



## **Zen Columbus Sangha: Orientation for New Attendees**

### **On Opening the Dharma**

The Dharma, incomparably profound and minutely subtle,  
is rarely encountered,  
even in hundreds of thousands of millions of kalpas;  
we now can see it, listen to it, accept and hold it;  
may we completely realize the true meaning of the Tathagata.

### **The Buddha was a regular guy...**

#### **The Four Noble Truths**

The First Noble Truth. Life is difficult and unsatisfying. While this may seem obvious, here in America, we are particularly stubborn in not wanting to accept this notion. We have become so affluent and so comfortable as a culture, that as a society we have come to believe that this is how life should be. So whenever anything unpleasant or painful happens, our first reaction is to assume that something is wrong. Pain and discomfort are things that happen to other people, not to us. If I am suffering, either it is because I am doing something wrong, or someone else has done something wrong.

The Second Noble Truth. Life is difficult because of craving and attachment. Because we have lost sight of who we truly are, and are ignorant to how Life really works, we try to seek fulfillment, stability, and security in the world outside of us. We seek permanent satisfaction and predictability in a world where all things are impermanent and subject to change. We suffer because we demand that life be something other than what it is, in order for us to be happy. We suffer because we try to resist the reality of impermanence of all things, and of change. We suffer not because of what happens to us, but rather because of how we react to what happens to us.

The Third Noble Truth. An End of suffering is possible. While the Second Noble Truth may be hard to hear, with its message of the fact that our suffering is self-inflicted, it is in actuality, very good news. Since our suffering find its origins within us, it means that it is also within our power to put an end to it. We can end our suffering by giving up our attachments and cravings. We can end our suffering by giving up the habit of demanding that life be a certain way for us, in order for us to be happy and find peace of mind. Suffering ends when we give up our resistance to life as it actually is.

The Fourth Noble Truth. The End of suffering lay in the Eightfold Noble Path. That is in the basic teachings and practice laid out by the Buddha....what we now call 2500 years later, Buddhism. The Eightfold Noble Path consists of Right View, Right Resolve, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration.

#### **Three flavors**

- Hinayana (Theravadan)
- Mahyana (Zen)
- Vadraryana (Tibetan)

### **Who is the Zen Columbus Sangha:**

- A group to support the meditation practice of its members
- This is a Zen Sangha. The three treasures of Buddhism: Buddha, Dharma, Sangha.
- Context: Zen started with Bodhidharma who brought Zen from India to China around 500 A.D. He said Zen is: "A special transmission outside the scriptures, not founded on words or letters. By pointing directly to one's own mind, it lets one see into one's own true nature and thus attain Buddhahood".
- We practice in a tradition that has its roots in Japan, and which came to America with Robert Aitken, who founded the Diamond Sangha in Hawaii
- Our meeting times: Tuesday evening (7:45pm) and Saturday mornings (8:30am)
- We have a formal membership however the regular meetings are open to the general public. We encourage donations, but there is no cost to attend.

### **Logistics**

- Enter through the inner door (please do not disturb the zendo by coming in the outside door), take off shoes
- Some people arrive early to set up.
- Sitting meditation for periods of 25 minutes, interspersed with walking meditation for five or ten minutes. Walking is also meditation.
- Sitting periods begin with one clapper and three bells, and end with one bell.
- Final sitting is followed by sutra chanting and three full prostrations (show sutra sheet, tell them to just follow along).

### **Meditation Practice**

- Explain different leg postures: cross-legged, kneeling, sitting in chair.
- Explain use of meditation cushions
- Other posture notes: spine straight, shoulders relaxed, abdomen relaxed, eyes open, unfocused gaze 3 - 4 feet in front, hands rest in lap in the Zen mudra hand position
- Explain breathing practice. Counting out breath from 1 to 10, and repeat. OK to lose count; just keep coming back to the counting. Nature of the mind to wander. Pay attention to the mind and the body. Effortless effort. Sit with dignity, like a mountain. Let the mind and body settle. Let the breath settle. Sit for five or ten minutes, but leave time for questions before end of period

### **Entering and Leaving the Zendō.**

Deposit shoes and coats in the hall, arranging them with care in an orderly fashion. After picking up a zafu, enter the zendō. Gasshō (join your palms together) and bow in the entrance every time you enter and leave the zendō. Find a place to sit, place the zafu on the zabuton, and bow toward the cushion. Turning in the direction of the altar, bow toward the center of the room. Sit and prepare to meditate.

### **Zazen and Kinhin**

- Begin 1<sup>st</sup> period: strike clappers (1), strike bell (3) - maintain half gasshō
- End 1<sup>st</sup> period: strike bell (1), everyone bows on cushion
- Begin kinhin: everyone stands, strike clappers (1), everyone bows to center and turns to left
- End of kinhin: strike clappers (1), return to place; leader -- large arcing motion of hands, gasshō and bow; everyone – gasshō and bow to center, turn and gasshō and bow to cushion

- Begin 2<sup>nd</sup> period: strike bell (3) – maintain half gasshō
- End 2<sup>nd</sup> period: strike bell (1), everyone bows on cushion

The jikijitsu (jiki) or timekeeper leads the meditation period and kinhin. The jiki is often the person responsible for opening up the zendō, although any experienced member of the sangha is welcome to volunteer.

Meditation periods last for 25 minutes. The jiki begins the first period with one strike of the wooden clappers followed by three well-spaced, crisp strikes of the bell (either the large, black bowl-shaped bell or the small, gold bowl-shaped bell). Try to make each strike of the bell successively softer. While striking the bell, the jiki maintains a half gasshō with the free hand. At the end of 25 minutes, the jiki strikes the bell once. Everyone bows on cushion in response.

After the first mediation period, everyone rises and the jiki strikes the clappers once. Bow together in gasshō and turn to your left to begin kinhin. The jiki leads, walking slowly in a clockwise direction around the room. The jiki sets the pace and may alter it several times during kinhin. Maintain an erect posture in kinhin with your hands folded together at waist height – left hand covering the right fist. Maintain an even distance between each person in the kinhin line – about arms width apart. Take small steps and remember that this is moving meditation.

Anyone may exit the line to use the bathroom or to leave early. Step out of the line as you near the main entrance and bow upon leaving the room. To re-enter the line, wait at the main entrance until your place in the line approaches. Bow and merge back into the line. Alternately, wait until kinhin is finished to return to your place.

The jiki sounds the clappers once to indicate the end of kinhin. At this signal, walk quickly until you arrive at your place. The jiki makes a large arcing motion with their hands, ending in gasshō and everyone bows together. Turn toward your cushions and bow again. Remember to turn facing the altar, not the back of the hall. Sit and prepare to meditate. The jiki strike the bell three times to signal the start of the second meditation period. At the end of 25 minutes, the jiki strikes the bell once. Everyone bows on cushion in response.

### **Sūtras and Raihai.**

- Chant the Heart Sūtra
- Leader reads dedication (if there is one)
- Everyone responds with “All Buddhas throughout space and time...”
- Recite the Four Great Vows (repeat 3 times)
- Leader rings the inkin bell (crescendo)
- Ring inkin bell (1) and everyone prostrates fully (repeat 3 times), leader damps bell during bow on third prostration
- Ring inkin bell (1) and everyone bows toward altar
- Leader approaches altar, bows, extinguishes candle, bows and returns to place
- Ring inkin bell (1) and everyone bows toward center

### **eMail forum**

Zen Columbus Sangha has a Yahoo Group. If you are interested in what is happening within the group, contact the moderator, Ying Studebaker for further info or to join the e mail group.

**Website** <http://www.zencolumbus.com>

**Best synopsis of Diamond Sangha** – Taking the Path of Zen by Robert Aitken.

Meditation guide: <http://www.mro.org/zmm/meditation/zazeninst.pdf>