



Rohatsu Sesshin

December 6-13. See pages 2 & 3.

Holiday Schedule

The zendo will be closed for the Thanksgiving Holiday on Thursday and Friday, November 28-29. **The regular Sunday morning program on December 1, will be held as usual.**

The zendo will be closed from Friday, December 20, through Wednesday, January 1, except on **Sunday mornings, December 22 and 29, the regular program will be held at 9:00 am. Also, on Tuesday night, December 31, there will be a New Year's Program beginning at 8:00.** The ongoing schedule will resume on Thursday, Jan. 2.

General Meeting

The General Meeting, our annual members' business meeting, will be held on Sunday morning, November 3, at 11:00, following zazen. The nominees for the next Board of Directors will be introduced and the budget for 2020 will be presented. Everyone is encouraged to attend, but only Participating Members are eligible to vote. If you have agenda items, please contact the Board President, Ken Wilson at kenneth.wilson@duke.edu.

Sunday Morning Dharma Talks

Chimyo Atkinson, a priest at Great Tree Zen Temple near Asheville, NC, will give a Dharma Talk on November 10, at 10:30.

Jakuko Mo Ferrell will give a Dharma Talk on November 17, at 10:30.

Zenki Kathleen Batson will give a Dharma Talk on November 24, at 10:30.

Outdoor Half-day Sitting

Saturday, November 9th, 6:30 A.M. - 12:15 P.M.

The Eco-dharma Discussion group is sponsoring our first Half-day Outdoor Sitting. There will be **no** orientation Friday night, details and procedures for participating will be sent via email. Please sign up at the bulletin board or email info@chzc.org. A simple breakfast, coffee and tea will be provided. Fees for this sitting are by

donation. When signing up please indicate what part of the day you plan to attend.

Buddha's Enlightenment Ceremony

On Sunday morning, December 15, we will commemorate Buddha's Enlightenment at 10:30 with a short talk directed to children followed by a candle lighting and special service in the zendo. At the end of service, the children will be given a gift of incense and a candle. ***The morning will end with pot-luck refreshments, with beverages provided.*** Two periods of zazen, beginning at 9:00 A.M. will be held as usual.

New Year's Eve

On Tuesday night, December 31, we will welcome the New Year with two periods of zazen at 8:00 and 8:50 followed by the Bodhisattva Ceremony at 9:20, and a Fire Ceremony at 9:50 finishing with refreshments. For the Fire Ceremony, we write down the habits and tendencies, difficult states of mind, tangled aspects of relationships, and so on, that we would like to release. We will have an outdoor fire to burn our papers along with the name cards from Memorial Services held during the past year and incense stubs that have accumulated throughout year. Everyone is welcome for the whole program or to any part of it. ***The program will end with pot-luck refreshments.***

Children's Program

November 27, and December 1 and 15

The program is open to children 4 years and older, and offers children the space and time to practice living mindfully and to learn about Buddhist teachings through a variety of activities, including meditation, story, craft, song, and movement. Parents may stay with their kids, or join the other adults in meditation in the Zendo. The Children's Program meets from 8:50 until 11:00. Activities begin at 9:00, but children may arrive anytime from 8:50 to 9:30. We end at about 11:00. Child care may be available on the other Sundays. For more information, contact Maura High, the program coordinator, at maurahigh@gmail.com.

Chapel Hill Zen Center Newsletter — Nov & Dec, 2019

<http://www.chzc.org>

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Rohatsu Sesshin

Friday, December 6 - Friday, December 13

Josho Sensei will lead the Rohatsu Sesshin from Friday night, December 6, through Friday afternoon, December 13. Sesshin is an intimate way to practice with ourselves and others. We begin sesshin together, we sit together, walk together, eat together, and work together. Our practice is supported by the entire universe and each of us is supporting everyone else.

Sesshin will begin at **7:00 on Friday evening** with orientation and job assignments. In order to help all of us settle into the schedule and our zazen practice, **please arrive on time for orientation on Friday night**. Following orientation, silence will be observed. The zendo will be open by 4:00 P.M. on Friday; so please plan to arrive in time to settle in before 7:00 p.m. It is possible to sit part of the sesshin, but please come to orientation on Friday night, and commit to sitting for at least two days. When registering, clearly explain what part of sesshin you would like to attend.

The sesshin day will include zazen, beginning at 6:00 A.M., kinhin, a Dharma talk, work period, and formal meals served in the zendo. Dokusan, an individual meeting with Josho Sensei, will be available. The day will end around 9:30 P.M. We are planning for the 5th day of sesshin to be a silent day, with no chanting or Dharma Talk.

Because expenses have increased and because of unexpected repairs, the fees are higher this year. Fees are \$50 per day for Participating Members, and \$60 per day for others. However if you are able to offer more, it would be very helpful; the additional funds can be considered a tax-exempt donation. There will also be an opportunity to offer a donation to the teacher. *It is our intention that no one be turned away for financial reasons. Scholarships will continue to be available.* If you would like to request a scholarship, please contact Ken at kenneth.wilson@duke.edu. In the past, contributions received for scholarships were very helpful in allowing people to attend sesshin here and at the San Francisco Zen Center. Please return your registration form by **November 25**, with a \$30 deposit.

You are welcome to sleep in the zendo. Please bring a portable bed or pad for the floor, a sleeping bag, pillow, a towel and wash cloth, slip-on shoes, work clothes, and layered clothing. Opportunities for bathing are limited. There also may be some space available in members' homes nearby. For more information, please contact Zenki at info@chzc.org. **The Zen Center emergency phone is 919-933-0776.**

Sesshin Guidelines

Follow the schedule completely. If you are unable to do so, please speak to Josho before signing up. If you become sick, or if a difficulty arises during sesshin, please speak with Josho, the Director, or the Ino at that time.

No reading or writing, including Buddhist studies. Of course, you may read the sesshin schedule, but any reading that is not essential to the sesshin should not be done.

No talking. Please maintain silence on breaks and during work time.

Meal Practice. Please take some of each food being served unless you have a bad allergy to a particular food. Our meal practice is to accept what is offered. If you have a problem with, or allergy to, any food, please indicate that on the registration form.

Tea, coffee and water will be available during breaks and before zazen in the morning.

Please do not use deodorants, aftershave lotion, or other cosmetics that are perfumed.

No smoking in the building or on the decks.

We think our feelings—our bodily sensations—want us to do something, like, this feeling means have a drink, this means smoke a cigarette, this means have sex. But our feelings don't actually want us to do anything. They all want the same thing. They want to be felt. Feelings want to be felt.

— David Guy

Rohatsu Sesshin Registration Form

December 6-13 —Applications Due November 25

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ E-mail _____

Emergency contact person: Name _____ Phone _____

Liability waiver: *prior to sesshin, you will be required to sign a waiver whereby you release the Zen Center from any liability for accident or injury, and agree not to sue. You may request a copy of the form in advance.* Do you have a **medical condition** (e.g., diabetes, heart condition, pregnancy), allergies or **dietary restrictions**? If so, please attach an explanation.

I have an oryoki I can bring Yes No

I plan to arrive at _____ on _____ I plan to leave at _____ on _____

I can help set up (4:00 P.M.—6:00 P.M.) I can help clean up

I have enclosed my deposit/sitting fees \$ _____

Checks payable to
Chapel Hill Zen Center
P.O. Box 16302
Chapel Hill, NC 27516

I would like to donate toward a scholarship fund \$ _____

If this is your first sesshin with the Chapel Hill Zen Center, please attach a short statement about your zazen practice and history: How long have you been sitting zazen? How often are your currently sitting? Have you sat a one-day sitting or longer sesshin before? If so, when and with whom?

Where do you plan to sleep?

I have read and agree to the Sesshin Guidelines

Will you need a chair? Full time Part time

The zendo emergency number is (919) 933-0776
Please read sesshin guidelines on previous page

Talk on the Heart Sutra

by Josho Pat Phelan

I would like to talk about some passages in the *Heart Sutra* and what they might mean. The *Heart Sutra* is chanted and studied in Mahayana Buddhist traditions in China, Tibet, Mongolia, Korea, Vietnam, Japan and now in the West. Sutras are considered Buddha's teachings and they were first written down about 300-400 years after Shakyamuni Buddha lived. The word "Buddha" means an awakened one. The British teacher, Sangharakshita, described a Buddha as "one who sees reality face to face, one who experiences reality fully ... at every level of ...being;" and he said that a "sutra is a communication from this heart of reality." Although the *Heart Sutra* may be the sutra most often chanted, it also may be the most difficult to understand.

The *Great Wisdom Beyond Wisdom Heart Sutra* is called the *Maha Prajna Paramita Hridaya Sutra* in Sanskrit. *Maha*, or *Maka* in Japanese, normally means large or great; and in Buddhism, it also has the meaning of ultimate or incomparable—being beyond comparison or duality. *Prajna* means wisdom, the wisdom of the way things really are, which is empty of substantiality.

Paramita means perfection and when it is used with "*prajna*," it means crossing over and reaching the other shore. The world of birth and death or samsara is this shore, and nirvana is the other shore. However, the realization of the incomparable wisdom of the emptiness of all things, or the direct experience of emptiness, is in itself crossing over to the other shore. In Mahayana Buddhism, "reaching the other shore" doesn't mean leaving this world, rather it is the experience of the reality of this world.

The next word in the title, *Hridaya*, means heart, or essence, or the essential point. The *Heart Sutra* is considered the essence of a large group of 35 longer sutras that focus on *Prajna Paramita* teachings, one of which is the *Diamond Sutra*. One way to translate the title of the *Heart Sutra* would be the "Essence of the Teachings of the Incomparable, Ultimate Wisdom of the Emptiness of all Things."

The Sanskrit word *shunyata* is often translated as emptiness, but it is important to understand that emptiness does not mean nothingness or voidness, and it does not refer to a nihilistic or existential view; it means empty of an absolute, independent existence, empty of an autonomous or free-standing, unchanging, and permanent essence. But I think it's pretty common in the West to associate the word "emptiness" with nothingness or something like a cold, dark abyss, but this would be a big misunderstanding of the Buddhist meaning of emptiness or *shunyata*.

Emptiness has been described as the teaching of Co-dependent Origination, the view that everything comes into existence dependent on other causes and conditions, so nothing exists except in relation to other things. All phenomena or dharmas, including all aspects of our material and psychological experience are interdependent, they depend on something other than themselves in order to arise and exist. Because nothing can exist on its own, Buddhism considers emptiness or co-dependent origination to be the true mark or true characteristic of phenomena.

In his translation of the *Heart Sutra*, Kaz Tanahashi translated *shunyata* as boundlessness, giving the feeling of limitlessness and spaciousness—beyond boundaries. He said, "Boundlessness is the nature of all things." For me, this means, no fixed-nature — nothing is fixed, everything changes and is impermanent. In the Dalai Lama's commentary on the *Heart Sutra*, he said that emptiness doesn't mean that things don't exist, it means they don't possess the intrinsic reality we naively thought they did.

The *Heart Sutra* continues, "*Form does not differ from emptiness, emptiness does not differ from form; that which is form is emptiness, that which is emptiness, form.*" This means that emptiness does not stand apart from things as their true nature, as if emptiness were more real or more permanent than things themselves. This is important: emptiness itself, as well as all Buddhist teaching, is also empty of an absolute existence. Buddhist teaching is not an end in itself, it is a tool that supports us to experience the nondual, unlimited, interconnected nature of reality for

ourselves. To me the empty nature of emptiness means, open your hands, open your heart, open your mind and let it go, don't mistake Buddhist teaching for reality; insight, including experiential insight, can be helpful, but don't cling to it.

After saying, "*Form does not differ from emptiness ...*" the *Heart Sutra* continues, "*The same is true of feelings, perceptions, formations and consciousness.*" which is the short way of saying, "*Feelings do not differ from emptiness, emptiness does not differ from feelings. Perception does not differ from emptiness, ...*" and so on. So, all of our experience depends on and is connected to other elements. Again, emptiness is not some **thing** that can exist by itself; it is a characteristic of form, feelings, perceptions, mental formations and consciousness. Thich Nhat Hanh talks about the word emptiness or *shunyata* as being an adjective or a description, not a noun or a thing.

Form, feelings, perceptions, mental formations and consciousness are the five *skandhas* or aggregates of human experience. The five *skandhas* collect and integrate to make our body and mind, including our personality and a sense of continuity that we experience as our self. The first *skandha*, form is basically matter, and it refers to the material side of experience. Form includes both our body and all the objects of our sense organs—everything we can see, hear, smell, taste or touch.

The other four *skandhas*, feelings, perceptions, formations and consciousness correspond to the nonmaterial aspects of experience. Feelings, here, do not refer to emotions, but mean the immediate, gut level response, either conscious or unconscious, that we have to everything we experience. Feelings are either pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral—there are only three types—and they happen very quickly, so it is easy to miss them. Feelings are the fundamental, primitive responses that even plants and animals have—like the instinctual pushing away of what's painful or unpleasant, or reaching out for what we like and want more of. Since our conditioning is rooted in these gut level responses, becoming aware of feelings is fundamental to becoming free from our conditioned reactions. When we are aware of

this impulse to reach for or to push away, we have the opportunity to interrupt our conditioning and habits. This is the place where, if we are paying attention, we can interrupt our automatic reactions and not follow through on our impulses. This is where we have the power, or the space, to be able to choose a different response and break the chain of our automatic reactions.

When we encounter an object we receive some sensory stimulation which creates and corresponds to images or representations in our mind. These representations are the third *skandha*, perception. Perception functions to categorize what we encounter by distinguishing the different characteristics of sense objects: such as blue, yellow, long, short, loud, quiet, male, female, friend, enemy, food, poison, etc. In this context, perception is considered a pre-naming discrimination that we learn in the first years of life, like the ability to distinguish between milk and water. So, this type of perception occurs before language is engaged.

The fourth *skandha* is mental formations (*samskara*) which literally means "together-makers." It functions by constructing and changing our mental continuum. This means from one thought to the next, constructing volitional activity that propels our body, speech, and thought. Mental formations are impulses, volitions, and emotions including all psychological states, as well as the thoughts and fantasies that carry us along on the stream of our mental activity.

The fifth *skandha* is consciousness, and it has the function of maintaining, cognizing, comparing, storing and remembering all the seeds of consciousness, including all of our past experience. When we are simply thinking or worrying about something, experiencing sadness, anger, desire, and so on, this is the fourth *skandha* of mental formations. But if we become aware of our thoughts and other states of mind, this is mental consciousness. Consciousness includes what we may think of as the self, as well as pure awareness and intentional thought. When we talk about the subject and object of an experience, the subject refers to the fifth *skandha*, consciousness.

Thich Nhat Hanh said, “The subject of knowledge cannot exist independently from the object of knowledge. He gave the example, “To see is to see something. To hear is to hear something. To be angry is to be angry over something. Hope is hope for something. Thinking is thinking about something. When the object of knowledge is not present, there can be no subject of knowledge.” Another way of saying this is that objects don’t exist independently from differentiating or discriminating consciousness, which is referred to as the subject. So, discriminating consciousness and its objects always arise together.

The function of discriminating or discursive consciousness is to differentiate, divide, and separate—it turns our experience into an object that we can reflect back on. The subject, me, and the object of consciousness, this room and the things in it, co-arise. For a long time I thought this meant that objects—the things that make up the world—do not exist at all, except when they are the objects of consciousness; or they only exist when some form of consciousness seeks them out. I imagined Chapel Hill or the whole world as a kind of swampy, indistinguishable mush which had objects popping into existence as consciousness sought them out and then disappearing into this mushy swamp when consciousness disengaged from them.

This reminded me of the question, If a tree falls in the forest and no one is there to hear it, does sound occur? These ideas brought a kind of panic about the nature of reality. I thought it meant that objective reality, instead of being the world filled with things as you and I know them, was instead a void; and if I were enlightened, I would dwell in this voidness or non-existence of objective reality. This was not only somewhat frightening, but it also sounded pretty boring. Of course, there was another part of me that thought, What does it matter whether or not objective reality is void? How would it change my daily life? And actually, I was never too worried that one day I would go into my office and find my computer void and my work void.

So, I asked my teacher, Sojun Roshi, to explain this. Actually, I asked several times over several

years because it took a long time for me to understand it well enough that I could remember what he said once I left the room. His explanation was that the objects of the world, the roads and cars, buildings, mountains, flowers, butterflies, you and me, and so on, exist, whether or not discriminating consciousness has arisen, but they don’t exist as objects—they aren’t differentiated until individual, discriminating consciousness separates them from the whole. Objects don’t exist separately from or opposed to each other. The universe is non-dual, it is only perceived as dualistic when discriminating consciousness is engaged, distinguishing things as separate. When discriminating consciousness arises, it arises with an object—a form, feeling, perception, or a mental formation. There is no discriminating consciousness without an object. And when discriminating consciousness drops away, our sense of separation also drops away which Master Dogen referred to as the dropping of body and mind, or we might say the dropping of misperceived or conceptualized boundaries.

Discriminating consciousness distinguishes between things, it objectifies and names them, and globs on associations from our past experience, and this is necessary for us to make our way in our everyday life. But this process is so strongly implanted in us that when we see something, what we actually perceive is the unique representation in our own mind which is informed, filtered and shaped by all of our past associations and experience. So, the way each of us perceives and experiences the world is completely unique based on and adjusted to our individual experiences from our past; and when we die, this unique world of ours will also end. The usual understanding is that the world which you and I experience, exists in common with others, and this world existed before we were born and will continue after we die. However, in Buddhist teaching this is considered a false view. For example, if we take this representation of Buddha on the altar, a common way of thinking is that it exists objectively—at this time, in this room, we are all seeing the same beautiful figure of Buddha.

But according to Buddhist teaching, this is not

quite the case. We each see the figure from a slightly different angle, in slightly different light and shadow, and we each have our own individual past associations and current feelings and emotions that flavor what we see and how we feel about it, and this loops back around and flavors how we perceive it. For example, the altar may remind someone of the incense and altar they experienced in a Catholic church and bring up their feelings about that. For someone else, seeing the Buddha figure may remind them of their potential for liberation, giving a feeling of assurance and peace. While someone else may have gotten car sick on their way to visit their first Buddhist center and when they see the Buddha figure, they may be reminded of that nausea. So, we each bring associations from the past and emotional overtones to the way we perceive things, and maybe some of us are even a little color blind or have an astigmatism. So, this Buddha statue is a different statue for each of us, having its own place in each of our worlds.

Going back to emptiness, Suzuki Roshi said, "There is no emptiness which has no form." In other words, emptiness has no independent existence, it cannot exist apart from form, feelings, perceptions, formations or consciousness. Suzuki Roshi said, "'To empty' something means to experience it without relying on the form or color of being... what it should be empty of is our preconceived idea of it ..., our idea of big or small, round or square." This is our usual way of measuring and comparing one thing to another. We tend to carry these values into our way of experiencing things, but things themselves have no inherent scale, or weight, or value. We overlay reality with our judgements and comparisons which results in assigning a value, and then we use these values so much that we often become blind to them. But they don't exist anywhere but in our thinking. Suzuki Roshi said, "When we have an idea of something, when we conceptualize something, it is already 'dead' experience. It's not actual experience and the reason we empty a thing...is that what we empty is not actual reality, but the idea of big or small, good or bad. I don't say that such comparisons are

always wrong, but mostly we are liable to use our selfish scale when we analyze,.. [or] when we form an idea of something.... We must empty this part. The way we empty this part is to practice zazen."

Talking about emptiness or the subject and object of consciousness can get pretty abstract or intellectual. One way to practice with this is to use the notion of emptiness, or boundlessness, or our deep interconnection with everything, to support getting in touch with the place where we are open or vulnerable, and in that place try to put down our guard. By turning toward our own open heart, we turn toward a space which isn't so fixed by our ideas of the way we think things should be. When we let go of self-protection that fixes our position and holds it in place, there can be space to allow movement. We can play with letting go of our identity which serves to define the boundary between inside and outside. We can practice, for example, letting go of controlling our breath. The space where we let go of control, but at the same time remain present, is the space where change and movement can occur, where we can come closer to things as they really are. Suzuki Roshi said, "Emptiness does not mean annihilation, it means selfless original enlightenment which gives rise to everything."

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Members' Library - New Acquisitions

Ruth King, *Mindful of Race*; David R. Loy, *The World is Made of Stories*; Jill Bolte, *My Stroke of Insight*; Emmanuelle Giumelli; *See, Hear Feel, Mindfulness for Children One Moment at a Time*; Rev. Amanda Robertson; *Training with Our Mistakes*; CD of a Dharma Talk from Shasta Abbey; Jay L. Garfield, *The Three Turnings of the Dharma Wheel*, CD from talks given at the North Carolina Zen Center; Shinzen Young, *Natural Pain Relief*; Frederick Franck, *Zen Seeing, Zen Drawing*; Thomas Tweed, *Asian Religions in America: A Documentary History and The American Encounter with Buddhism 1844-1912*.

Chapel Hill Zen Center



P.O. Box 16302
Chapel Hill, NC 27516
(919) 967-0861

Schedule

Sunday Morning *Tuesday Evening*

9:00 zazen	7:00 zazen
9:40 kinhin	7:40 kinhin
9:50 zazen	7:50 zazen
10:30 service	8:20 service

Monday to Friday

<i>Thursday Evening</i>	6:00 A.M. zazen
6:00 P.M. zazen	6:50 A.M. zazen

Meetings at 5322 NC Highway 86
2.5 miles North of I-40 exit 266

Joshō Pat Phelan, Abbess

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Eco-Dharma Discussion Group

Explores Buddhist teachings on the natural world, caring for it. Contact Zenki: lulu@rubblebuss.com.

Aging Gracefully, Befriending Death - December I

An informal discussion group that shares information and explore conversations among ourselves. Contact Carol: wmichael@nc.rr.com, or Kris: krisgarvin@gmail.com.

People of Color Sitting Group

The POC Sitting Group meets on Wednesday nights from 6:00-7:30. Contact Conal: pocsittinggroup@gmail.com.

Recovery Meeting

This is a recovery group with a Buddhist perspective on the 12-Step Program, which meets on Tuesday nights at 7:30. Contact: 919-265-7600 or ZenandRecovery@gmail.com.

Chinese Calligraphy and Brush Painting

Jinxiu Zhao teaches Chinese Calligraphy & Brush Painting on Sundays at **2:30-4:30**, Nov. 3, 17, Dec. 1, 15, \$30 per class. Contact Jinxiu: (919) 484-7524 or Jxznc@aol.com to register.

Embracing diversity, the Chapel Hill Zen Center expresses the fundamental connection of all beings by welcoming everyone to the practice of zazen.
May all beings realize their true nature.