

October Announcements:



October Sangha Services

Our Sangha Services (a Sanscrit word for Buddhist community) will be held October 3, 17, 31 at 10:30 am. The Sangha service is a traditional Jodo Shinshu service with chanting led by a Doshi, a lay member, from the Sangha.

Dharma Class Video/Book

discussion: Snacks are served downstairs following the Sangha Service. We are currently watching ***Great World Religions: Buddhism by Professor Eckel***. This is a guide to all schools of Buddhism around the world including our own Jodo Shinshu. Each lecture stands on its own, feel free to join us. We finish around noon.

Introduction to Buddhism

9:30 am Sunday, October 31
By Jefferson and Christine. This is an informal way to see what goes on at our temple. We cover what to expect when attending a Jodo Shinshu Service. We then give a brief overview

of Buddhism with a question and answer session as time allows.

Ko Service, Wednesday nights at 6:30 pm. Doshi is Ed Parker. This is a Sangha service and informal Dharma discussion group.

Thanks September Toban crew:

Kengo Kato
Satoshi Terao
Jim & Janet Tamura
Liat Parker
Ann Heineman

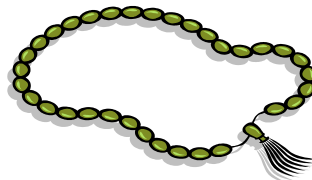
Service Change

Rev. Tetsuo Unno will not be able to be our guest minister this Oct. due to surgery and recovery time. We wish him the best and look forward to getting him on our calendar next year.

Bhante Seelawimala of the Institute of Buddhist Studies has agreed to conduct our Sunday Service on Oct. 10 at 10:30 am. That same afternoon at 3 pm, he will give a talk, "Being in the Moment" This is a wonderful opportunity to experience the Dharma, please join us.

Senbei Making October 16: We will be making Japanese rice crackers called Senbei. Two shifts, 9 am and 11am. Lunch will be provided for all workers. Bring a pizza cutter and join us!

October 31, we will be offering Children's' Dharma study. Details to be announced.



Looking ahead:

November 7, Fall Food Bazaar.

In preparation for which:

November 4: 5:30 pm clean the chicken

November 6: cook the chicken. We will also be making cone Sushi. Gobo will be offered for sale during the Food Bazaar.

November 7 Fall Food Bazaar Senbei and Bake Sale 11am - 2 pm

Please bring bake sale items by 10 am
Tickets for Chicken Teriyaki to go are \$8.50. To hold your Chicken Teriyaki call Janet Tamura at 534-9280

November 21 will be the first meeting of the Sangha Council. The Sangha Council is for those who would like to have more involvement in the Sangha and is intended to promote two-way communication between Members and the Board. How it will be structured will be determined through your interest and input. We will be discussing this in the Ko meetings on Wednesday nights.



Dharma Talk by Karen Vielle

My talk is based on an article by meditation teacher and author Sally Kempton, titled: "Just Let Go...sometimes the simplest advice can be the hardest to take. Here's "How to Practice Detachment without Giving Up on Life" (long title). In the discussion group after service last week, the question came up: How can you practice compassion without attachment? So, I've adapted my talk to include the practice of compassion in relationship to the practice of detachment as described in the article.

The article begins with a story as told by Ram Dass. He was telling a famous anecdote about the way you catch a monkey in India. You drop a handful of nuts into a jar, the monkey grabs the nuts, and then finds that he can't get his fist out through the opening. If the monkey would just let go of the nuts, he could escape. But he won't. Attachment leads to suffering, Ram Dass concluded. It's as simple as that: Detachment leads to freedom. But letting go of our fistfuls of nuts seems unthinkable. We couldn't imagine what life would be like without say cigarettes or coffee, without the drama of having to have some problem to complain about-not to mention other subtler addictions, like worry, resentment, and judgment. Many people think letting go of attachments just means pursuing simplicity. They blithely fling away career, home and relationships. What they haven't managed to get rid of are the worry, the resentment, and the tendency to criticize. And as a result, they are still suffering.

Detachment is not about external things. In fact, as is so often the case with the big issues of spiritual life, detachment involves a deep paradox. It's true that those without a lot of clutter in their lives have more time for inner practice. But in the long run, disengaging ourselves from family, possessions, political activism, friendships, and career pursuits can actually impoverish our inner lives. Engagement with people and places, skills and ideas, money and possessions, is what grounds inner practice in reality. Without these external relationships, and the pressure they create, it's hard to learn compassion; to whittle away at anger, pride, and hardness of heart; to put spiritual insights into action. So we can't use detachment as an excuse not to deal with fundamental issues such as livelihood, power, self-esteem, and relationships with other people. Nor can we make detachment a synonym for indifference, or carelessness, or passivity. Instead, we can practice detachment as a skill—perhaps the essential skill for infusing our lives with integrity and grace.

Questions that come up are: how do we fall in love and remain detached? Where do we find the motivation to start a business, write a novel, get ourselves through school, or work in the emergency room of a city hospital unless we care deeply about the outcome of what we're doing? What is the relationship between desire and detachment? What's the difference between real detachment and the indifference that comes with burnout?

What about social activism? Is it possible, for example, to fight for justice without getting caught up in anger or a sense of unfairness? And then there's the relationship between detachment and excellence. It's nearly impossible to excel at anything—including spiritual practice—if we aren't prepared to throw ourselves in 100 percent. Can we do that and still be detached?

Then there are the really tough issues, the situations that seem literally defined by attachment, like our relationship to our children or to our own bodies. How do we work with attachments so visceral that to let go of them feels like letting go of life itself? Detachment is rarely something we achieve once and for all. It's a moment-by-moment, day-by-day process of accepting reality as it presents itself, doing our best to align our actions with what we think is right, and surrendering the outcome.

What this means to me is that detachment is about me, not the other person or thing. Detachment isn't about giving things up or not caring. It's about caring deeply and doing what you feel is right without being attached to a certain expectation or outcome. An example of this might be a difficult relationship. Let's say it's with a coworker but it could be any relationship. This might mean that you decide to treat that person with compassion and respect no matter how they treat you. You're not attached to an expectation that if you're nice to them they should be nice to you. It might happen but if it doesn't and that was your expectation, then you would be disappointed. True practice of compassion without

attachment would be to continue to treat them kindly regardless of whether or not it changed their behavior.

We can't leapfrog into detachment. That's why the teachings recommend developing our detachment muscles by working them day-by-day, starting with the small stuff. Detachment takes practice. One way to practice is by acknowledging your feeling of attachment. Acknowledgment doesn't just mean recognizing that you want something badly or that you're feeling loss. When you want something, feel how you want it-find the wanting feeling in your body. When you're feeling cocky about a victory, be with the part of yourself that wants to beat your chest and say, "Me, me, me!" Rather than pushing away the anxiety and fear of losing what you care about, let it come up and breathe into it. And when you're experiencing the hopelessness of actual loss, allow it in. Let yourself cry. This is another perfect opportunity to practice compassion in relation to your feelings of attachment. Especially practicing compassion toward yourself. Gently and kindly acknowledging your feelings without judgment or criticism. When I baby sit my 3 year old nephew and he's throwing a tantrum because he wants to watch a certain cartoon, it doesn't help the situation for me to logically point out that Jay Jay the Jet Plane isn't on right now. But if I acknowledge his feelings of disappointment by saying "I know you're sad because you wanted to watch Jay Jay and it's not on right now," he says "yea" and moves on. I didn't fix the problem for him or buy

into the problem. I just acknowledged his feelings. How often do we treat ourselves and others with this level of compassion? To kindly, acknowledge our feelings or the other person's feelings without getting caught up in, or attached to, the self-pity, drama, or story line that created the feelings.

Another stage in the process of practicing detachment, after acknowledging and processing the feeling of attachment, is to be able to take the right action. We talk a lot in Buddhism about the Noble Eight Fold Path and one of those steps being the need to engage in Right Action.

Loss or desire can paralyze us, so that we find ourselves without the will to act or else acting in meaningless, ineffective ways. One of the reasons we take time to process our feelings of attachment is so that when we do act, we're not paralyzed by fear or driven by the frantic need to do something (anything!) to convince ourselves we have some degree of control. In the early stages of loss, or in the grip of strong desire, it is sometimes better just to do the minimum for basic survival. As you move forward in the processing, however, ideas and plans will start to bubble up inside you, and you'll feel actual interest in doing them. This is when you can take creative action. You've reached the stage of freedom when thinking about your loss (or the thing you desire) doesn't interfere with your normal feelings of well-being.

I think this is an important point. Letting go of attachment doesn't mean we no longer feel grief or sadness over loss. But it does mean that we're not attached to that feeling of grief or

sadness. It doesn't define who we are. Whether we're doing it daily or as a way of dealing with a big bump in our road, practicing detachment is easier if we do it with a soft attitude; without being too hard on ourselves. After all, we're not out there all alone in this. We can rely on the compassion of Amida and let our attachments go into the infinite compassion of Amida Buddha.

Offering our actions up to something larger than ourselves helps train us to do things not for any particular gain or personal purpose but simply as an act of gratitude, or as a way of joining our consciousness to the greater Oneness. Offering our desires, fears, and doubts into the ocean of Oneness, loosens the hold they have on us. Once you've made the offering, let yourself linger in the feeling space you've created inside yourself. The nurturing force of the presence of Amida is the only power that really dissolves fears and attachments. The more we get to know that we are a part of this vast, benign energy, the more we realize it is the source of our compassion and love. And that's when our detachment becomes something greater, not detachment from desire or fear but awareness that what we are is so large, it can hold all of our smaller, petty feelings inside itself and still be completely free.



Dharma talk by Ed Parker

After pondering: May the wisdom of the All-Compassionate One so shine within our hearts and minds, that the mists of error and the foolish vanity of self be dispelled. So shall we understand the changing nature of existence and reach spiritual peace, (page 17 of Shin Buddhist Service book). And remembering a story shared by Reverend Castro about a tragic accident that left three people dead.

Were I perfect, could I exist in this imperfect world? Were I perfect, would I behave so poorly? I ask rhetorically. From my perspective, there is little question as to the nature of my existence. I have long since proven that I am simply a limited, foolish human being; one decidedly imperfect. Were I perfect, I would doubtless have swirled away in a great flush of guilt long ago from having made so little of my life. I am referring to the guilt that comes from being so much less than you feel you could be, coupled with a compulsive need to take responsibility for the short fall. A ridiculously pretentious concept, yet one many people seem to suffer from.

We all make mistakes. None of us is perfect though we act as if we were at times, or should be. Despite the best planning and good intentions, sometimes things just don't work out. There are a number of reasons this is so. There is the dependent origination the Buddha spoke of: All things change in relation to causes and conditions, nothing exists independently. This is true of our delusions, our bonno. It is said our

blind desires, bonno, are so named because they are easier to see in others than in our selves. Given that these things are so, how could we not be limited, imperfect beings? Of course, we make mistakes. My mistakes fail to surprise me anymore, well those I recognize. I suspect there's more out there waiting for me to notice them.

I live in a state of delusion, from rose hued to, too dark to see. I have colored all that I have known with my opinions, given and taken value, adding to and subtracting from each reality. I have stamped every perception with my presence.

Once I thought, I understood truth, and built with it as if it were brick and stone, creating mansions of well considered certainty. Now I ponder my delusions and watch my mansions crumble. I have lost faith in knowing any organic truth: truth I have not tarnished with intent or denial. There is no perfection in this world; there can be no guilt from its lack. There is only arrogance in such guilt. How could I achieve perfection in this life? How I could reach so high? Even my remorse in my failure to overcome my ignorance is vanity.

Truthfully, knowledge has overcome me; cast me into a well of questions. How can I know? I pause, scratch and ponder, but know? I know this muddied water I drink is from my standing in the stream. And yet, I continue to stand there, looking into the past, lacking the wit to even turn around.

How can any of us know who we are until we know who we are not? Which of us is perfect? Truthfully, there are only those who seek to know

and accept what they are, and those who deny the changing nature of reality. All things change. Buddhism changes, if not the truth of the Dharma, though it has many guises. What can be considered good, or bad, when everything changes? To say, I am a good person is to deny or dismiss as unimportant, all that I am that does not fit an image of good. I am limited enough. If I am not capable of being consistently "good" am I then, an evil person? Or am I simply a limited, foolish person incapable of knowing, good from evil?

Each of us lives inside our delusions. How can anyone say with certainty, who they really are, much less what they are? Self-power is the process of seeking perfection in this life. I just never got it, though I frustrated my delusions mightily, straining every mental muscle. Now I have taken refuge in the light of Amida's wisdom and compassion, which shines through each of us, revealing all that we have hidden, all that we deny. We must accept the entirety of our deluded self, the kindness and the spiteful, petty, meanness, all of it.

Are we not that which makes us uncomfortable, that which we feel obliged to deny, that which we hate and fear, our base desires, as well as our loftier pretensions? There is no perfection in this life. We can only dream of perfection, to awake alone and empty. Perfection is an absolute, a direction, a model, a gauge by which we measure and evaluate. The perfect rose cannot exist. It lives in the abstract, an ideal that represents our eternal dissatisfaction. An absolute cannot exist, who would allow it? It

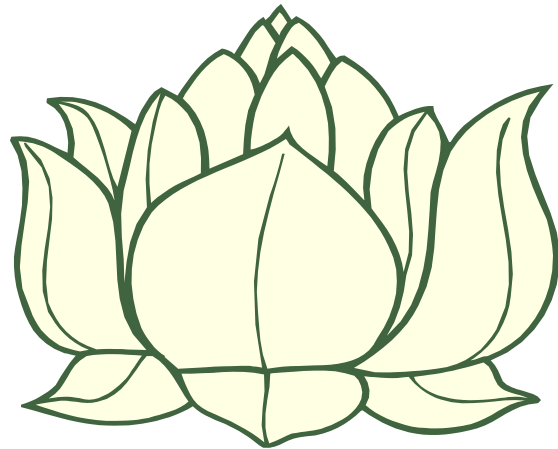
would mean surrender. It would mean accepting that we are all limited, foolish, imperfect people, each in our own way, it would mean accepting that only Amida is infinite.

We live inside our delusions of self, the delusions we have created. Our fears create our hatreds, our cravings, attachments, and as for our ego needs, are we not each, the center of the world? How can anyone know anything of importance until they know their own limits? Without a true acceptance of our limits, we only push true understanding away. We all are imperfect. I ask you, were we not, would we behave so poorly? Read the newspaper; listen to the news, we all make mistakes. Some mistakes cannot be undone. We fix what we can fix. We try to know ourselves. We try to know the truth about our deluded self and find only more delusion.

Unexamined delusions are limitless, but with examination, when questioned, delusions fade to doubt, to ill-at-ease uncertainty, then, vanish. We banish our delusions by accepting them as delusions. Often, we fail; usually we fail; and in our failure, there is suffering and sorrow. There is a sense of failure in being less than perfect. Even with the light of Amida Buddha's wisdom and compassion, self-examination is painful. We live in this passing moment, in an on going stream of acts, and what is done is done. What is said is said. What is broken must remain broken. This must be the most difficult truth to accept. This too, is revealed in the light of Amida's wisdom and compassion. We are all limited, foolish, imperfect people, doing the

best we can in an uncertain world. How can we judge anyone else, we don't even know ourselves? We are imperfect and in our imperfection, must know sorrow and suffering.

Humility sits coarse and uncomfortable on our western egos. How difficult is it to be grateful for sorrow and suffering? How could this not be so? How could we fail to take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha? Namu Amida Butsu.



**Condolences to the family of
Mary Sueko "Sue" Shimizu**

December 1, 1912 – September 6,
2004

DONATIONS

The Spokane Buddhist Temple gratefully acknowledges the following dues and donations received from Aug 15 through September 18, 2004. Please notify Fumi Uyeji or Liat Parker of any omissions or corrections.

Dues listed are those received during this period, often times dues are paid for a few months or a year at a time and are acknowledged once when received

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