



# kai han

The Newsletter of the Albuquerque **Zen** Center  
No. 4 Spring 2018

## **Awakening Mahayana Faith** by Seiju

*The Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana*, which is attributed to Asvagosha, is considered an important text in the development of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism. It is short, but deep, and I have always found it inspirational. The author was aiming for conciseness of expression, yet completeness in Buddhist teaching. Most Buddhist texts gradually work their way towards presenting a culminating teaching. There is an allowance for our confusion and the teaching speaks to this level of (mis)understanding. These teachings provide plenty of “footholds” for discursive mind in progressing through the teaching. In this sense *The Awakening of Faith* is not user-friendly. The “standpoint” of the text is ultimate reality – the Dharmakaya. This is a Buddhist term for an all-embracing yet unknowable completeness. This is strong medicine up front. In our age of fascination with digital precision and information gathering, this teaching may not be appealing. Yet all the technology and connectivity cannot defuse an underlying discontent in our society. There is little peace in our fragmented world.

*The Awakening of Faith* was written for folks who want to “get to the point.” In that regard, the text is very direct: the essence/totality of everything – the imperceptible Dharmakaya - is the only reality. Everything else – self, world, past, present, and future – all are merely momentary manifestations of Dharmakaya. Dharmakaya activity gives rise to the subject and object in everyday experience; but this is not reality. Only the Dharmakaya is reality. Sasaki Roshi, devoted much of his teaching to examining the dynamics of Dharmakaya unifying and dividing, expanding and contracting. He called the process dharma activity.

The “faith” mentioned in the title of the text should not be confused with belief. We are not being asked to blindly accept some truth. Our faith is akin to trust. We need trust to test the teaching. This allows us to practice and verify the teaching in our own experience. We usually begin our practice in the Zendo, or some other sheltered setting; but to influence our lives we must also test in daily living. Without faith in the teaching it can be very difficult to truly let go and stop. Faith replaces fear; and inspires a willingness to experience the teaching for ourselves.

The benefit of starting with the conclusion is that it suggests a practice which gets to the vital point. This

practice, stopping and seeing, has been an essential meditation in several different Buddhist schools.

There is only one reality, Dharmakaya. Therefore, every time I assert myself, affirming “my thoughts” or “my emotions,” I am obscuring reality. If we want to realize the truth of this teaching – end suffering – we must relinquish standing in our self. We must drop any/all self-centric activity as it is recognized. Not asserting self, see – meet - whatever is arising. Sasaki Roshi had a succinct observation about this aspect of practice: first unify mind and body in personal center of gravity, then unify personal center of gravity with cosmos center of gravity.

Human experience is the realm of discriminative consciousness; complete consciousness is imperceptible. The stopping presented in the text is straightforward: if thoughts arise, at once discard them. Don’t get caught. This is not a question of “How do I...”. Stopping is clear energy. This requires our “A game” and is more like a marathon than a sprint. We will trip over ourselves repeated. The practice outlined in the text is simple, sufficient, but not easy. So, start with the low-hanging fruit: stop identifying and judging. Stop the commentary; end the narrative. The direct way to end dualism is to immediately, unconditionally embrace everything as oneself. Stop being a spectator in your life; and unconditionally embrace your content as yourself. Disappear into immediate relationship, and discursive mind disappears. See the moment, meet the moment – without labels and judgments. The cosmos is utterly dynamic but never wiggles. If our mind is wiggling, we are not with the center of gravity of the cosmos.

This is an iterative process. To the degree we truly stop, to that degree we see. There is much for us to learn as we relax our self-affirming mind and more and more completely disappear into relationship.

If you want a text and practice to cut through the busyness of self-delusion, *The Awakening of Faith* is a worthy choice. As we cut through the more obvious self-activity, the underlying dynamic relationship, which had been obscured by our self-interest, becomes clearer. Test it for yourself. Find your home in the center of gravity of the cosmos.

## Notes from a lecture on the Diamond Sutra

by Kyozan Joshu Sasaki Roshi

The Buddhist understanding of life is based on two levels, the relative and the absolute. In the former, the self is the basis for understanding life and in the latter, no self is that basis.

The self that functions on the level of dichotomy has an individual center of gravity. When this self disappears and no longer is the center of the experience of life, we become one with the Absolute center of gravity and experience life from this center. This experience is known as *taiken*, the total experience of emptiness in which there is no inside/outside, no background. True liberation comes when we realize that there is no reality behind this realization of *Ku* (emptiness).

The Four Noble Truths are beyond conceptual grasp. They cannot be understood on the relative level by the particular self. To comprehend them, we must experience them fully as we realize *Ku*. When Nagarjuna says that in the Four Noble Truths there are no Four Noble Truths, he is manifesting *Ku* in his teaching.

We must remember that while we begin our study of the Four Noble Truths from the standpoint of the particular self, our goal is to manifest them.

Recorded by Hal Roth, Summer 1977



Photo by Sam Boese

## Two waka poems celebrating spring by Saigyō

I

In spring I spend day  
with flowers, wanting no night;  
it's turned around  
in fall, when I watch the moon  
all night, resenting the day.

II

I must strain to see  
the few buds this old tree  
labored to open;  
in pathos we're one, and I wonder  
how many more springs we'll meet here.

Saigyō (1118-1190) was born Satō Norikiyo into a noble family that served the emperor. He left his military commission to become a zen monk at age 23 and often lived as a hermit. Saigyō made many extended pilgrimages to remote areas for the "practice of Buddhist austerities." His poetry is considered to have greatly influenced later Japanese poets, especially Bashō (1644-1694).

Kai Han is the newsletter of the Albuquerque Zen Center. Striking the han signals dawn, dusk, and evening in zen centers and monasteries. If you are interested in contributing essays, book reviews, poetry, drawings or photographs please contact Michele at [mmpen1891@gmail.com](mailto:mmpen1891@gmail.com).

## AZC Board News

Please mark your calendars—The next sangha meeting is **Saturday, May 19 at 10:00 am** with a reception to follow.

Long-time sangha member Harriet Romero moved to Oregon in March. We all wish her the very best and are grateful for her dedication and tireless energy in and around AZC working on the grounds and maintaining the zendo. Gassho Harriett!

Thank you all who helped make the year-end pledge drive a success. Your generosity for the center is greatly appreciated. Although monthly expenses are kept to a minimum, and January and February saw an increase in donations, March had us in the red again. Please consider a recurring monthly membership or any extra amount that you contribute. Sincere thanks to everyone for your continued support.

The Board is trying a new schedule for Beginner's Instruction in the hope that more people will return after their initial introduction to zazen. Instead of every Saturday instruction, it is now offered on the second Saturday of the month at 10:30 for approximately one hour. This provides the *densu* more time for instruction which will also include *kinhin* and *sarei*. Given a more detailed introduction and understanding of the etiquette etc., hopefully new individuals will be more comfortable with the practice and want to continue. The next few dates for Beginner's instruction are June 9, July 14, and Aug. 11.

Donors: C. Alelyunas, M. Athens, C. Beck, P. Bergman, F. Bridges, D. Cabral, C. Callahan, T. Cleaves, J. Creek, S. Crozier & P. Humphreys, D. D'Agostino, J. Damour, M. Eddy, G. Galsworth, A friend, M. Hart, J. Houle & C. Hyde, A. Kelly, L. Lian, P. Livingston, H. Lurie, Myosho, M. McCandless, T. McGuire, J. McNamara, C. Mead & M. Penhall, D. Merion, F. Miller, N. Montoya, D. Mullen, D. Nolte, S. Reiger, Hosen R., M. Reese, P. Ryder, F. Scarlito, V. Seiser, E. Shir, C. Stump, J & D Taber, B. Tingley, H. von Briesen Jr., T. Whalen, M. Wojtkowski, D. Wolfskeht, Bodhi Manda Zen Center

## The Third Treasure

The AZC sangha is a community of friends practicing the dharma together. Sangha arises when we practice being in relationship together with all beings—it is not practiced in isolation. A genuine sangha is an extended dharma family where we all work together in a unified spirit. The sangha's efforts build upon previous efforts. In this way we have been able to maintain the center's buildings and establish an important library.

We need members to help with housekeeping and grounds work. For housekeeping, one of our long-term members who did a significant amount of housekeeping tasks and gardening tasks, recently moved. Thus, we need members to volunteer to regularly clean the zendo, meeting room and to help with projects in and around the grounds.

No experience is required, just enthusiasm to further one's practice in the Third Great Treasure, the Sangha. If you are interested in these opportunities, please contact the center at [officeazc@gamil.com](mailto:officeazc@gamil.com), or 505 268 4877. Gassho!



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Membership levels begin at \$30.00 a month and no one will be excluded based on income or inability to pay. It is always possible to make alternative arrangements to include service and work at the Zen Center or other contributions. Please see the website for further information.

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## Weekly Practice Schedule

Monday-Saturday morning zazen  
6:00-7:30 a.m.

Monday- Wednesday evening zazen  
6:00-7:00 p.m.

Thursday Discussion Group  
6:00-7:00 p.m.

Beginner's Instruction  
Second Saturday of the month  
10:30-11:30a.m.

Saturday Samu Practice  
8:15-9:15 a.m.

Saturday mid-morning zazen  
9:30-11:00 a.m.

Friday evening & Sunday  
closed



