the trauma and sleepless nights.

As a climate scientist, I know more suffering and death are on the way for humanity. There is nothing wrong with wanting to live, but the fear of death enslaves us to the very systems harming us. Our fear of old age and death results in endless consumerism, a quest for “perfect” and “immortal” leaders, and systemic oppression of others, while keeping us away from our own divine power. It is getting over our death denial that will allow us to access the life-giving inner force needed by bodhisattvas in these times. ○

KRITEE is a Rinzai Zen teacher, climate scientist, and founding teacher of Boundless in Motion, a community in Boulder, Colorado, dedicated to Zen meditation and strategic activism.



Good Death? Let's Get Real





Most of the time death won't follow our script, says Zen teacher and end-of-life expert **JOAN HALIFAX**. But amid its messiness and pain, our experience can be respected, and we can learn.

MELVIN McLEOD: *The ideal of having a "good death" is popular these days. What are your thoughts about it?*

ROSHI JOAN HALIFAX: I believe that a great discovery on the journey of dying is to be free of expectations, including the expectation of a "good death."

Few of us are looking forward to dying. Yet if we consider the inevitability of death, we probably want a good one. For some, that is dying while asleep. For others, it might be a painless death which gives them time to say goodbye to the people they love, or to finish that novel they were writing. And for the spiritually ambitious, maybe the great aspiration is to get enlightened at the moment of death.

But let's be real here. Death is just death, and we cannot really know, design, or manage how it will unfold. Stuff happens that can be way out of our control. That simply is the way it is. So thinking about a good death, I wish one for everybody, but realistically, for many people that wish might not be realized.

What might be even more unfortunate is how the idea of a "good death," or even a sane death, might cause more suffering as dying unfolds. Unintended consequences can arise in expecting, planning for, or designing a so-called "good death" that can adversely affect a dying person, their loved ones, and caregivers.

Yes, we want the best care possible. Yes, we want to be free of pain and suffering. But if we are trying to design a "good death" we could well cause ourselves more suffering, because if that's not what happens, this can be experienced as a

serious failure of character. The idea of a "good death" can be a disservice to both caregivers and the dying person.

Are there similar problems with the Buddhist approach to dying?

Yes, our Buddhist tradition might be considered complicit in this issue. The tradition has an interesting view of what might be considered a good death, which is enlightenment at the moment of death.

There are stories in the Zen canon in which the Zen master sits up, recites his death poem, and leaves his body. And in the Tibetan tradition, enlightenment at the moment of death is something one might prepare for during the course of one's life. But if you're a "regular" human and don't get enlightened in the final moments of life, one might be considered by others a kind of spiritual failure.

Maybe these narratives of enlightened dying dial down the fear of death or incentivize us to practice deeply, but they are probably not realistic for most of us. I've heard stories of well-respected Buddhist teachers, contemporaries of mine, whose journey of dying was tough, chaotic, and messy. Does this diminish the integrity of their teachings or their good heart? I don't think so.

What then can we do spiritually as we go through the dying process? Are there ways we can use this time to learn and grow?

The spiritual aspects of dying are really important. I'm not speaking about religion per se but about the existential aspects of life, including a sense of what our life has meant.

How have we touched the lives of others? How have others touched our life? Is forgiveness important, for us and others, as we move through the dying process? Is expressing love to others important for us, or receiving love from others? What has given our life meaning? Do we have regrets we need to let go of? To put it simply, I think one of

Citipati, a protector deity in Tibetan Buddhism, is visualized as two intertwined, dancing skeletons that represent perfect awareness amid the eternal dance of death.

Coming Through the Flames

Badly burned in a near-fatal plane crash, Buddhist teacher **ALLAN LOKOS** contemplates the gifts this terrible experience has given him.

ON CHRISTMAS DAY, 2012, I boarded a commercial plane in Mandalay, Myanmar, heading for Kalwa township. Thirty-eight minutes later the plane, having gone off course, sheared through heavy electrical cables, burst into flames, and crashed violently in a rice field. I was trapped inside and before I could escape, suffered burns so severe that doctors in four countries concluded I had little to no chance of survival.

Yet through extraordinary medical care, including many surgeries and considerable grafting, plus the foundation of twenty years of meditation practice, I survived and returned to teaching the dharma some four months later. I'm a bit less steady on my feet now than I used to be, but the joy and preciousness of life are present in me as never before. I still bleed when cut, grumble when hungry, and am saddened and agitated by injustice. But I am immodest enough to believe that at times I am a bit more awake to the world.

Even when I mess up and do something really unskillful, I remind myself how incredible it is that I am here, alive and able to stumble. That's a big step for me, and a gift from an otherwise horrific experience. I used to invest a great deal of time beating myself up for unskillful actions or words. Sometimes, the self-degradation went on endlessly—for days, weeks, even years. Now I see that my unhappiness benefits no one. Better it is to reflect, apologize, and deepen my commitment to a considered life, which in my case means dharma study and practice.

A year after the accident my account of the event, titled *Through the Flames*, was published. In the many media interviews that followed, I was often asked, "Have you ever wondered, *Why me? Why did this happen to me?*" My answer was always the same, "No, I never asked that. But if I had, my answer would likely have been, *Why not me?* Why should I be exempt from one of life's undeniable truths?

The historical Buddha, Shakyamuni, based his lifetime of teaching on the truth "there is *dukkha*,"

which is variously translated as suffering, unhappiness, or dissatisfaction. Having to deal with so much physical pain and mental turmoil helped me to understand the depth of *dukkha*, and further I believe that acceptance and relinquishing allowed my body to heal when medical opinion said it could not.

During the time that I was writing *Through the Flames*, the New York Times published an article about an oncologist in the Midwest who was seriously ill and had built his own coffin. He saw this as an opportunity to celebrate life and accept his impending death. I had an immediate sense I needed to speak with this man.

Although he was close to death, Jeff spent the better part of two days on the phone with me. Here are some of his words from our final conversation: "I think when people really confront death, life changes. When we are born we are given a kind of knapsack and we begin adding things to it—jealousy, anger, greed, grudges, and whatever. What people with cancer understand is how futile it is to keep carrying that knapsack.

"There is something fundamentally beautiful in this world, a spiritual force of some sort that we can address when we're walking around and be grateful for, and that is always available to us. The process of approaching my death has brought me much closer to the person I've always wanted to be."

Death is a once in a lifetime experience. To be at all ready for it takes a lifetime of preparation. I have learned that lifetime may be a lot shorter than we expected. ○



ALLAN LOKOS is founder of the Community Meditation Center in New York City. He is the author of three dharma books, including *Through the Flames: Overcoming Disaster Through Compassion, Patience, and Determination*.



the most important things we can open ourselves to in the journey of dying is a sense of completion.

My teacher, Roshi Bernie Glassman, spoke of three tenets: not knowing, bearing witness, and compassionate action. We can explore applying the first two tenets in our dying process. Not knowing means meeting death with openness, or beginner's mind, and not being driven toward a particular goal we might fall short of. Bearing witness means not separating from the truth of whatever is arising in the experience of dying. It's really about what we are learning—from pain, from incontinence, from memory loss, from fear, from all of the usual messiness of the journey out of life. And the blessings that might arise.

One of the things we need to thank modern medicine for is that there are now a number of interventions that can be offered to a dying person who is in a lot of pain. As a result of that release from the grip of pain, one can have more internal space to look deeply at the existential and spiritual aspects of the experience of dying.

You might ask, have I done what I wanted to do with my life? We should look at that, because it's difficult to carry the burden of remorse as we die. Anger can also come up if there is a loss of control in the experience of dying. If that is your experience, you can ask, what am I learning now? You can look deeply at the experience of anger and hopefully go to what is the jewel of anger, which is clarity. Then you might look through that jewel of clarity to the truth of one's mortality, the truth of impermanence, and that each moment provides an opportunity to let go.

Is there a better term than “good death” that reflects the realities of death and how we should best approach them, like aware death, or loving death, or something?

The word that comes to mind is respect. Respect really makes a difference in the dying process. Having borne witness to the journey of many dying people over decades, I find that the messiness of death, the surprise of death, the mystery of death require respect on the part of caregivers, whether they are clinicians or family members. The dying person needs to feel respected, even if their back end has to be wiped three times a day or their mental state has degenerated into rampant confusion.

Another word that comes to mind is dignity. I don't mean that the dying person has to be dignified. In fact, dying can be a very undignified experience. What I mean is that those who are giving care approach the dying person in a way that reflects human dignity. Dignity reflects love on the part of those giving care.

I think one of the most important things that each of us can do, as someone who will inevitably die, is to understand what we want in terms of care. To communicate to our family, friends, and clinicians what we want to happen in the experience of dying—what will support us, who we want at the bedside, what we don't want in terms of interventions to prolong life or abate pain—so our aspirations and values will be respected and supported by our caregivers. But as I said, stuff happens. We do not always get what we want.

The overall theme of this issue is how awareness of death transforms our lives, and why it's so important to cultivate that. As a Buddhist teacher and expert in caring for the dying, what would you say about that?

There are two ways we can approach the experience of our mortality. One path is based on fear and building a life based on our dread and avoidance of the reality of death.

The other way is coming to terms with the truth of our mortality—going deep into the reality of impermanence and exploring its landscape, whether it's the passing of the seasons, the death of loved ones, the loss of objects that you really care about, the lessening of mental or physical pain, or the beauty of spring.

Realizing the truth of impermanence is one of the most important awakenings associated with freedom from suffering. As many great teachers have shared, this points us not only toward spiritual practice, but toward love, service, and compassion. Encountering our mortality is not simply about the end of things, but how we actually use our lives in the present moment. ○



ROSHI JOAN HALIFAX is the author of *Being with Dying* and founder of Upaya Institute and Zen Center, where she leads a two-year Buddhist chaplaincy training program.

Practicing for Death





The Buddha said that meditating on death is like the elephant's footprint, because it makes the biggest imprint of all meditations. Here are three meditations to make part of your practice.

Birth and Death in Every Breath

When we practice mindfulness of breath, says **JUDY LIEF**, we connect to the reality that birth and death are happening in every moment.

BUDDHISM TEACHES US that it's very important to relate to the reality of death and prepare for the challenge of leaving this life. It may be hard to face up to the truth of impermanence, but to do so can be liberating. And the time to do it is right now!

When you meet your physical death, you are not going to die "then," but "now." Likewise, to prepare yourself for death, you need to do it here and now.

Mindfulness is a powerful method for connecting with that simple ground. It is a way of shifting your relationship to death. In mindfulness practice, you focus your attention on the breath as it comes in and out, as each breath arises and dissolves.

Mindfulness is simple, it is immediate, and it is embodied. Instead of musing about death as a future possibility, mindfulness confronts us with the experience of impermanence on the spot. It lays the ground for establishing an ongoing awareness of death as integral to life, not a threat from afar.

You don't breathe in the future and you don't breathe in the past. You're always breathing

in the present, which makes breath potent as an object of meditation practice. Breathing is dynamic, not static. On one hand, one breath follows another, over and over, all more or less the same. On the other hand, each breath is unique and happens just once. Over and out!

Like life, breathing seems to be continuous, but in fact it is not. In each breath cycle, the inbreath is birth, the outbreath is death, and the little period in between is life. In meditation, you tune into this arising and dissolving process over and over again, and so you become more and more familiar with it. With each breath, you are born and you die. With each breath, you let go and you allow something fresh and new to arise.

The simple bodily activity of breathing teaches us about dying—not only as a future possibility, but as a part of everything we do. Our breathing takes place within rivers of breath flowing continually among all living, breathing beings sharing one atmosphere. It connects us with the greater flow of living and dying beyond the personal.

Listen to the breath. It is direct teaching. No need for words. ○



JUDY LIEF is a Buddhist teacher and author of *Making Friends with Death*. Her teachings and new podcast, "Dharma Glimpses," are available at judylief.com.

The Buddha entering *parinirvana*, his final enlightenment, at the time of his death.

The Five Remembrances

To change your life now and prepare for the inevitable, says
PAMELA AYO YETUNDE, regularly contemplate these five home truths.

I first encountered the five remembrances when I was a chaplaincy student at the Sati Center for Buddhist Studies. Diana Lion, one of the teachers, handed us an altar card with five statements from the *Upajjhatthana Sutta*. Here they are in their blunt simplicity and undeniability:

- I am of the nature to age.
- I am of the nature to become ill.
- I am of the nature to die.
- I will be separated and parted from all that is dear to me.
- I am the heir to my actions.

While at Sati, and later as a volunteer at the Zen Hospice Project (now Zen Caregiving Project), I reflected silently on each line, feeling the emotions that arose with each statement while trying to remain as still as possible with the agitation. Reflecting on the five remembrances is a fact check, and this helped me become more authentic with people who were in their last days of living. Authenticity requires recognizing and releasing the culturally laden, death-denying strategies for making people (and myself) feel good about dying by reassuring them (and myself) they'd survive. Fact check: they were on an accelerated dying path, along with the other twenty-plus people in the hospital unit, and no royalty-minded, faultily constructed facade of immortality could obscure that reality.

In the Buddhist chaplaincy world, we remind ourselves that we are constantly in the state of dying. But in the broader culture of a booming cosmetics industry, we are constantly fooled into believing that if we have the means to secure a drink from the fountain of youth, we will never age, become ill, or die. Through our cultural investments in cosmetic obscuration and longevity, we are set up to experience

devastating shock when we inevitably encounter illness and death.

How often should you reflect on the five remembrances? Whether a fact check in the form of the five remembrances is needed occasionally or frequently depends on how averse you are to facing the realities of aging, illness, and death. Living where we live, in this society, I would suggest engaging in this reflection practice at least monthly to counter the cultural illusions of permanence that lead to shock and despair when reality dawns.

The five remembrances can be written on an altar card and placed among the other precious altar items we will be parted from. They can be chanted on the full rotation of the moon to underscore the passing of time, perhaps as we recall Dogen's exhortation: "Time swiftly passes by and opportunity is lost. Each of us should strive to awaken. Awaken! Take heed, do not squander your life."

Of course, a five remembrances practice need not be limited to a Buddhist context, for its truths are universal and can be contemplated as an important part of any spiritual path. Perhaps through this practice we can contribute to a culture where older people are honored, resources to care for the sick are more accessible, and we learn to say "goodbye" to the dying like we say "hello" to those being born—with deep appreciation for the gift of good health when we have it, the life stages of our aging, and our fleeting lives, without the shock and despair that prevent us from offering love and authentic care. ○



PAMELA AYO YETUNDE, TH.D., is an associate editor of *Lion's Roar*. She is an author, a spiritual care practitioner and professor, and co-founder of Center of the Heart.



7 Life and Death Questions

MICHAEL HEBB, founder of Death Over Dinner, offers some important questions to guide your contemplation of mortality.

“IN EACH LIFE THERE ARE TWO LIVES, and the second one begins when we realize we only have one.”

This quote attributed to Confucius is one of my favorite bits of wisdom ever written about death. Its simple math illustrates poignantly the medicine present in contemplating our own mortality—the simple truth that facing death unlocks a much deeper, more vital life.

Rodney Smith wrote in *Awake at the Bedside*, “We end our suffering when we understand that we are diminished as human beings when any part of our character is denied.” And what we deny most in our death-phobic culture is the very fact that we die.

Journaling is a perfect way to explore our fears, anxieties, revelations, and grief about death. I recommend putting aside ten minutes every week to journal on this topic. Pick a day when you know you can sit quietly with your thoughts and let your pen make its way through this sometimes difficult terrain. Keep this journal separate from your others, because you will likely find yourself drawn back to it for answers as life inevitably serves up loss, terminal diagnosis, grief, and awakening.

Here are some of my favorite writing prompts you can use as you journal. They are inspired by the work of Dr. Ira Byock, Megan Devine, Ram Dass, Alua Arthur, Frank Ostaseski, and so many other remarkable teachers who have offered us their wisdom about facing our mortality. Don’t force a prompt—if it isn’t lighting up something in you, move on to the next. Most importantly, be gentle and kind with yourself as you explore this vast landscape.

- Have you been close to an end-of-life experience that you felt was beautiful? What was right about it?
- Have you been close to an end-of-life experience that was more difficult than you feel it had to be? What went wrong?
- If you found out you only had one hour left to live, who would you call and what would you tell them?
- What song(s) would you like performed at your funeral? Write about what each song means to you and why you think it would be meaningful in this context.
- If you died today what would be your biggest regret?
- “anger. is often grief that has been silent for too long.” Does this line from a poem by Nayyirah Waheed strike a chord within you? Is there a death or a grief that comes to mind?
- What do you want to be remembered for? Try writing a short obituary for yourself.

The great lesson I have learned through writing and talking about death is that our answers change as we age, evolve, and experience loss. It is a topic that will always reveal the invisible to us. It will show us ourselves. ○



MICHAEL HEBB is the author of *Let’s Talk About Death (Over Dinner)* and the founder of Deathoverdinner.org and EOL.community, a comprehensive platform for end of life planning and grief.

Goodbye and Good Journey



Funeral ceremony at Jigenji Soto Zen temple in Yamanashi, Japan.

FINAL ORDINATION

AT THE HEART OF A ZEN FUNERAL is ordination. In the ceremony, the deceased is ritually ordained in the same way that living monks and nuns are. This is done because total dedication to spiritual life, of the kind undertaken by monastics, is seen as the natural endpoint of life, even if that wasn't the case when the person was alive. Ordination is also seen as increasing the probability of a favorable rebirth.

To begin the funeral ceremony, a vigil is maintained by relatives for a day and a night

while Zen priests chant from scripture and an altar is prepared in the household. Attending mourners offer *okoden*, or “condolence money,” to the family of the deceased. The centerpiece of the altar is a portrait of the deceased, alongside candles and offerings of flowers and fruit.

The dead's ordination is the same as a living nun's or monk's. The precept master asks the body three times if the deceased will observe and embody the five precepts. Where a living monk or nun would offer their vow, the corpse's silence is interpreted as acceptance.



Buddhist funeral traditions around the world help both the dead and their loved ones let go and move on.

The deceased is then given a Buddhist name and presented with a lineage chart connecting them with enlightened masters stretching all the way back to the Buddha himself. The family of the newly ordained is provided with their own tablet with the deceased's Buddhist name on it, and the tablets are either kept in the local temple or displayed in the family's household altar afterward.

Some Zen funerals also feature a shout which is meant to sever the deceased's bond to the earthly plane. Those who have attended such ceremonies say this also provides a moment of catharsis for the mourners. The funeral concludes with the cremation of the deceased's body.

What, then, are Zen funerals like for those who are already ordained? The funeral of a monk or nun can take different forms, both long (involving a procession including the deceased's robes and lineage papers) or very short. The funeral for the founder of the Soto Zen, Dogen, is famously said to have consisted of just a short moment of chanting by his most senior disciple.

SHARING MERIT WITH THE DEAD

WHITE CLOTH, A SYMBOL OF VIRTUE, marks a Theravadan funeral in the Sri Lankan tradition. Fringed palm fronds and white banners, often with a picture of the deceased, mark the way to the home of the deceased. A white banner declares in large writing: "All conditioned things have the nature of decay." In the house, mourners in white are greeted by relatives of the dead, the men dressed in sarongs of white cloth and white

shirts, the women in white saris. Having been washed by family members, the body of the dead is also attired in white.

The wake, during which the deceased's family greets and feeds the guests, lasts for several days, which allows those traveling to reach the funeral house. Guests sometimes bring gifts of food for the family.

The funeral ceremony truly begins with the arrival of the monks. They enter the front room of the funeral house, where their feet are washed by a male member of the household. The monastics are guided to chairs draped in white cloth and the deceased's family kneels before them in respect.

Then the coffin is brought to the front room, or remains in a tent in the front yard if there isn't room in the house, and a salutation chant to the Buddha is offered, followed by the chants of the three refuges and the five precepts. Parcels of white cloth are presented to the monks, and the mourners chant, "We offer the 'cloth of the dead' to the community of monks." This gift of cloth has a practical origin. Monks in Sri Lanka, as elsewhere in Theravadan societies, rely on the community to feed and clothe them. Payment for presiding over the ceremony comes in the form of white cloth.

In this merit-sharing culture, the Theravadan funeral also features a bowl filled with water by the deceased's family until it overflows, representing giving merit to the dead so their rebirth will be a promising one. As the water is being poured, the monks chant: "Just as rivers full of water fill the ocean full / Even so does what is given here benefit the dead."



A Tibetan *thangka* painting of the pure land of the primordial buddha Amitabha, known as Amida in Japanese.

mourners, and *Thun masadana*, an alms-giving three months after the funeral to support the monastics who officiate at funerals and other ceremonies in the community.

GUIDING THE DEAD THROUGH THE BARDO

THE TIBETAN APPROACH to death and dying is guided by the teachings of the *Bardo Thodol*, popularly known in the West as *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. This text describes what happens to us in the *bardo*, an intermediate period or gap between death and rebirth. During this time, it is possible to advise and help the deceased so they can achieve enlightenment or at least a favorable rebirth.

In Tibetan Buddhism, there are a number of meditations and rituals that can be

performed after someone dies or during their dying process. These include reading them the *Book of the Dead* over a forty-nine-day period to guide them through the various stages of the bardo journey, and *powa* practice, in which an accomplished master can help the dying person transfer their consciousness directly into an enlightened state.

The *sukhavati* ceremony is traditionally performed shortly after a person's death. In this ceremony, their loved ones, friends, and fellow

After a sermon based on Pali scripture is delivered by the senior monk, the mourners chant "Sadhu!" three times, an expression of gratitude connected to the attainment of arahatship. Speeches by family and neighbors follow and then the coffin is conveyed to the burial ground or crematorium under a white umbrella.

Two important dates continue the remembrance ceremonies after the day of the funeral: *Mataka-bana*, when a monk returns a week later to deliver a sermon to the family and other



practitioners, guided by a Buddhist teacher, pray they will be reborn in Sukhavati, the Western Paradise or Land of Ultimate Bliss. This is the enlightened pure land of the primordial buddha Amitabha in which they are free of all karma, defilements, and suffering.

In this ceremony, the congregation generates loving-kindness and compassion toward the deceased, who may be suffering confusion and fear in the bardo. They urge the deceased to let completely go of their previous identity and karma and ask the buddhas and bodhisattvas to guide them to the pure land. Here is a prayer that is typically recited in Sukhavati ceremonies in the Kagyu school of Tibetan Buddhism:

Wonderful Buddha of Limitless Light [Amitabha], to his right the Lord of Great Compassion and to his left the Bodhisattva of Great Power, surrounded by an infinite retinue of buddhas and bodhisattvas.

The joy and happiness is limitless and wonderful in this pure land called Dewachen [Sukhavati].

As soon as this life has passed away, without the diversion of other births,

May [name of the deceased] be born there and thus behold the face of Amitabha.

All buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions, please grant your blessing that the wish expressed in this prayer be accomplished without hindrance.

In some versions of this ceremony, a photograph of the deceased is burned at the climax of the ritual so the deceased does not hold on to their former identity. As the photograph becomes ash, the prayers conclude and in the silence, the teacher intones the single syllable HUM, the mantra of great compassion. All pray their loved one will take the excellent opportunity of the bardo state to enter Sukhavati, the paradise that is freedom from karma and suffering.

TAKING REFUGE IN AMIDA BUDDHA

THE FUNERAL RITUALS OF Jodo Shinshu Buddhism, as practiced in the Buddhist

Churches of America, remind practitioners that through taking refuge in Amida Buddha, the central figure in Pure Land Buddhism, one can transcend time and space, and join together in the pure land as buddhas before returning to samsara to help others. In this way, death is understood to be a beginning rather than an end, and funeral rites offer comfort, solemnity, and the opportunity to express gratitude to the surviving family and friends.

After a person's death, the minister is contacted by the family and the *Makuragyo* (literally "pillow service," or bedside service) is performed. The home altar is decorated with white cloth and flowers, as is the body. The minister will chant one of the gathas from the *Larger Sutra of Immeasurable Life*, such as *Juseige* or *Sanbutsuge*.

Often, relatives live too far away for the body to remain long enough for them to travel to the funeral, so a cremation is done and the funeral takes place with a photo and urn. The funeral service itself begins with the ringing of the calling bell, reminding listeners of the impermanence of all things, an important remembrance in times of death.

Next, the presentation of the Buddhist name occurs. If the dying person has not already received a Buddhist name, the chanting of *Kisamboge*, by Shan-tao, helps to confirm the person; for those who have already received their name, the chanting is considered a rededication.

Then there is a chanting of *Shoshinge*, by Shinran, during which guests come up to burn incense, symbolic of the purification of one's heart and mind to receive the truths of the Buddha. After this, there is an opportunity for eulogies by friends and family, followed by a dharma teaching and the recitation of Rennyo's "White Ashes" from the minister, which concludes with the line: "By so understanding the meaning of death, we shall come to fully appreciate the meaning of this life, which is unrepeatable and thus to be treasured above all else."

Traditionally, the service ends with some words of acknowledgment and a meal afterward, held at the temple or a nearby restaurant. ○

THE SPIRITUAL ENTREPRENEUR

TAMI SIMON, founder of Sounds True, brings the spirit of enlightenment not only to her company's products but to its culture. (Plus, dogs.)

TAMI SIMON'S CAREER STARTED when three words popped into her head: "Disseminate spiritual wisdom."

She was a twenty-two-year-old college dropout who waited tables at a Chinese restaurant and volunteered at a community radio station. On her way to the station, she walked by an office with huge crystals in the window and a sign saying "Transformational Economy," with a dollar sign through the center of a yin-yang symbol.

She was curious about the man inside and arranged to interview him for her radio show. But then her father died and she discovered she'd inherited \$50,000. In addition to doing the interview, she decided she'd go to the man for advice.

"Tami," he said, "why don't you put the money into yourself?"

It was a good idea in theory, but she was hoping for a more concrete suggestion.

"You know what you want to do," he said. "Come back in three days and we'll talk about it."

As Simon walked away, she had a strange feeling. That's when she suddenly thought: "Disseminate spiritual wisdom."

She had no business experience and only a fuzzy idea of what she wanted her company to be. But she took everything she had—her money, a tape recorder, and an unshakable drive—and founded Sounds True.

Today, Tami Simon is one of the most successful entrepreneurs in the spiritual field, and Sounds True is a flourishing multimedia publisher with a team of 150 employees. Their mission is nothing less than waking up the world, and to that end they've produced more than six thousand titles, featuring spiritual leaders like Pema Chödrön, Jon Kabat-Zinn, Jack Kornfield, Tara Brach, Thich Nhat Hanh, Eckhart Tolle, and a host of other teachers and visionaries. Simon has become an inspiration to anyone who aspires to bring business and wisdom teachings together, and to make the world of work more meaningful and humane.

"Businesses are incredibly powerful crucibles for human development and meaningful relationship," says Simon. "Most of us spend a heck of a lot of our life working. People say intimate relationship is hard and you can turn it into your spiritual path. I think work is even harder, because at least in an intimate



relationship it's just two people. At work, you've got hundreds, and you're trying to get to a place together where you're aligned with something bigger than any one individual."

As Simon sees it, work can be the fuel for the most important things in life—connecting with other people, bringing forth our creative gifts, leaving something behind for future generations that will matter. As she puts it, "Work can be an enlightenment engine."

TAMI SIMON WAS BORN in 1962. Her family, of Coral Gables, Florida, was in her words "culturally Jewish." Once a month, they spent Friday night at temple because her mother liked the songs and ritual.

Simon enrolled at Swarthmore College to study philosophy, yet what she learned in her classes felt disembodied, abstract. Switching to the religious studies department, Simon dove into the lives and teachings of great mystics. Then she had a realization: "No mystic worth their salt would get a degree in mysticism." In her sophomore year, when it was time to declare her major, she threw the paperwork in the trash and went off to explore Sri Lanka.

There she attended a ten-day Vipassana retreat taught personally by the famed teacher S. N. Goenka. As Simon puts it, it was like "boot camp." She had to wake up at five a.m. and meditate until ten p.m., maintaining noble silence. Yet she fell in love with the practice and went on to do additional Vipassana retreats in India and Nepal.

"I felt like I'd finally found home," says Simon. "It wasn't in books. It wasn't in philosophy. It was right here."

So when she was first deciding how to go about disseminating spiritual wisdom, books didn't strike her as the right fit. Instead, she leaned into her experience with audio.

Simon's interview show on community radio was popular. Three, four, maybe five people phoned in each week asking for copies of the episode, and she sold them for ten bucks each. "I don't even know if you'd call it a cottage business," she says. "It was just me and my dubbing deck with my five roommates in a big house in Boulder."

"I liked dharma talks," says Simon. "I liked listening to an inspired person teach about spiritual truths. I

could feel it when somebody was in an expanded state of being, and they spoke from that place. I learned through the sound of their voice, through the cadence. It was like a mind-to-mind transmission. That's the kind of audio I wanted to put out in the world."

In the early days of Sounds True, Simon attended spiritual workshops, such as a weekend with Ram Dass. "I brought these big, heavy, cassette-dubbing machines with me," she remembers. "It's a miracle I didn't get back trouble."

She'd record the workshop, give the teacher the masters, and sell copies to participants. This was a sweet deal for Simon—not only did she get to attend the workshops for free, she left with cash in her pocket.

Over time, Simon accumulated an archive of live workshop recordings and started giving out pink photocopied sheets listing them all. She felt, though, that to take her recordings to the next level, she needed to edit them. Though dedicated to maintaining that quality of "living wisdom," she wanted to take out the bathroom breaks, the questions that couldn't be answered, and the teachers' tangents about what they were doing next month. She did it old-school, with a razor blade and splicing tape.

In 1990, Sounds True released *Women Who Run with the Wolves*, by Dr. Clarissa Pinkola Estés. It was their first breakout audio title and—contrary to the usual order of things—it later became a bestselling book. This marked Sounds True's shift away from workshop recordings. In the studio, Simon realized, speakers could talk directly and intimately to listeners at home. The company's signature style was born.

Now that Sounds True was on the map, they branched out from catalog sales into retail distribution. Just a couple of years later, they produced Thich Nhat Hanh's *The Present Moment* and Thomas Moore's *Soul Life*. These were their first audio learning courses, and they were cutting edge.

In both 1995 and 1996, Sounds True was on *Inc.* magazine's list of the nation's five hundred fastest-growing privately held companies. Sounds True released *Energy Anatomy* by Caroline Myss, their first audio learning course to sell more than one hundred thousand copies, and one of their all-time bestselling titles. They also created their first video, *Meditation for Beginners* with Jack



Presenting at a conference in India, Simon had a warm exchange with the Dalai Lama. She's engaged with some of the most influential spiritual figures of our time, including Thich Nhat Hanh, Ram Dass, and Pema Chödrön.

Simon, however, isn't willing to put on a mask at the office. With all the time people spend at work, it's too exhausting to keep up the charade.

"The idea that we're one person in our private life and some different person at work is breaking down for a lot of people," posits Simon. "What makes me happy about that is that when people are themselves at work, we will see businesses have different kinds of priorities." That is, while traditional businesses prioritize profit,

Kornfield, and their first correspondence course, *Insight Meditation* with Sharon Salzberg and Joseph Goldstein.

"BEING TRUE" is Tami Simon's inner litmus test. When she contemplates what to do next—in the next moment, day, or decade—the question is always: "What will feel authentic to me?"

According to Simon, "People at Sounds True say, 'With Tami, you always know where she's at. Her face will tell you, her words will tell you.' That's also what I like from other people," Simon continues. "Even if it's hard news, I want people to be direct and truthful. When there's truth in the room, the air feels clear to me, and when there isn't, I'm spending a lot of energy trying to navigate what's actually going on."

Every week, when the Sounds True leadership team meets, Simon asks, "What's under the table? What are we not talking about that we need to be talking about?" As far as she's concerned, that part of the meeting is always the most interesting.

Being kind and direct are official core values at Sounds True. "Originally," says Simon, "I wrote it out as being direct and kind, but the leadership team said, 'You know, Tami, you emphasize the direct part maybe too much. Why don't we put kind first?'"

It's commonly believed that it isn't possible or desirable to show up authentically in the world of business.

people value not just money but also sustainability and accountability, relationships and kindness. As Simon phrases it, "Humans have human priorities."

About fifteen years ago, The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society (CMind) got in touch because they were studying businesses led by people engaged in contemplative practice, and they wanted to study Sounds True.

Simon made it clear that although she herself had a meditation practice, that wasn't the case for everybody at the company. So CMind interviewed employees from the warehouse to the editorial offices and issued a twenty-page report, the gist of which was that people at Sounds True do *not* identify as working for a spiritual company. Instead, they identified as working for a company where they get to be themselves.

Simon asked her employees what it was that made them feel they could be authentic at work. Some said it was because they could wear whatever they wanted. Somebody said, "When my kid's sick, I don't have to lie about the reason I'm not coming in. I can just say, 'My kid's sick. I can't come.'"

One morning, Simon was leaving for work when her fur baby looked at her with unbearably sad eyes. She decided to take him into the office. Soon other people wanted to bring in their dogs too, and dogs became an integral part of the company culture.



Simon meeting with staff at Sounds True, where she is developing a culture based on contemplative principles. While most bosses focus on how to manage others, she says, “Honestly, if you manage yourself, you will see huge results.”

“I brought my dog into work and then other people brought their dogs,” says Simon. “I brought myself into work and then other people brought themselves. That’s what happens.”

TAMI SIMON SEES SOUNDS TRUE as “an inner transformation company.” Though the catalogue is eclectic—spanning myriad spiritual traditions, psychology, and wellness—it has a unifying aim: the flowering of who we are as human beings, both at the individual and societal levels.

Not everything Sounds True produces personally resonates with Simon, but that isn’t the point.

“It’s been a maturation process for me,” she says. “When I was younger, I had a lot more judgment. As I grew and the company grew, I started practicing

opening my mind to ask why does this person I work with find this material so valuable. I’m going to take their perspective and see if I can understand it.”

Simon hosts the weekly Sounds True podcast and has interviewed every Sounds True author. “I learn something every time,” she says. “*Every time.*”

When Simon was thirty-nine, she recorded a series on Buddhist tantra with scholar and Buddhist teacher Reggie Ray. They spent about ten days together, and during this time she was introduced to what Ray called “somatic meditation,” a process of taking our body—not the thinking mind—as the foundation of meditation practice.

At the end she told Ray, “I don’t want to follow the traditional path, but I’d love to be able to keep working with these practices and to ask you questions. Would



that be okay with you?”

“Tami,” he answered, “I’ll make sure you get the dharma you need.”

After seven or eight years of training, Ray told Simon that the next step was for her to become a teacher herself. So she started teaching courses on meditating with the body. This, she says, was a really important growth period for her. Nonetheless, something gnawed at her.

Simon felt she was trying to occupy two seats at once—the teacher seat and the business leader seat. “There’s something about the Sounds True seat that fully comes from me,” she muses. “There’s nothing in it where I have to fit into something else. As a meditation teacher within a tradition, there were times when I didn’t feel I could wholly be myself, and that didn’t work for me. It’s hard to have more than one seat.”

About eight years ago, Simon stopped being a meditation teacher. She says, “I needed to find a way to bring that teaching function into a way of being in the world that wasn’t being a traditional dharma teacher, but instead a business leader operating according to dharmic principles.”

With Sounds True thriving, the question arose, “What do we really want this business to be about?” For Simon, the answer was clear: “Providing unlimited access to transformative materials, and not just for people who have the money to buy them.”

So in 2018 the Sounds True Foundation was launched. At first, it wasn’t 100 percent clear what projects they were going to take on beyond donating Sounds True products to prisoners and others who couldn’t afford to buy them. “But soon,” says Simon, “I got a call from one of our authors, Justin Michael

Williams, who wrote *Stay Woke: A Meditation Guide for the Rest of Us*. Justin is a Black man who’s a musician as well as an inspiring speaker and teacher. He said, “Tami, I didn’t write this book for people who are shopping in bookstores. I wrote this book for kids like me who aren’t going to be drawn to the traditional white wellness world. I want to go on tour and bring freedom meditation to high school and college students. Can Sounds True help me?” I was like, ‘Hell yeah.’”

Since then, other opportunities have arisen for the Sounds True Foundation. As Simon explains it, they just keep asking themselves how to get spiritual wisdom into the hands of people who otherwise aren’t going to have access to it, and then they see what manifests to meet that goal.

THESE DAYS, MANY COMPANIES offer mindfulness training to employees. Simon recognizes this as a great first step. “But the real thing is how we engage with other people,” she says. “Quite honestly, I’ve seen a lot of dysfunction within Buddhist organizations. Mindfulness alone does not teach you how to run a healthy organization.”

Partnering with Soren Gordhamer, founder and host of Wisdom 2.0, and Scott Shute, who leads mindfulness and compassion programs at LinkedIn, Simon created Inner MBA, an immersive program to train leaders, entrepreneurs, managers, and employees on growing their companies *and* themselves.

“We took all the best wisdom training at Sounds True for the last thirty-five years and packed it into nine months, illustrating how those lessons translate into the workflow,” says Simon.

There are three modules in the program, moving from the personal to the interpersonal and to the organizational.

“We start with you,” Simon explains. “How do you work with yourself? People need to dis-identify from the thinking mind. If you’re fully identified ▶ page 74



ANDREA MILLER is the deputy editor of *Lion’s Roar*. Her most recent book is *Awakening My Heart: Essays, Articles, and Interviews on the Buddhist Life*.

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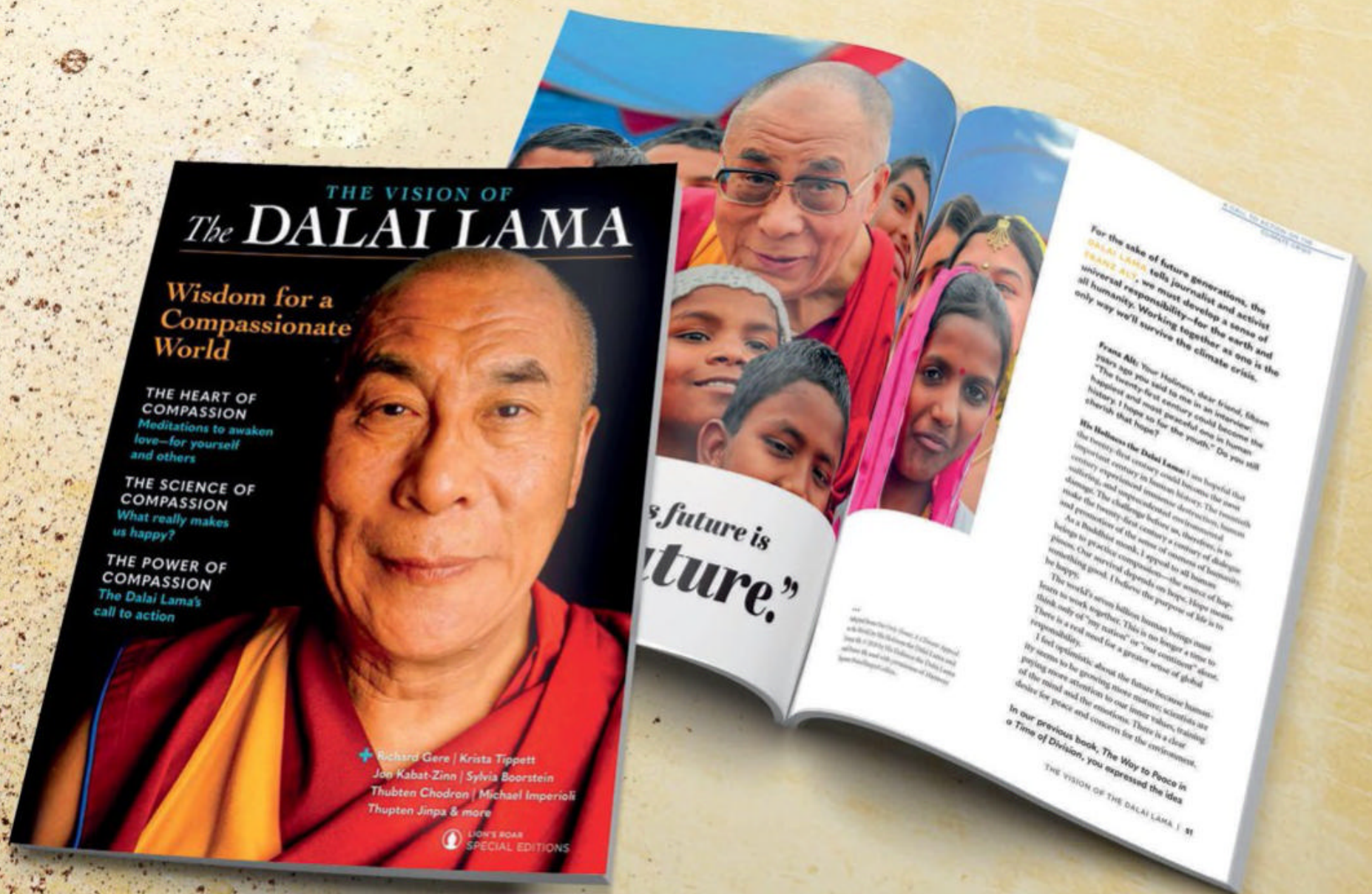
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THE MAN WHO REDEFINED ZEN

From just sitting to cooking as practice, Dogen defined how most of us understand Zen today. STEVEN HEINE on the life and global impact of Dogen Zenji.

The Japanese Buddhist teacher Dogen (1200–1253) is perhaps best known as the founder of the Soto school of Zen, which promotes the practice of single-minded, unremitting seated meditation (*zazen*), also referred to as “just sitting” (*shikantaza*). Soto Zen remains one of the largest denominations in Japan today, with nearly fourteen thousand temples throughout the country and two head temples: Eihei-ji, founded by Dogen in the deep mountains north of Kyoto, and Sojiji, based on the lineage of fourth patriarch Keizan, which relocated from northwest Japan to Yokohama in the early twentieth century.

Dogen is also celebrated as one of the greatest representatives of East Asian Buddhist philosophy, and Buddhist thought more broadly. Since the end of World War II, when his teachings began to be widely disseminated in the West, with some of his main works now translated in several versions into English and various European languages, Dogen’s reputation has been expanding internationally. His exacting approach to sustained meditation, along with a strict adherence to the minimalism and diligent discipline of traditional monastic life, sometimes referred to as the attitude of making “just the right amount” (*oryoki*) of effort, has greatly influenced a multitude of *zazen* meditators and other



contemplatives and spiritual seekers in America and elsewhere.

On a theoretical level, his masterwork, the *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye (Shobogenzo)*, is considered one of the greatest examples of worldwide religious writings. A collection of diverse lectures on doctrines and rituals given by Dogen over the course of twenty years, and further edited by Soto monk-scholars over the centuries, its key passages have been compared to classical philosophy and medieval mysticism, as well as modern psychology, physics, and environmentalism. As a philosopher, Dogen has been ranked with Aristotle and Augustine, Hegel and Heidegger, and as a poet with Walt Whitman and Gary Snyder, as well as, in the Japanese context, Kukai, Saigyō, and Bashō.

What is the basis of the tremendous impact exerted by Dogen, both on Zen and international spiritual perspectives? As Dogen himself was aware, his life and outlook unfolded at a crucial crossroads in the social and cultural history of East Asia in two main ways.

First, just at the time he was born, Japanese society was undergoing a radical transition from four centuries of peaceful rule by the Fujiwara aristocracy to the dominance of the warrior class in the Kamakura era. The newly empowered samurai class fully embraced Zen training methods because of their emphasis on self-control and self-reliance, although its leaders were often torn whether to use these skills to support or reject actions on the battlefield. In 1248, Dogen was in fact offered, but declined, the chance to become the private teacher and leader of a temple built by the shogun, Hojo Tokiyori, who a few years after this interaction stepped down to join the Rinzai Zen sect.

Second, Dogen was one of the first great Japanese teachers in the thirteenth century who traveled to China. In the 1220s, he spent four

years there and transmitted to Japan the teachings and rituals of Zen. At that time, Zen was beginning to fade in importance on the Chinese mainland, but was taking hold in Japan and was poised to expand rapidly with the support of the shogun.

Dogen played a crucial role in the development of Zen in this period, introducing many kinds of practice, such as meditation conducted in the Monks' hall; a new layout for temple design featuring the Dharma hall that replaced the Buddha hall; the delivery in the monastic compound of various kinds of formal and informal sermons; an emphasis on the value of the chief cook and other seemingly lower level temple officers; and the use of poetry to express fundamental philosophical truths, especially during ceremonies and celebrations.

At the same time, Dogen sought to strip ritual activities from the traces of esoteric rites that were upheld at a couple of prominent early Zen temples in Kyoto, including Kenninji, founded by Eisai in 1202, and Tofukuji, established by Enni Ben'en in 1243. Both followed streams of the Rinzai sect based on Chinese teachings that, in medieval Japan, often became rivals with Dogen's lineage.

To appreciate the achievements attained during his monastic career, Dogen's lifetime can be divided into four main stages lasting about a dozen years each. During each stage, he faced and resolved a particular challenge to self-understanding and its function in developing an innovative view of the Zen institution.

1. THE FORMATIVE PERIOD

The first, or formative, period (1200–1213) revolves around Dogen's admission to the monkhood and decision, after experiencing a "great doubt" (*daigi*) about mainstream practice methods, to thoroughly explore the path of zazen.

This stage begins with Dogen's aristocratic background in Japanese court society, including his high level of Buddhist and secular education as a child growing up in the capital. Dogen had connections to the fading but still powerful Fujiwara regency clan on his mother's side, and to the emerging Minamoto samurai clan derived from his father, who was also a descendent of the imperial family.

At age seven, Dogen was orphaned after his mother's death. He experienced profound feelings of evanescence and was determined to renounce society. Five years later, after rejecting an opportunity to become a court official, he was ordained as a Tendai priest on Mount Hiei, located to the northeast of the capital.

There, Dogen quickly became deeply disillusioned because of a sense of grave misgiving about the doctrine of original enlightenment (*hongaku*). If all beings in the universe already possess the endowment for awakening, he asked, what is the need to carry out austere meditative practice? This doubt propelled him to take leave of the dominant Tendai sect to join the fledgling Zen movement initiated in Japan by Eisai.

2. THE TRANSFORMATIVE PERIOD

The next stage, from 1213 to 1227, encompasses the new religious path Dogen started after he quit Mount Hiei and began training at Eisai's Kenninji temple in central Kyoto

before eventually attaining an experience of enlightenment in China.

At Kenninji, zazen meditation was featured as the primary, though not exclusive, practice technique for the first time in Japanese Buddhist history. It is said that Dogen briefly met Eisai, who led other Zen temples in Kamakura and Kyushu, before he died in 1215. Dogen stayed at Kenninji from 1217 to 1223, although not much is known about these years of his life.

A decade after leaving the Tendai sect, Dogen undertook a four-year journey to China in the company of Eisai's foremost disciple, Myozen, who died prematurely in 1225, with his remains later returned to Kenninji by Dogen. That same year, Dogen met his Chinese mentor Rujing in an intense face-to-face encounter (*menju*) and began studying closely with him. Dogen gained a breakthrough to liberation by "casting off body-mind" (*shinjin datsuraku*) and thereby earned the transmission of the Soto lineage.

3. THE REFORMATIVE PERIOD

The third, or reformative, period (1227–1243) begins with Dogen's slow-starting efforts to establish Soto Zen in Japan and culminates with the formation of a thriving monastic compound.

After six transitional years from the time of his returning "empty-handed" (*kushu*) to his home country, during which he struggled to gain a substantial following, Dogen became very successful in opening the first authentic Chinese-style monastery in Kyoto. The practice center, named Koshoji, featured the first Dharma and Monks' halls in Japan.

Here on the outskirts of the capital, Dogen started to produce many outstanding writings, including the *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye* and the *Extensive*



Just sitting at
Upaya Zen Center
in Santa Fe.

Dogen lived the last ten years of his life and did some of his most important work at Eihei-ji, the monastery he established in the mountains north of Kyoto. It is one of the two head temples of the Soto Zen school.

Record. He earned the patronage of the powerful one-eyed samurai Hatano Yoshishige, who supported the rest of his career. However, because of Fujiwara family objections to Dogen's novel approach to Buddhist teaching, as well as other complex circumstances that are still not entirely clear, Dogen decided to move his assembly during the summer of 1243 to a provincial site long celebrated for its splendid landscapes.

4. THE PERFORMATIVE PERIOD

Finally, the period from 1243 to 1253 covers the fulfillment of Dogen's mission to become leader of a genuinely reclusive Zen monastery before his death. This he did at Eihei-ji, where he remained true to the methods of meditation and ritual he almost single-handedly imported from China to Japan. Once ensconced at the new cloister, Dogen left the mountains only once for the rest of his life, for a six-month visit to the Hojo shogun in the garrison town of Kamakura.

At Eihei-ji, Dogen put greater emphasis on the functions of clerical discipline, especially the performance of daily chores based on the dignified daily demeanor that he saw as linked to a deep understanding of the universal impact of karmic causality. This trend seems to represent a divergence from some of the views he endorsed while leading Koshoji, where the technique of just sitting meditation prevailed and there was a greater sense of inclusiveness of women and lay practitioners. In 1253, he went to Kyoto for medical care and died in zazen posture.



Although Dogen had a sense of his long-lasting originality and creativity, one of his poems, originally an inscribed verse for his portrait that was composed near the end of his life, expresses a humble and self-deprecating standpoint characteristic of the first Zen patriarch, Bodhidharma, who gazed at a cave wall for nine years:

*If you consider this portrait to be real, then who am I, really?
But why put it there if not to give people a chance to know me?
When you look at this painting,
And think that what hangs in empty space embodies the real me,
Your mind is clearly not one with wall-gazing meditation. ✨*



STEVEN HEINE is director of the Asian Studies Program at Florida International University. He has published numerous books on the life and thought of Dogen, including the forthcoming *Dogen: Japan's Original Zen Teacher* (Shambhala).



Genjokoan. Calligraphy by Kazuaki Tanahashi.

“TO STUDY THE SELF IS TO FORGET THE SELF”

SHOHAKU OKUMURA breaks down Dogen’s seminal text *Genjokoan*.

Genjokoan was written in the mid-autumn of 1233, the year Dogen founded his first monastery, Koshoji, outside Kyoto. This short poetic text is considered one of the masterpieces of world religion. In it, Dogen offers in beautiful, poetic expressions his fundamental insights into delusion and realization, practice, life and death, and buddhas and living beings.

Gen means “to appear” or “in the present moment” and *jo* means “to become, complete, or accomplish.” So the combined word *genjo* means “to manifest,” or “to appear and become.” *Ko* means “to be public”; *an* means “to keep one’s lot.” As a compound, *koan* means the reality in which “the equality of all things” and “the uniqueness of each thing” are completely interpenetrated.

So all beings here and now are the true reality; the true reality is nothing other than all beings happening in front of our eyes. Each phenomenal being, because it is empty and not an independent permanent entity, is actualization of the true reality. True reality, without being actualized by phenomenal beings, cannot exist.

Each phenomenal being is interconnected with all beings in the ten-direction world. Although everything has its own unique beauty and dignity, each individual being can exist only through interconnectedness with the entirety of time and space. If we cut off our connection with others, we lose the ground of our existence.

Let’s look at some of the famous statements from *Genjokoan* that elaborate on this view.

To study the Buddha Way is to study the self. To study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be verified by all things. To be verified by all things is to let the body and mind of the self and the body and mind of others drop off.

We need to study the true self because otherwise we might create a completely illusory self-image and picture of the world in our minds. We need to forget the self that is continuously making such illusory images of ourselves and the world, creating a heroic tale in which we are the protagonist.

When we recognize the emptiness of self and other and become free from self-clinging, we begin to see that even our ability to create various illusory self-images is a gift from the entire network of interdependent origination. When we follow the movement of that network, we see that the separation between the self and other beings disappears. Our story and other people's stories are intermingled. All beings on this planet Earth are various fruits of the great tree of life.

Conveying oneself toward all things to carry out practice-enlightenment is delusion. All things coming and carrying out practice-enlightenment through the self is realization.

When we try to find the true reality of all myriad beings using our personal efforts and ability, no matter how much or how hard we study and practice, we are within delusion. We become subject and observe the myriad things as our objects, and we are cut off from the interconnectedness of which we are part.

When all beings come to us and allow us to study and practice through our karmic body and mind, that is realization. However, we still need to study and practice using our own energy and will. When these two powers—the power of the self and the power of the myriad things—encounter each other and become one, there is no reality to realize and no delusion to eliminate. Only dharma flowers turn the dharma flowers.

Firewood becomes ash. Ash cannot become firewood again. However, we should not view ash as after and firewood as before. We should know that firewood dwells in the dharma position of firewood and has its own before and after. Although before and after exist, past and future are cut off.

We usually think that we were born into the stream of time at a certain point in the past, have been living for some years until the present moment, and will die soon or later in the future. But that is not the only possible way to interpret time and our life. When we are born, we are born with the entire world. While

we live, we live together with all beings in the entire world. And when we die, we die together with all beings in the world.

This actual moment is the only absolute moment. The moment before is already gone; the moment after has not yet come. Only this moment is a true moment in which we can live.

Yet our thinking mind cannot grasp the time that has no length. So we continually create a heroic story of where we are from, why we are here, and where we need to go. We can only live the absolute moment by opening the hand of thought. Zazen practice is a way to examine how the fictitious heroic story is continuously produced in our mind. It's how we can experience this absolute present moment.

Therefore, if there are fish that would swim or birds that would fly only after they investigate the entire ocean or sky, they would find neither path nor place.

We are fish swimming in the entire ocean, birds flying the boundless sky. As soon as we are born, we begin to swim/fly without understanding why we should do so, or what the entire ocean/sky really is. When we become teenagers, some of us begin asking why we should swim/fly. What is the meaning of swimming/flying through this particular time and space? What is the entire ocean/sky?

Many of us forget such questions because we become too busy getting day-to-day bread and taking care of numberless details in our lives. But when we face unexpected difficulties, we face these questions again. And when we feel we have already had enough swimming/flying, after our children become independent and have financial security, we remember the questions yet again.

What is this we are doing? People like Shakyamuni and Dogen cannot stop asking the question. For them, searching for the answer itself became their swimming/flying. After discovering the answer, they continued swimming/flying, sharing the answers they discovered with others. There is no option for us not to swim/fly until we have completely investigated the entire ocean/sky. The entire ocean is swimming with us, the entire sky is flying with us. ✨



SHOHAKU OKUMURA is a Soto Zen priest and dharma successor of Kosho Uchiyama Roshi. He is the author of *Realizing Genjokoan* (Wisdom Publications).

4 KEY TEACHINGS

From being to the nature of time, Dogen explored the big questions.
Four experts unpack some of his most influential concepts.

BEING-TIME: EVERYTHING IN THIS MOMENT

SHINSHU ROBERTS

Awakened practice can only happen in this present moment. “Although the [dharma] might seem as if it were somewhere else far away, it is the time right now,” Dogen writes in his famed *Shobogenzo* fascicle *Uji*—Being-Time.

Understanding how this comes about is Dogen’s primary teaching throughout the *Shobogenzo*. Everything is simultaneously manifesting, he explains, both as this moment and as all moments that together make up the world’s functioning; this is the essential nature of the buddhadharma. A particular being-time/time-being, or dharma position, is a hologram that includes all of time(s) and being(s) as one event that cannot be separated.

Awakened response is integrating oneself with the specificity of each moment, which is intimately experienced as your life with self and others. While Dogen’s teaching about time-being/being-time is multifaceted, it is always about the concrete activity of each being’s life as it unfolds. Here’s an example from our human experience.

Imagine you are attending a meeting with a difficult coworker. You enter your hypothetical meeting with 360 degrees of possible action points of exit from each moment. Will your response be dictated by past ill will, or will you be able to be open, listening, and responsive?

As you enter this present-moment circle, there is the past “behind” you of all your previous experiences with your coworkers. Yet this moment doesn’t have to be defined by your past or by your future agendas. Since the moment in itself is already liberated, you have the possibility to respond without attachments. This freedom is the independent aspect of a being-time freed from past karma and future desires. Liberation

can only happen in response to your present moment.

But if you are caught by your past experiences and expectations for the future, your exit from each moment will be quite narrow and probably unskillful. A big part of our practice then is becoming aware of when we are caught, and then changing course. Only when we can fully engage without being caught by the snares of our desire can we respond to each encounter with a liberated mind. That’s why it is important to stay awake and integrate ourselves with what is actually happening, not with what we wish would happen or what we are afraid will happen.

Dogen’s teaching on the unity of being-time, or reality itself, is vast. *Uji* discusses the various aspects of a dharma position: its independence, codependent arising, eternal presencing, universality, and flexibility as one mandala manifesting as this moment’s intimate response.

The essence of being-time’s expression is compassion, wisdom, and skillful action. Dogen’s teaching on being-time’s inseparability is not a philosophical treatise on time’s relationship to being; it is a primer on alleviating the suffering of self and other. ✨



REV. SHINSHU ROBERTS is the author of *Being-Time: A Practitioner’s Guide to Dogen’s Shobogenzo Uji* (Wisdom) and cofounder with Rev. Daijaku Kinst of Ocean Gate Zen Center in Capitola, California.

MONASTICISM: TRAINING IN COMPASSION

CHIMYO SIMONE ATKINSON



The whole pure assembly should abide in mindfulness that everyone in the study hall is each other's parent, sibling, relative, teacher, and good friend. With mutual affection take care of each other sympathetically, and if you harbor some idea that it is very difficult to encounter each other like this, nevertheless display an expression of harmony and accommodation.

—Dogen Zenji in “Regulations for the Study Hall”

During my time in Aichi Senmon Nisodo monastery in Nagoya, Japan, I shared a room with seven other Soto Zen nuns. It was so small I slept with my feet in the closet. The edges of our futons overlapped when we laid them out at night, and we had to arrange ourselves face-to-face and head-to-foot to fit in the cramped space.

We were *Tenzo-ryo*, the kitchen crew. Often we were the first to get up in the morning and the last to get to bed, keeping long work hours to feed the monastery and the frequent visitors.

By the end of a long day of kitchen work, practice, and study, we were all exhausted. My futon was the farthest from the door, and getting to the toilet in the middle of the night I had to carefully cross an obstacle course of prone

bodies, doing my best not to step on a stray foot or hand. It made me very aware of how vulnerable we all were, and how trusting and how careful we had to be with each other just to get through the day.

Monastic training is not simply learning how to do ceremonies or studying the sutras, although these things are essential to our formation as priests. Learning to embody the compassion these ceremonies and sutras point toward is really the purpose of joining the intense environment of the monastic assembly.

In the monastery I spent very little time alone. I was in the company of my fellow nuns twenty-four hours a day. We had to move in harmony in order to function. All

the activity of the monastery was focused on caring for each other—cleaning bathrooms, preparing meals, drawing baths, ringing bells for zazen. Nothing happened in those buildings that was not for the benefit of our fellow monastics.

I barely remember some of the ceremonies I was taught at the monastery. I can always look them up or find some reference book if need be. What has stayed with me are the memories of sliding my feet between those tender bodies in the dark, of preparing a tray of cups for tea, of a sister nun helping to straighten my robe. These are simple examples of the care and compassion that I believe we monastics are meant to pass on to our communities and disciples when we reenter the world. ✨



REV. CHIMYO SIMONE ATKINSON

received dharma transmission in 2015 and served as head of practice at Great Tree Zen Women's Temple. She is currently on the board of the Soto Zen Buddhist Association.

PRACTICE: BE THE BUDDHA YOU ARE

KOUN FRANZ

In Japan, I heard monks joke that “the only person to ever train in the way of Dogen was Dogen.” His monastic rules are so numerous and so precise they are almost impossible to follow. But there’s another side to it, which is that training in the *spirit* of Dogen is actually pretty simple. It just requires an unconventional lens on what practice is all about.

At the heart of Dogen’s (many) teachings is the notion of practice–verification, sometimes referred to as practice–enlightenment. Essentially, this means that the fruit of what we do is precisely the thing we’re doing. In other words, we don’t practice to attain enlightenment. We practice because practice is enlightenment. In his language, we don’t train to *become* a buddha; we train *as* buddha.

In *Fukanzazengi*, his most famous set of instructions for zazen, Dogen wrote, “To practice the Way singleheartedly is, in itself, enlightenment. There is no gap between practice and enlightenment or zazen and daily life.” Here, we get a glimpse of how Dogen framed everything. Practice is enlightenment (it’s self-verifying); practice is also zazen; zazen is daily life. Therefore, everything we do, every action we undertake, can be practice. Enlightenment is built in.

This doesn’t mean, by the way, that there’s nothing to do. Practice means doing something; verification means there’s something to verify. The trick is to practice—whatever that is in this moment—free of the idea that there’s some reward.

If you visit a Soto Zen center, you’ll hear people talk about “just sitting.” When you bow, they’ll say, “Just bow.” Just sit, just bow, just chant, just study, just walk—in Dogen’s conception, these are not means to an end, stepping stones



to some spiritual goal. They’re not part of a curriculum. Each thing is *just this*. Each thing is enough, just as it is. It’s complete.

We discover that completeness by taking it up in a wholehearted way—not just with our minds but with our bodies. We meet this moment with our hands and our posture and our breath, with the way we speak and the way we walk. “If you understand this,” wrote Dogen, “you are completely free.”

Dogen is famous for his dense, poetic writing—sentences and ideas that seem to turn in on themselves, sometimes leaving us unsure which way is up and which way is down. It’s beautiful stuff, some of the most challenging writing in all of Buddhism. Some are drawn to that, but I suspect many just find it too much.

But underneath it all is a single thought experiment: if you are already buddha, if you’re not striving to gain something, then how do you *act*? How do you take care with this moment—not in the abstract, but in the way you move, in the way you hold an object, in the way you open a door? Buddhas know the answer, and that means you do too. So just act like the buddha you are. ✨



KOUN FRANZ is a Soto Zen priest who guides Thousand Harbours Zen, based in Nova Scotia. He is the editor of *Buddhadharma: The Practitioner’s Guide*, published by Lion’s Roar.

BEING: AWAKENED BY ALL PHENOMENA

SEIGEN JOHNSON

I spend a lot of time engaged with the teachings of Dogen. For years, I literally carried his words with me nearly everywhere I went. My spiritual practice is deeply grounded in his teachings on the harmony of difference and equality—awakening through an intimate embrace of the universal and subjective not as separate phenomena, but as two qualities of all phenomena.

In my earliest days of practice with Dogen, I was struck by the balance in his expressions between the poetic and pedagogical. You hear his lyricism in his metaphors about the nature of phenomena: the moon in a dewdrop, the sands of the Ganges, the phenomenal expression of ash, the simplicity of a grain of rice. And then he offers unsentimental, practical instructions: how to sit and hold one's posture during zazen, how to organize the kitchen, how to orient the space of the meditation hall. The lived example of Dogen points us to the fully integrated way of being: feeling oneness with all things through careful attention to the mundane activities of everyday life.

The sense of phenomenality—the philosophy that things only exist as they are perceived by consciousness and not independently—in Dogen is poignant for me as an African American woman who practices Zen Buddhism. Our nation's conversation about the teaching of critical race theory, for example, brings front and center Dogen's teaching that we are awakened by all phenomena. What is often missing in the conversation about CRT is the understanding that engaging with the legacies of slavery gives us access to and understanding of generational harm, but also reminds us of the extraordinary treasure trove of generational wisdom and healing born of that suffering. This is one of our nation's most valuable cultural gifts to all of us.

Dogen wrote in *Tenzko Kyokun (Instructions for the Cook)*: "Getting to eat a single grain of Luling rice enables one to see the monk Guishan; getting to supply a single grain of Luling rice enables one to see the water Buffalo [that Guishan will become]. The water buffalo eats the monk Guishan, and the monk Guishan feeds the buffalo...If you

carefully inspect and exhaustively check [these matters], your understanding will dawn and become clear."

These instructions invite more than just observation. Dogen invites aliveness and active engagement. For me, most importantly, he invites imagination and creativity.

Recently, I was watching an episode of the Netflix series *High on the Hog*, which shares insights on the profound impact of African American food culture on the overall cultural landscape of the United States. Reaching back to Africa, the show's host connects rice to the fabric of who we are today as a country. The rice I am now eating holds the history of the transatlantic slave trade and the beginnings of American capitalism. The rice I am now eating also nourished the people who survived that journey and who taught their captors to cultivate this grain in unfamiliar soil.

Awakening, for me, is understanding that the brokenness in the tragedy of the stolen (the grains and the people) is made whole in the transmission of knowledge, courage, and love. Across generations, across cultures, across time and space—Dogen's wonderful gift is in guiding us all to this awareness.

I find incredible peace knowing that on my meditation cushion all things are possible if I allow myself to be grounded in an awareness of who I am—and also that I am more than who I think I am. I am earth, water, air, fire. I am you. You are me. Once we see it, we cannot unsee it, and we manifest togetherness in word and deed. We are together—phenomenal. ✨



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THE TRUE DRAGON IN AMERICA

TENKU RUFF looks at Dogen's impact today—on American Zen and beyond.

If you have meditated sitting on a round black cushion atop a larger square cushion, or if this is the picture that comes to mind when you think of meditation, then you have been influenced by Eihei Dogen. His influence stretches from monastic silence, to how meditation is understood in the broader world, into the mainstream culture itself.

The first Soto Zen temples in North America primarily met the religious needs of Americans of Japanese descent, and Zenshuji Soto Zen Mission, the first Soto Zen Buddhist temple in North America, will celebrate its one hundredth birthday next year. Today, Soto Zen is one of the most widely practiced types of Buddhism in North America, with more than three hundred ordained priests in the Soto Zen Buddhist Association and thousands of lay adherents.

A Zen practitioner can sit on the front steps of Ryumonji Monastery in Iowa and listen to cows mooing, walk in the woods around Zen Mountain Monastery in upstate New York, or step away from a busy city street in any number of large

cities into the quiet sanctuary of a zendo. The wide-reaching Branching Streams network flows out of the San Francisco Zen Center, founded by Shunryu Suzuki Roshi; Katagiri-lineage Zen centers dot the Midwest; Shasta Abbey and Dharma Rain Zen Center carry on the legacy of Jiyu Kennett in the Pacific Northwest; and the numerous small Zen centers and larger monasteries comprising the White Plum Asanga founded by Taizen Maezumi Roshi can be found all over America.

Smaller temples and Zen centers across North America tend to focus on meeting the needs of their local communities. Dogen's teachings that all aspects of our life are Buddhist practice resonate with laypeople, particularly those who got off to a rocky start with their childhood religions and are keen to experience religious understanding through first-hand experience rather than someone else's interpretation.

Traveling to Japan for monastic training happens infrequently now, but the home-leaving tradition of ordaining and entering the monastery continues in new form, no longer applying only to ordained monastics, as it did in Dogen's day, but to lay people in equal measure. Likewise, the home-staying path no longer applies primarily to lay people, as many ordained people remain home rather than enter a monastery. This blend of lay and ordained



The first Soto Zen temple in the U.S. was Zenshuji Soto Mission, founded in 1922 in the "Little Tokyo" section of Los Angeles. Today it serves a diverse community of practitioners, offering services and teachings in Japanese and English.

The annual conference of the Soto Zen Buddhist Association brings together Soto priests and teachers from across the U.S.



people practicing side by side, often indistinguishable from each other, predominates in modern American Zen centers.

Entering a midsize American Zen center today, you might find a group of thirty or so people sitting atop round black cushions facing the wall and assiduously following Dogen's "Universal Recommendations for Zazen":

Take a deep breath, inhale and exhale, and settle into a steady, immovable sitting position. Think of not-thinking. How do you think of not-thinking? Non-thinking. This in and of itself is the essential art of zazen.

Dogen's "think of not-thinking" piques the curiosity of intellectuals and anti-intellectuals alike. That we cannot possibly know practice-realization through our intellect, and yet continuously attempt to do so, is an endeavor Dogen himself wrestled with. Dogen's extensive education and unanswerable questions led him to travel to China in search of authentic Zen training. In China under his teacher Rujing's guidance, he managed to drop off the thinking body and mind and realize true enlightenment. In America, spiritual seekers skeptical of fixed concepts are attracted to Dogen's anti-intellectual intellectualization, with thinking of non-thinking as its centerpiece.

Here are some other important Dogen themes resonant in North America:

KITCHEN PRACTICE: There is a strong emphasis on food in Western Zen—its cultivation, preparation, presentation, and consumption—which may be due in part to the early availability of Dogen's *Instructions for the Cook* in English. Kitchen practice is an essential element of Soto Zen, with the head cook ranked just under the abbot. Zen monasteries have gardens in which they grow their own vegetables, and some even grow their own indigo for dyeing robes.

DOING WHAT'S IN FRONT OF US: The commonly cited teaching to throw ourselves into whatever we meet in each moment likely comes out of the influence of *Instructions for the Cook*, as well as Shunryu Suzuki's teachings in *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*. By chopping the carrots in a Zen kitchen, students are taught how to live all of life. When we chop, we just chop, without thinking of what comes next. Zen becomes Zen when we become truly ourselves, doing what each moment asks of us.

THE NATURAL WORLD: Dogen's teachings that grasses, trees, fences, and walls all expound the dharma naturally sink into—or arise out of—American soil, in an easy symbiosis with Native American understanding of the natural world as sentient and interconnected. These teachings permeate Dogen's writing, as when he says things like, "Water is life and air is life"; "In a single drop of water, the ten-thousand things are realized"; and "Mountains and waters themselves become wise, become sages."

Tassajara Zen Mountain Center in Northern California is the oldest Soto monastery in the U.S. Part of the San Francisco Zen Center community, it offers traditional three-month programs of intensive zazen practice and monastic life.



EQUITY: The lines “Do not discriminate between men and women. This is the most wondrous principle of the buddha way,” in “Prostrating to the Marrow of Attainment,” speak to Americans firm in our conviction that Dogen advocated for treating women and men equally (while many Japanese monks argue that the passage was added on by a mistaken female with a grievance). Regardless of race or caste, laymen or laywomen, high rank or low rank, Dogen had choice words (“stupid,” “mistaken,” “inferior”) for those who do not honor the true practice of others as equals. Americans like this.

TRULY ENGAGED BUDDHISM: Social justice as a practice runs strong in Western Soto Zen. The Kannon bodhisattva who appeared to Dogen in a vision is the same embodiment of true compassion that appears in the modern world in the form of feeding the homeless, environmentally friendly temple buildings, marching to end injustice, and addressing the depression, anger, and anxiety of Western people.

What then would Dogen think about Soto Zen practice in the West today? If Soto Zen practice in Japan is an ancient, aging tree, in America it is a sapling, just starting to bear fruit. Given his emphasis on monastic training and his penchant for speaking his mind, Dogen might have a few choice words about our lack of monastic focus and emphasis on expensive organic tea treats. Perhaps he would like the T-shirts though, especially “Doing nothing since 1233.”

Most of all, Dogen would likely appreciate the intrepid spirit of Americans doing their best to continue the Soto Zen tradition—building temples with their own hands, sewing their own robes and zafus, and even braving forest fires to protect the practice centers we have come to know as our own. Dogen had to travel to China to find the true spirit of Zen before bringing it home to Japan. His eastward push continues on without him, riding the waves and tucked into the sleeves of countless American Soto Zen practitioners. What would he say to us? Perhaps this:

“Please, honored followers of Zen: Long accustomed to groping for the elephant, do not be suspicious of the true dragon. Devote your energies to a way that directly indicates the absolute. Your treasure-store will open of itself, and you will use it at will.” ✨



TENKU RUFF, OSHO is a Soto Zen priest trained in monasteries in Japan and North America and former president of the Soto Zen Buddhist Association. She is a Board Certified Chaplain and head priest of Beacon Zen Temple in Beacon, New York.

THE SPIRITUAL ENTREPRENEUR

► Continued from page 59

with your thoughts, there’s no space in which you can be aware of everything that’s happening. So that’s the first step—a whole mindfulness module.”

The second module is on practicing presence and self-management. Most people are preoccupied with mastering the art of managing others. “Honestly, if you manage yourself, you will see huge results,” says Simon.

Finally, the Inner MBA program focuses on teamwork. “People think differently than us,” says Simon. “That’s a good thing.” How do we recognize all of the different invisible diversities on our team? How do we create psychological safety on our teams? How do we listen? How do we speak up for what our real needs are in respectful ways?

Ultimately, the Inner MBA program is about baking our values into every part of what we do at work. “The torch I’m carrying is for businesses to recognize the role they have in helping the human species not enter the sixth extinction,” says Simon.

There are already businesspeople engaged in this meaningful work. The guest speakers—the “CEO storytellers”—of the Inner MBA program include Rose Macario, formerly of Patagonia; Joey Bergstein formerly of Seventh Generation; and Eileen Fisher of her namesake company. These and other successful CEOs, including Simon herself, are showing that a company can have multiple bottom lines—social, environmental, and financial. Profit doesn’t have to suffer for it.

Meanwhile, for those of us who don’t work at enlightened companies, there’s still a lot we can do. “You have an opportunity to work on yourself. That’s really powerful,” says Simon. “Are you watching your mind, your reactivity? Are you contributing in some way to uplift the lives of the people you work with, even if it’s with a kind signature line or holding the door open? Or are you just being grumpy? To me, that’s not being a practitioner, and what I mean by being a practitioner is saying, ‘This is what I care about, and I’m going to do it every day.’ I believe all of us have that capacity.”

Simon takes a breath. “The human species is on the line,” she says. “We each have to give everything we’ve got.” ○

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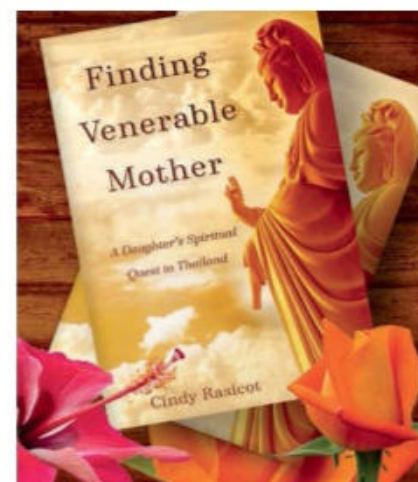
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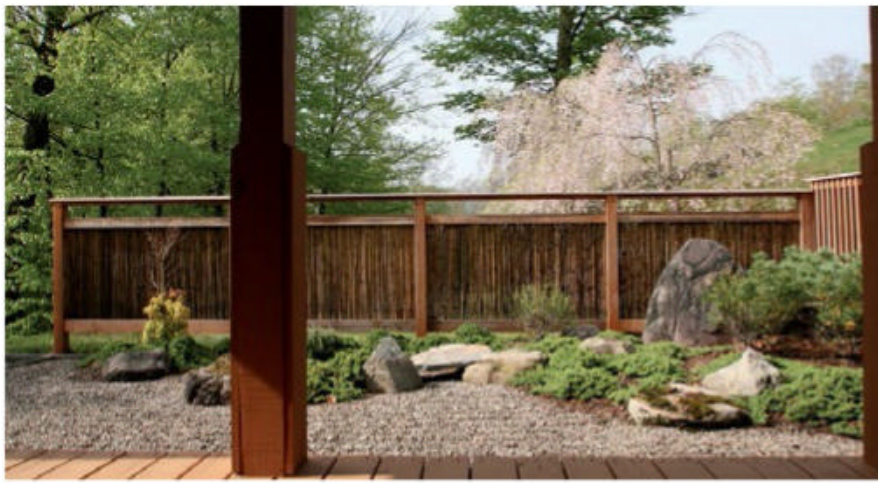
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MINDFUL HEART PROGRAMS

2565 Puesta Del Sol, Santa Barbara, CA 93105. (805) 694-8432, mindfulheartprograms@gmail.com, www.mindful-heartprograms.org • The mission of Mindful Heart Programs is to provide a safe refuge for meditation practice and to provide educational programs in mindfulness, compassion and nature connection to enable us to care for ourselves, others and our world by transforming suffering, building resilience and deepening our capacity for serving and training others. One Dharma Sangha meets on Mondays, Tuesdays & Wednesdays.

PURE LAND FARMS

3265 Santa Maria Rd, Topanga, CA 90290. info@pureland-farms.org, www.purelandfarms.org • Pure Land Farms, named after Tanaduk, the Pure Land of the Medicine Buddha, is a ten acre sanctuary located on the edge of Los Angeles in beautiful Topanga, California. Easily accessible yet totally secluded, it offers the perfect environment for immersing yourself in the richness of the healing and spiritual sciences of Tibet under the guidance of qualified teachers. Created in collaboration with Dr. Nida Chenagtsang and Sorig Khang International, Foundation for Traditional Tibetan Medicine.

RANGJUNG YESHE GOMDE CALIFORNIA

66000 Drive Thru Tree Road Leggett, CA 95585. (707) 204-

9482, info@gomdeca.org, www.gomdeca.org • We are a center in the Chokling Tersar lineage under the spiritual direction of Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche. Our remote, beautiful land offers the perfect environment to your understanding of the Buddha's teachings.

NORTHWEST

GREAT VOW MONASTERY

79640 Quincy Mayger Rd, Clatskanie, OR 97016. (503) 728-0654, kennyozendust.org, www.zendust.org • Great Vow Zen Monastery of Zen Community of Oregon is a full-time residential Zen practice community in Clatskanie, OR, just north of Portland. The style of practice in ZCO embraces a wide range of influences while remaining rooted in Soto Zen, specifically of the White Plum lineage of Taizan Maezumi Roshi.

SOUTHWEST

ALBUQUERQUE ZEN CENTER

2300 Garfield Ave SE, Albuquerque, NM 87106. (505) 268-4877, officeazc@gmail.com, www.azc.org • Daily sitting practice in Rin zai Zen tradition.

DORJE KHYUNG DZONG RETREAT CENTER

PO Box 131, Gardner, CO 81040. (719) 746-2264, dkd@shambhala.org, www.shambhala.org/centers/dkd • Solitary cabin meditation retreats in rural mountain setting. Retreat caretakers on site 24/7. Open all year. See web site for retreat guidelines and cabin tour.

EARTH JOURNEY RETREAT CENTER

Lorien Rd, NM 87556. (575) 586-1038, sheppmartha@gmail.com, earthjourney.org • Earth Journey is a center for the journey in spirit, through meditation, contemplation, and practice.

THE MOUNTAIN HERMITAGE

PO Box 807, Ranchos de Taos, NM 87557. (575) 758-0633, hermitage@mountainhermitage.org, www.mountainhermitage.org • Grounded in the Theravada lineage. Vipassana, concentration, Brahma Vihara, creative process, and personal retreat for up to one month for experienced students. Special scholarship rates for those who could not otherwise attend. Marcia Rose, Guiding Teacher, with various visiting teachers.

PADMASAMBHAVA MEDITATION CENTER

1900 South Cook St, Denver, CO 80210. (720) 353-4419, Fax: (877) 799-2941, info@pmctr.org, www.pmctr.org • Tibetan Buddhist meditation center under the direction of Chhoje Tulku Rinpoche, a Nyingma/Kagyü master. Free Thursday meditation at 7pm.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN ECODHARMA RETREAT CENTER

Ward, CO. info@rmerc.org, www.rmerc.org • In the Rocky Mountains, half an hour from Boulder, Colorado, the center is available for low cost rentals for meditation retreats and related events for up to 30 people. Facilities include lodging, full kitchen, meditation hall, fantastic views, a river, and miles of trails. We are just over an hour from DEN airport.

SAGE INSTITUTE

522 Paseo Del Pueblo Sur, PO Box 1433, Taos, NM 87571. www.sagetaos.com • Long distance/low-residency 200 hour Meditation Leader Training Program. Training largely

online, Secular, all faiths and backgrounds welcome. Director/Teacher Sean W. Murphy; Tetsudo Sensei, White Plum Zen Lineage.

TARA MANDALA RETREAT CENTER

PO Box 3040, Pagosa Springs, CO 81147. (970) 731-3711, info@taramandala.org, www.taramandala.org • A vibrant international Tibetan Buddhist Community with groups around the world founded by Lama Tsultrim Allione. The hub of the community is the 700-acre retreat center in Pagosa Springs, Colorado, offering group and private long term solitary retreats.

UPAYA ZEN CENTER

1404 Cerro Gordo Rd, Santa Fe, NM 87501. (505) 986-8518, upaya@upaya.org, www.upaya.org • A Zen Buddhist practice center, offering Chaplaincy and Resident programs, meditation retreats, End-of-Life Care and other trainings for socially engaged Buddhism.

VALLECITOS MOUNTAIN RETREAT CENTER

PO Box 4051, Durango, CO 81302. (505) 469-9017, refuge@vallecitos.org, www.vallecitos.org • Waking Up in the Wild. Meditation retreats and hermitage in a gorgeous wilderness setting in the remote mountains of Northern New Mexico. May to October.

ZEN CENTER OF LAS VEGAS

Chaiya Meditation Monastery, 7925 Virtue Court Las Vegas, NV 89113. (702) 293-4222, zencentroflasvegas@gmail.com, www.zenlasvegas.com • Tues. and Thurs. 6:30 pm, Sunday mornings 8:30 am. Beginners orientation on the first Monday of each month. A Kwan Um School Zen Center.

MIDWEST

ANCIENT DRAGON ZEN GATE

1922 W Irving Park Rd, Chicago IL 60613. info@ancient-dragon.org, www.ancientdragon.org • Soto Zen meditation practice with Taigen Dan Leighton: Author, scholar, and Dharma teacher in the lineage of Shunryu Suzuki.

DHAMMA SUKHA MEDITATION CENTER

8218 County Rd 204, Annapolis, MO 63620. (573) 604-1481, info@dhammasukha.org, www.dhammasukha.org • 7–14 day TWIM Retreats in Spring/Summer/Fall, Tranquil Wisdom Insight Meditation. Attaining awakening through the practice of Metta/Loving-kindness and the Brahmaviharas following the earliest Buddhist Suttas. Beautiful forest setting. Quick progress with daily interviews.

OJAYA DHARMA SANGHA

Batavia, IA 52533. www.ojaya.com • The OJAYA Dharma Sangha offers 100% online courses in OJAYA Deep Meditation: The Ancient Martial Art of Serenity & Inner Strength.

RIME BUDDHIST CENTER AND MONASTERY

700 West Pennway, Kansas City, MO 64108. (816) 471-7073, info@rimecenter.org, www.rimecenter.org • Executive Director Gabriele Otto, Spiritual Director Lama Matthew Rice. Meets: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday class/meditation, 7pm., Sundays,service/practice, 10:30 am.

TERGAR INTERNATIONAL

706 N 1st St, Ste 112, Minneapolis, MN 55401. (612) 460-8837, minneapolis@tergar.org, www.tergar.org • Tuesday

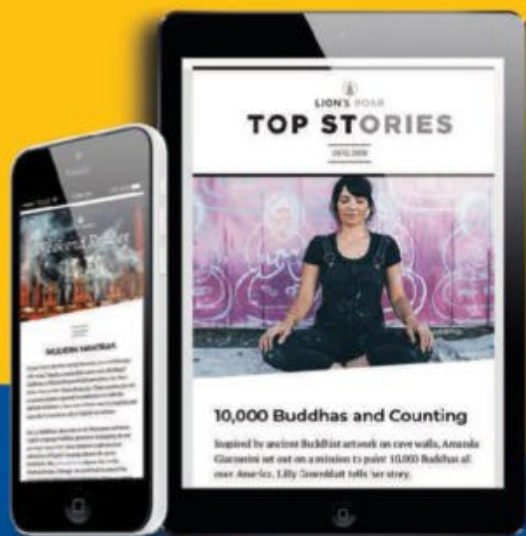


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meditation 7 pm; check website for other centers and program dates. Summer retreats in NE, NW and MN.

UDUMBARA ZEN CENTER—EVANSTON

1330 Ridge Ave, Evanston IL 60201, (847) 475-3264, udumbara@udumbarazen.org, www.udumbarazen.org • Regular zazen practice and study schedule; Bodhisattva, chaplaincy, priest training/ordination; Head Teacher Sensei Tricia Teater.

YOUNGE DRODUL LING

1624 Fordem Ave, Madison, WI 53704. info@youngedrodulling.org, www.youngedrodulling.org • We are a global community of Dharma practitioners devoted to preserving an authentic Rime practice lineage.

ZEN LIFE & MEDITATION CENTER, CHICAGO

38 Lake St, Oak Park, IL 60302. (708) 689-1220, www.ZLMC.org • Our mission is to empower you to live a zen-inspired life of openness, empathy and clarity based on a foundation of mindfulness meditation.

SOUTH

CHAPEL HILL ZEN CENTER

PO Box 16302, Chapel Hill, NC 27516. (919) 967-0861, info@chzc.org, www.chzc.org • A Soto Zen temple with daily meditation in the lineage of Shunryu Suzuki Roshi. Teacher: Josho Pat Phelan.

DAWN MOUNTAIN CENTER

FOR TIBETAN BUDDHISM

2010 Naomi St Ste. A, Houston, TX 77054. (713) 630-0354, info@dawnmountain.org, dawnmountain.org • Free Sunday morning meditations, Tuesday night teachings, family programs, retreats. Basic Tibetan Buddhism through Longchen Nyingthig, live or online.

HOUSTON ZEN CENTER

1605 Heights Blvd, Houston, TX 77008. (713) 869-1952, www.houstonzen.org • Zen meditation—daily zazen, weekly classes and lectures, sesshin and retreats. Soto Zen. Abbot Gaelyn Godwin and assistant teachers.

LITTLE ROCK ZEN CENTER

1516 W 3rd St, Little Rock, AR 72201. (501) 661-1669, lucyhauer@gmail.com, www.ebslr.org/kwan-um-zen • Meditation practice every Tuesday nights from 6:00-7:00 in the large meditation room at EBS - Please join us! A Kwan Um School Zen Center.

PROJECT CLEAR LIGHT

2220 Postoffice St, Suite B, Galveston, TX 77550. (409) 599-4268, www.projectclearlight.org • Prison outreach, sponsor prison sangha groups and retreat, offer a free Lojong correspondence course for incarcerated, resource list. Weekly open sittings Tuesdays and Thursdays 8–9 a.m., Nyingma, Great Perfection, contemplative practices.

NORTHEAST

AMERICAN BUDDHIST SHIM GUM DO ASSOC.

203 Chestnut Hil Ave, Brighton, MA 02135. (617) 787-1506, Fax: (617) 787-2708, info@shimgumdo.org, www.shimgumdo.org • Shim Gum Do - Mind Sword Path; Zen meditation and martial art training. Ongoing classes and residential programs available.

BARRE CENTER FOR BUDDHIST STUDIES

149 Lockwood Rd, Barre, MA 01005. (978) 355-2347, contact@buddhistinquiry.org, www.buddhistinquiry.org • Residential and online courses combining study, discussions, and meditation for strengthening sangha, supporting curiosity, and expanding and deepening personal practice.

BLUE MOUNTAIN LOTUS SOCIETY

6496 Jonestown Rd, Harrisburg, PA 17112. (717) 671-5057; houseofmeditation@gmail.com; www.bmls.org • The Blue

Mountain Lotus Society is devoted to sharing the universal teachings of the Buddha in the 21st century. Director, Sensei Anthony Stultz.

BOUNDLESS WAY ZEN

1030 Pleasant St, Worcester, MA 01602. (508) 792-5189, info@boundlesswayzen.org, www.boundlesswayzen.org • Throughout New England and beyond. Shikantaza, koan practice, sesshins, dokusan, and workshops.

CAMBRIDGE INSIGHT MEDITATION CENTER

331 Broadway, Cambridge, MA 02139. (617) 441-9038, www.cambridgeinsight.org • Vipassana. Guiding Teachers: Larry Rosenberg and Narayan Liebenson. Urban center dedicated to integrating meditation practice and wisdom into daily life. Workshops, retreats, practice groups. Daily sittings, weekly drop-ins, Dharma talks.

CAMBRIDGE ZEN CENTER

199 Auburn St, Cambridge, MA 02139. www.cambridgezen.org • Cambridge Zen Center welcomes you to the practice of Zen Buddhism, an ancient tradition that can help you discover your inherent resources of wisdom, love, and compassion. We offer morning and evening Zen practice almost every day of the year, at no charge. We also offer weekly introductory classes and dharma talks, monthly workshops and meditation retreats, and the opportunity to experience joyful community life. Please join us.

CHAN SPACE NEW YORK

219 E 60th St., New York, NY 10022. (917) 475-1046 chanspacenewyork.org • Following Master Hsin Tao's teachings, guided by Ven. Guang Guo Shih, our Peace Meditation program encourages regular practice for a meaningful life with less anxiety.

CLEVELAND ZAZEN GROUP

1813 Wilton Rd., Cleveland Heights, OH, 44118. (216) 932-3084, clevezen@gmail.com, zencleveland.com • For the past forty-plus years, the Cleveland Zazen Group has taught and practiced traditional Zen meditation in a welcoming, all-inclusive atmosphere and setting. Located in Cleveland Heights, the group meets several times weekly as well as sponsoring occasional introductory workshops for beginners and extended meditation retreats for more experienced practitioners.

COPPER BEECH INSTITUTE

303 Tunxis Rd, West Hartford, CT 06107. (860) 790-9750, info@copperbeechinstitute.org, copperbeechinstitute.org • Connecticut's premier retreat center for mindfulness and contemplative practice offering 40+ retreat programs. Beautiful monastery campus with 48 wooded acres 90 minutes north of NYC. Farm-to-table meals, comfortable accommodations. Day and evening meditation groups. Stone labyrinth open daily. All are welcome.

DAI BOSATSU ZENDO-KONGO-JI

223 Beecher Lake Rd, Livingston Manor, NY 12758. (845) 439-4566, office@daibosatsu.org, www.zenstudies.org • Japanese Rinzai Tradition. Remote mountain setting. Residential practice: two training periods, shorter interim stays. Sesshin, introduction weekends. Shinge Sherry Chayat Roshi, Abbot.

DAY STAR ZENDO

300 Arnold St, Wrentham, MA 02093. (774) 364-1798, tabernercynthia@gmail.com, daystarzen.com • Day Star Zendo, ecumenical, open to beginners and seasonal practitioners, with koan practice, shikantaza, teishos and interviews. Join us for weekly and regularly scheduled retreats.

DHARMA DRUM MOUNTAIN / RETREAT CENTER

184 Quannacut Rd, Pine Bush, NY 12566. (845) 744-8114, Fax (845) 744-8483, ddrc@dharma drumretreat.org, www.dharma drumretreat.org • A center for Chan Buddhist practice and study in the Lineage of Master Sheng Yen. Meditation retreats & activities suitable for beginners to advanced practitioners. Weekly activities. Volunteer opportunities.

GREATER BOSTON ZEN CENTER

552 Massachusetts Ave, Cambridge, MA 02139. info@bostonzen.org, www.bostonzen.org • A vibrant and inclusive Soto Zen practice community in Cambridge MA with affiliated sitting groups from Maine to North Carolina.

HEART CIRCLE SANGHA

451 Hillcrest Rd, Ridgewood, NJ 07450. (877) 442-7936, information@heartcirclesangha.org, www.heartcirclesangha.org • Zen meditation, beginning instruction, koan and precepts study, retreats. Rev. Joan Hogetsu Hoeberichts, Sensei. White Plum Asanga Soto-Rinzai Lineage.

KUNZANG PALCHEN LING

4330 Rte 9G, Red Hook, NY 12571. (845) 835-8303, registration@kunzang.org, www.kunzang.org • Tibetan Buddhist center supporting all traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, especially Vajrayana and in particular the terma tradition of Barway Dorje.

MENLA RETREAT & SPA

Phoenicia, NY. (845) 688-6897, menla.us/spa • Menla Retreat & Dewa Spa: official Catskills retreat of Tibet House US, the Dalai Lama's US Cultural Center in NYC.

NATURAL LIGHT RETREAT

7 Mary Lyon Rd, Buckland, MA 01338. (413) 530-0143, info@naturallightretreat.com, <https://naturallightretreat.com> • Natural Light Retreat offers contemplative and creative retreat accommodations for personal and small groups in a peaceful wooded environment in Western, MA.

NEW YORK BUDDHIST CHURCH

331-332 Riverside Dr, New York, NY 10025. (212) 678-0305, www.newyorkbuddhistchurch.org • All inclusive Pure Land community. Weekly Sunday services (Japanese, English), Wednesday evening meditation; Buddhist classes, book discussion, Japanese cultural offerings.

NEW YORK ZEN CENTER FOR CONTEMPLATIVE CARE

119 W 23rd St #401, New York, NY 10011. info@zencare.org, www.zencare.org • The center offers meditation and dharma talks, three annual retreats, training in contemplative care and Zen practice, courses in Buddhist studies, accredited CPE training, Masters in Pastoral Care and Counseling, CE programs available for nurses and social workers, and end-of-life grief, bereavement, and spiritual support.

NEW YORK ZENDO SHOBO-JI

223 East 67th St, New York, NY 10065. (212) 861-3333, office@newyorkzendo.org, www.zenstudies.org • Japanese Rinzai tradition. Daily zazen, Zen intro, zazenkai, sesshin, Dharma talks and interviews. Shinge Sherry Chayat Roshi, Abbot.

OPEN-HEARTED AWARENESS INSTITUTE

305 W 91st St #2, New York, NY 10024. contact@lochkelly.org, www.effortlessmindfulness.org • Effortless mindfulness, Heart mindfulness, and Sutra Mahamudra for path of awakening. Workshops, retreats, and online courses. Teacher, Loch Kelly.

SOJI ZEN CENTER

2325 Marshall Rd, Lansdowne, PA 19050. info@sojizencenter.com

STAY FIERCE

New York, NY. (646) 822-3000, info@stayfierce.com, www.stayfierce.com • Health/life coaching. Private & group meditation. Private & group brain tickles. All sessions are virtual during the pandemic, via Zoom. All consultations are free. Sessions are customized to your needs.

VILLAGE ZENDO

(Dotoku-ji True Expression Temple) 588 Broadway, Ste 1108, New York, NY 10012. info@villagezendo.org, www.villagezendo.org • Daily Zen meditation, retreats, workshops in the heart of the city. Roshi Pat Enkyo O'Hara, Abbot.

WONDERWELL MOUNTAIN REFUGE

253 Philbrick Hill Rd, Springfield, NH 03284. (603) 763-0204, info@wonderwellrefuge.org, www.wonderwellrefuge.org • The Buddhist meditation and retreat center of Natural Dharma Fellowship. We host residential and online programs in the Tibetan traditions of Mahamudra and Dzogchen. Specialty retreats: lineage teachings, wisdom of the body, retreats in nature, eco-dharma, contemplative care, women in Buddhism. Spiritual Directors: Lama Willa Blythe Baker, Lama Liz Monson.

ZEN CENTER OF NEW YORK CITY

500 State Street, Brooklyn, NY 11217. (718) 875-8229, zcny@mmro.org, <https://zmm.org/zcnyc/> • Geoffrey Shugen Arnold Roshi, Abbot. Ron Hogen Green, Sensei and Jody Hojin Kimmel, Sensei, Co-Directors. A residential lay training center offering daily zazen, a regular Sunday program, weekly retreats, and meditation intensives.

ZEN CENTER OF SYRACUSE, HOEN-JI

266 W. Seneca Tpke, Syracuse, NY 13207. (315) 492-9773, admin@hoenji.org, www.zencenterofsyracuse.org • Shinge Sherry Chayat, Abbot. Daily zazen, sesshin, teisho, dokusan, Dharma study, residency, visiting scholars & artists.

ZEN MOUNTAIN MONASTERY

PO Box 197, 871 Plank Rd, Mt. Tremper, NY 12457. (845) 688-2228, registrar@mro.org, <http://zmm.org/> • Geoffrey Shugen Arnold Roshi, Abbot; Jody Hojin Kimmel, Sensei. Residential training programs, monthly sesshin, and weekend retreats in the heart of the Catskill Mountains.

CANADA & HAWAII

LONDON ZEN CENTRE

923 Waterloo Street, London, ON N6A 3X2. info@londonzencentre.org, londonzencentre.org • Zen Centre in the koan line of Linji. Emphasis on personal growth and environmental responsibility using koans and deep personal work. Head teacher is Guy Gaudry, Roshi. Dharma heir of John Tarrant, Roshi.

NECHUNG DORJE DRAYANG LING

96-2285 Wood Valley Rd, Pahala, HI, 96777-0250. (808) 928-8539, www.nechung.org • The temple is a remote sanctuary located in a secluded part of the Big Island, and is uniquely suited for contemplation & meditation. Nechung Rinpoche established the temple in 1973 and is its head Lama. Weekly Sunday practices are ongoing from 10 am to 11:30 am.

THOUSAND HARBOURS ZEN

Halifax, NS. zennovascotia.com • Founded by Rev. Koun Franz in 2014 with a commitment to provide authentic Soto Zen Buddhist practice and teachings to all. Daily practice online.

TORONTO ZEN CENTRE

33 High Park Gardens, Toronto, ON M6R 1S8. (416) 766-3400, info@torontozen.org, www.torontozen.org • Lay zen training. Daily zazen, sesshin, dokusan, mettabhavana courses. Roshi Taigen Henderson, Dharma Heir of Sunyana Graef, Roshi; Roshi Kapleau lineage.

TRUE NORTH INSIGHT MEDITATION

(613) 422-4880, info@truenorthinsight.org, www.truenorthinsight.org • True North Insight — Insight meditation residential/non-residential retreats, sitting groups, daylongs and workshops in French & English. Diversity of background and experience are welcome. Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto.

WHITE WIND ZEN COMMUNITY / ZEN CENTRE OF OTTAWA

240 Daly Ave, Ottawa, ON K1N 6G2. (613) 562-1568, info@wwzc.org, www.wwzc.org • Main monastery (Dainen-ji) of the White Wind Zen Community. Subscribe to our free weekly email illustrated newsletter—www.wwzc.org/emirror.



BUDDHIST DIRECTORY

The definitive listing of meditation and retreat centers in North America is now paired with an expanded online version.

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Again

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continuing the yearly progression of one's history
in one place
change is subtle, sometimes hardly noticed
and then a large gasp, someone is gone, forever.

The migrating flocks return
the coast range changes color,
monarchs come back. . .
'restless surface watching the minutes'

Not too much happens strands
of consciousness, strands of dreams
precious, rare and mundane, where we live

—JOANNE KYGER

INNER HARMONY

LIVING IN BALANCE • BY JON KOLKIN

From the Forewords:

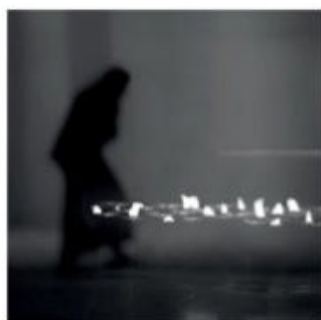
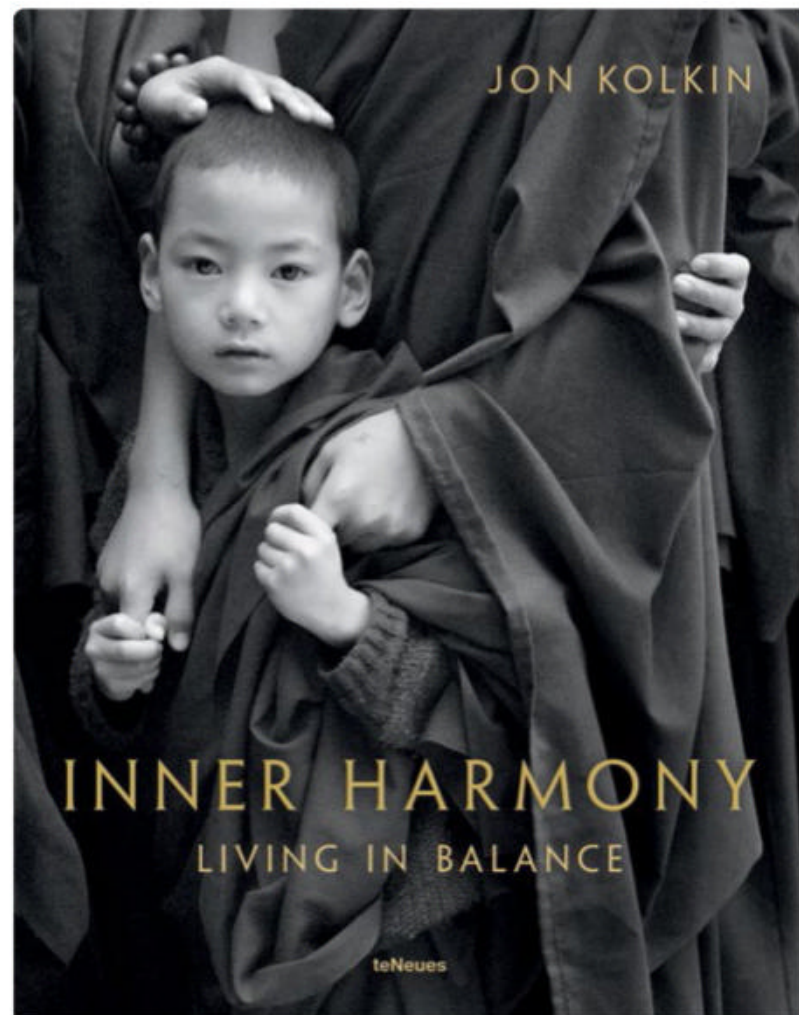
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—The 14th Dalai Lama



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