



# Mountains Talking

Lotus in the Flame Temple, Zen Center of Denver

Winter 2008

## Teacher Teachings

### Samu by Karin Kempe

Aitken Roshi translates samu as work service or work sutras, the activity of religious practice in work. Even though this morning we will be setting up for a holiday celebration, Thanksgiving, and of necessity may be doing some quiet talking in the course of our work, still the primary focus is on deep absorption in what we are doing: work meditation. Roshi likes to point out that samu is a unique opportunity to practice as if we were monastics - just letting ourselves sink into the deep silence of the morning, the way we do in sesshin. It's a mini-retreat, except that we are not retreating or moving away but towards the simple reality of our life this minute. From time to time the densho will ring, and that's an opportunity to come back to this moment, this space and to refocus the mind right here.

Maurine Stuart, an early American Rinzai Roshi, wrote: *There is nothing that is not sacred; nothing that is not spiritual practice... True Zen practice is carried on in the midst of activity. When we are cooking, we are in deep cooking samadhi. When we are cleaning, we are in deep cleaning samadhi. This condition, samadhi, is not a vacancy, a stupor, a spaced-out state of mind. It is a deeply awake, alert, vividly present condition - and of course, it may be blissful. We may be so vividly awake we can hear the ash from the incense fall.*

*Each of the activities we are engaged in, when given our full attention, without any feeling of resentment or comparison, is an opportunity to experience something, to open our eyes more clearly. When we let go of our egocentric hold on things, we find that something wonderful is there, something that has always been there; we have never been without it.*

Samu is right action, right speech and right thought. By "right", we mean action, speech and thought that are one with our spirituality, our aspiration. Simple, direct, sincere. As we go through this morning, let's appreciate the deep quiet that is at the heart of everything. Let's absorb ourselves in what we are doing, awake, and aware of the smallest details and sensations. Our complex lives can wait until we step outside the temple doors this afternoon. For now, there is just the taste of hot tea, the rough feel of the carpet on our feet, the colors of the gourds and the rustle of the dried leaves for the altar. Let's see what we discover together! Appreciate your morning.

### Samu vs Workdays by Peggy Sheehan

You will notice on the calendar that there are samus and workdays. Workdays are scheduled on Sundays from 8:00 am to noon. They begin with a 30-minute informal sitting after which the sangha joins together to do work projects around the temple. These days are opportunities for the sangha to get to know one another in a more relaxed atmosphere and to accomplish some needed work projects that take a bit of time. Workdays are in essence the practice of dana or generosity (selfless service). Samu, on the other hand, is a specific practice form. Samus are on Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 pm. Through this practice we learn to take our zazen off the mat or to embody the Way in activity. This is a crucial bridge practice between formal zazen and the activity of our daily lives. As Aitken Roshi says, samu is the fourth pillar of Zen. The day includes zazen, tea ceremony, an instructional or encouragement talk by the teacher, formal work practice in silence, an oryoki meal and a final discussion. Because samu introduces members to important sesshin forms including concentrated silent work practice, tea ceremony and oryoki meals, it is a requirement to attend samu before applying for sesshin for the first time. All are encouraged to join in and experience both of these wonderful practices.

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# Sangha News

## New Year, New Zendo by Danan Henry, Roshi

As a result of our new open zendo policy whereby, there is a constant flow of new or newly returning people from the larger community sitting at the Temple on a daily basis, some of our forms are no longer appropriate. The new people come for meditation and gradually, if at all, become familiar with the spiritual dimensions of zazen and the Buddhist context. With our high standards for disciplined sitting, proper instruction and corrections, the new people are doing remarkably well and the zendo continues to be silent, still and concentrated. But our many ceremonies are not consistent with the new zendo atmosphere and are very taxing on the energies of the Monastery Without Walls zendo leadership. So, we are eliminating (on a trial basis) the Kannon Ceremony, Ceremony of Aid, the Thanksgiving Ceremony of Gratitude, the Parinirvana Ceremony, the Ritual Cleaning of the Temple and the New Year's Ceremony. Our emphasis will be on zazen, teisho, dokusan and samu. We will continue with the Tuesday evening occasional Q & A format and the Tuesday evening series of Talk & Discussions on Buddhist practices such as the Eightfold Noble Path, the Paramitas, the Four Abodes, the Seven Factors of Enlightenment, The Bodhisattva Precepts, the Oxherding Pictures, etc. We will, of course, retain the repentance ceremonies, the annual Ceremony of Jukai, Vesak celebration and will continue to have the Buddha's Enlightenment Ceremony in the context of the rohatsu sesshin. In addition to Sunday teishos, we will continue our Dharma Discussions and Seniors Talks. We will continue to have Shosan (Dharma Combat) led by the teachers on the final Saturday morning of sesshin. And we will continue to have all-Sangha meetings twice a year on Sunday mornings during the Fall and Spring Angos.

Notice that we are reverting to four, three-month angos (training periods) per year (winter, spring summer and fall). I look forward to getting feedback at our all-Sangha meetings regarding these changes.

## Paying Our Way by Ken Morgareidge

The housing market is in collapse; foreclosures are rampant. The dollar has tanked. The stock market is on a roller coaster that's heading downward. A major automobile manufacturer just eliminated 12,000 jobs. The U.S. is spending four billion dollars a day on war. As Bette Davis once put it, "Fasten your seatbelts, it's going to be a bumpy ride." All this coupled with our American ethic of total self-reliance can put us in a psychological and spiritual bind. How ironic that in times of difficulty, whether personal, professional, or financial, when we most need the support and solace of spiritual practice and of sangha, so many of us feel that we "aren't worthy"; that if we can't "pay our own way", there is something wrong with us and we are not entitled to come to the Zen Center. Well, there are many ways of paying our way.

Someone once asked Yasutani Roshi if Zen was for everybody. Yasutani said that Zen is for anyone willing to pay the price. Now Yasutani was certainly not talking about money. The most important, and really the only manner in which we pay our way at the Zen Center is not with dues or contributions or any of that stuff. We pay our way with our practice. We pay our way by coming to the Center to sit. That is the real price and it is enough. Transiency is the Buddha's great teaching. Things change, politics change, finances change, lives change. And we never know when or how. But the practice is endless. It is endlessly forgiving, endlessly accepting. There are no barriers, certainly not money or the lack of it. If you are feeling the pinch these days, you are not alone. It's just the way things go, and we can work with lower dues or no dues for however long it needs to be. Just let us know how things are going. Whatever happens, richer or poorer, come to the temple.

*Mountains Talking* is a quarterly newsletter published by:

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## Important Announcements

◆ Karin Kempe is the new Head of Zendo, beginning January 1, 2008.

◆ As of January 1, 2008, there will be four, 3-month training periods (Winter: January-March; Spring: April-June; Summer: July-September and Fall: October-December). Each angō will begin with an opening ceremony. Additionally, the Center will be closed for one week at the end of each angō.

◆ All members are strongly urged to attend one samu and one workday during each training period. This is to optimize the experience for taking the practice off the mat in addition to caring for the temple and its grounds.

◆ It is required, that those applying to sesshin for the first time, attend at least one samu and one zazenkai before being accepted into sesshin.

◆ It is requested that all members participate on at least one committee.

◆ The Diamond Sangha Teachers' Circle will be meeting at the Zen Center of Denver March 2-8, 2008. The schedule and opportunities for sangha participation will be provided in a later communication.

## Dokusan

During the Winter training period, the dokusan schedule is as follows:

**Sunday and Tuesday mornings:** Karin; **Tuesday Evenings:** Roshi and Peggy (two dokusan lines - one using the office); **Wednesday mornings:** Ken; **Thursday mornings:** Roshi; **Thursday evenings:** Roshi and Ken (two dokusan lines one using the office); **Friday mornings:** Peggy Sheehan.

## Upcoming Events

Center Closed	January 1-6
Winter Ango Opening Ceremony	January 13
Talk & Discussion	January 15
Zazenkai	January 20
Workday	January 27
Talk & Discussion	January 29
Samu	February 2
Talk & Discussion	February 12
Zazenkai	February 17
Samu	February 23
Talk & Discussion	February 26
Sesshin Application Deadline	February 27
Diamond Sangha Teachers' Circle	March 2-8
Dharma Discussion	March 16
Sesshin	March 22-29
Shosan	March 29



## Thank you From the Teachers

Thank you Sangha for the warm and supportive participation at the New Teacher Ceremony on December 17. We were deeply touched by the heartfelt well wishes by so many of our dharma brothers and sisters.

*-Danan, Karin, Ken and Peggy*

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