



# Mountains Talking

Lotus in the Flame Temple, Zen Center of Denver

Fall 2000

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## Jukai

*A talk given at the November 1995 Jukai Ceremony by Sue Cole*

Jukai is the taking of the 16 Bodhisattva Precepts. Aitken Roshi calls these precepts “archetypes” or “skillful means for us to use in building our engagement with the world.”

The precepts are the heart of the moral and ethical teachings of Buddhism, but they are not hard and fast rules. They are guidelines that describe how a fully enlightened person lives. They are rooted in the awareness that everything is one and therefore they find expression through acts of compassion. Acts that are helpful, and appropriate depending on the time, place, and situation.

Aitken Roshi describes them as not being “commandments written in stone,” but rather as “expressions of inspiration written in something more fluid than water.” He also says that, “Without the precepts as guidelines, Zen Buddhism tends to become a hobby, made to fit the needs of the ego.”

So the precepts keep us on track. When we take them we acknowledge that without a commitment to follow these guidelines, we will continue to act from an ego-based center that brings pain and suffering to ourselves and others. But by publicly committing to follow the precepts, we embrace them and can call upon them to guide our future actions.

If you are wondering whether or not you should participate in the Jukai ceremony, you might consider what Toni Packer had to say about this. She said the right time to take the precepts is when we resolve that we must come to awakening. When we are finally fed up with what she calls “the endless repetition of the sense of me and mine with all its fear, craving, accumulating, depending, clinging, despairing, and new craving.”

If you have listened to Sensei’s teishos on the precepts, or have read something about them and have a fairly good understanding of them--if you feel a calling or connection to this path, by all means, take Jukai. If you are undecided or have doubts, then you are encouraged to wait another year so that when you do take them, you can enter into them wholeheartedly.

If you are simply concerned that you can’t keep the precepts, remember that these are guidelines and no one but a fully realized Buddha could always keep them. The important thing is that you intend to try to keep them.

Jukai is a serious step and not something to enter into lightly. However, the door is open to anyone who wants to take the precepts, and all who wish are invited to join in the ceremony today.

# Sangha News

## Being a Compassionate Companion

**On Saturday and Sunday, September 23rd and 24th, the Center will host a two day seminar on death and dying with Frank Ostaseski, the founding director and guiding teacher of the Zen Hospice Project in San Francisco. Frank has introduced thousands in the US and Europe to the practices of mindful and compassionate care of the dying. His work draws on many years of Buddhist practice and more than 15 years at the bedsides of people dying of cancer, AIDS and other illnesses.**

**The workshop will present a mindful and compassionate approach to address the practical, emotional and spiritual issues that are inherent in being a companion to the dying. Frank will introduce traditional mindfulness practices, exercises designed to explore impermanence, fear, and grief to help us develop the skillful means necessary to accompany those facing death with openness and love. The workshop is open to all, and presents an invaluable opportunity to learn how to help others, perhaps even our own friends and family, to face terminal illness and death. Sangha members can attend the seminar for \$75, and scholarships are available for those whom the fee presents a financial hardship.**

**A number of Sangha members have been working very hard contacting hospices and other organizations in Colorado and the surrounding states to generate publicity for the event. More help is needed in these efforts. This seminar presents an excellent fundraising opportunity for the Center, the success of which depends upon our getting the word out as widely as possible. Lists of phone numbers and addresses are posted regularly on the bulletin board with instructions and a signup sheet. You can also contact Jeff Black (303-477-1866) or Dennis Tesar (303-234-9042) if you would like to help. Assistance will also be needed for the event itself; look for an upcoming signup sheet on the bulletin board.**

**Frank Ostaseski and the Zen Hospice project will be featured on the first part of a four part series on death and dying entitled *On Our Own Terms*, to be aired on PBS September 10-13 with Bill Moyers.**

## Sangha Camping Trip

Becky Wethington is inviting any interested Sangha members and their families to join in a camping trip on her mountain property over the Labor day weekend. Becky owns about 40 acres of mostly undeveloped land just north of Lyons on Blue Mountain. Facilities include a trailer with a kitchen, a well, and a composting toilet. The property is a wonderful place to hike, with beautiful cliffs and lovely views. If you are interested in going, please contact Becky at 303-467-2387 for directions and instructions, or call the DZC Office. Everyone should bring their own food and camping supplies.

## Submissions Requested

Mountains Talking needs news and activities from committees to share with the Sangha at large. Also considered inclusion are personal pieces- poetry, artwork, and short essays on Zen Buddhism or related topics. Deadlines for submissions are the last week of November for the Winter issue; the last week of January for the Spring issue; the last week of May for the Summer issue; and the last week of July for the Fall issue. All submissions are subject to approval by Sensei and the editors, and to editing for space.

## Sangha Meeting

During the Sangha meeting in November, there will be elections for new Board members . A nominating committee will be formed at the August 30 Board of Directors meeting to nominate at least one new Board member. Also at the meeting there will be a discussion and vote on changes to the Bylaws of the Center regarding grievance procedures in the event of misconduct on the part of the Spiritual Director or anyone else in a position of leadership in the Sangha. To have a valid election, a majority of the In-town Supporting Membership must be present in

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person or by proxy. If you are unable to attend the meeting, please find someone who will be in attendance to give your proxy to.

### Departing Sangha Members

A number of Sangha Members are leaving Denver to move to surrounding states. Tim and Jackie Barrow will be relocating to The Salt Lake City area in Utah, so Jackie can pursue a career in the field of forensic science. Also moving to SLC is Sarah Briggs-Cornelius, who will be playing with the orchestra there. Bob Dickson will be temporarily relocating to Wichita, Kansas for the next 2 1/2 years to pursue a Masters degree in art. Bob will be returning to Denver during semester breaks, so we should still see him periodically in this time.

### A Note about the Center's Name

Although generally we refer to the Center as the Denver Zen Center, our actual corporate name is the Zen Center of Denver. People on committees who produce "official" documents for the Center (particularly fundraising brochures and advertising) should keep this in mind, and use Zen Center of Denver rather than Denver Zen Center.

### Gassho Corner

A deep gassho to:

Jeff Black, Dennis Tesar, and John Emelin for their hard work in organizing the Being a Compassionate Companion seminar and leading the publicity efforts for it. Thanks also to those who have helped with phone calls and mailings to generate interest in the event.

Bob Dickson, Bill Zaun, and Dennis Tesar for beginning the enlargement of the stage in the auditorium. The enlargement will hopefully be completed or come close to completion at the All-Sangha Workday.

### Upcoming Events

Zazenkai	September 17
<b>Being a Compassionate Companion</b>	<b>September 23-24</b>
Kannon Ceremony	September 28
Dharma Discussion	October 1
Repentance Ceremony	October 17
<b>Sesshin</b>	<b>October 21-28</b>
<b>Sangha Meeting</b>	<b>November 5</b>
Zazenkai	November 11
Dharma Talk	November 12
Fast for a World Harvest/ Ceremony of Aid	November 16

Teisho on the Precepts  
Thanksgiving Ceremony

### Jukai

### Sesshin

Buddha's Enlightenment Ceremony  
Ritual Cleaning of the Zendo  
New Year's Eve Ceremony

November 19  
November 23  
**November 26**  
**December 2-9**  
December 12  
December 30  
December 31

### An Excerpt From *Bendowa*

by Dogen Kigen

*Question 14:* Home leavers are free from various involvements and do not have hindrances in zazen to the pursuit of the way. How can the laity, who are variously occupied, practice single-mindedly and accord with buddha-dharma which is unconstructed?

*Answer:* Buddha ancestors, out of their kindness, have opened the wide gate of compassion in order to let all sentient beings enter realization. Who among humans and heavenly beings cannot enter?

If you investigate olden times the examples are many. To begin with, emperors Daizong and Shunzong had many obligations on the throne; nevertheless, they practiced zazen in pursuit of the Way, and penetrated the great way of Buddha ancestors. Ministers Li and Fang both closely served their emperors but they practiced zazen, pursued the way, and entered realization in the great way of buddha ancestors.

This just depends upon whether you have the willingness or not. It does not matter whether you are a lay person or home leaver. Those who can discern excellence invariably come to this practice. Those who regard worldly affairs as a hindrance to buddha-dharma only think that there is no buddha-dharma in the secular world, and do not understand that there is no secular world in buddha-dharma.

(Translation by Lew Richmond and Kazuaki Tanahashi. Excerpted from "On the Endeavor of the Way," page 155, in *Moon in a Dewdrop: Writings of Zen Master Dogen*, edited by Kazuaki Tanahashi.)

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