

Regular Practice Schedule

Kansas Zen Center

Monday thru Friday

6:00 to 7:00 am

Saturday

6:00 to 8:00 am
(kong-an interviews)

Sunday

9:30 to 11:30 am
(Beginner's introduction at
9:00
Dharma talk at 11:00)

Wednesday

6:30 to 7:00 pm
special chanting
7:00 to 8:00 pm regular
practice (kong-an interviews
2nd Wed. of the month)

Prairyerth Zen Center

Unitarian Universalist
Fellowship
4775 SW 21st, Topeka, KS
785.478.3478 (Rebecca) or
785.232.5958 (Bill)

Tues. & Thurs.

6:00 to 7:00 am

Thursday

6:30 to 7:30 pm
(kong-an interviews first
Thursday of the month)

Kansas City Zen Group

Unity Church on the Plaza
913.551.7792 (Bill)

Tuesday

7:00 to 8:00 pm



Buddhist Ethics

*The monk asked: Is the enlightened man
subject to cause and effect?*

*Pai Chang answered: Cause and effect are
clear.*

This exchange is a small piece of the kong-an known as *Pai Chang's Fox*, from the *Mumonkan*. In it, an old monk appears at the back of the dharma hall, eventually comes forward, and confesses that 500 generations ago he was the Zen master on this mountain, but he spoke once incorrectly and has been reborn a fox ever since. When asked, "Is the enlightened man subject to cause and effect?" he answered no. Now, tired of this fox's body, he humbly asks Pai Chang for the correct answer. Pai Chang responds, "Cause and effect are clear."

This is the heart of Buddhist ethical teachings.

The ethical ground of Buddhist practice is the precepts. The first five are pretty basic: don't lie, kill, or steal, don't commit bad actions from lust, and don't seek out getting drunk or stoned. There are many more precepts; monks and nuns take hundreds. Precepts are wonderful guides. When you are in doubt, follow the precepts. When your mind is unclear, follow the precepts. In some forms of Buddhism, the first several years of practice consists of following the precepts – practice forms such as meditation only come later.

But precepts are words, and words are inherently ambiguous. Everyone understands that killing a cow breaks a precept. But what about eating meat from a cow someone else has killed? Or wearing leather shoes? What about pulling weeds?

Or killing rats during a plague? Everyone has their own version of what constitutes each precept, along with their own justifications, and their own theories to back all this up. The precepts are, indeed, quite wonderful. If we take them seriously and are honest about our actions they can prevent a lot of bad behavior. But they also can become absorbed into our ego structure, just another way to shore up our teeny tiny selves.

The second aspect of ethical teachings in Buddhism is direction. Theravada Buddhists emphasize *metta*, compassion. Mahayana Buddhists also emphasize compassion, and, additionally, make this direction explicit with the first of the four great vows: sentient beings are numberless, we vow to save them all. This means our practice is not just for us. Even our life is not just for us. Our practice and our life are for all beings. Our direction is not to attain our own satisfaction, it is to help all beings.

This is also very wonderful. And it can seem quite strange. When I first started practicing, it made no sense to me. How was it possible to save all beings? I didn't even know most of the people in the town I lived in, much less all sentient beings in the universe. I remember asking Dyan Eagles, who now runs DharmaCrafts, about this and Dyan, who is shorter than me, stood on tiptoe, patted me on the head, and said, "Don't worry, you'll figure it out."

But even this wonderful direction is open to delusion. How often have we done something with the excuse that we are being helpful and it went horribly, horribly wrong? And how often, if we were honest with ourselves, have we realized that our

Regular Practice
Schedule (cont.)

Tall Grass Zen Center

P.O. Box 1694
Manhattan, KS 66506-1694

Tuesday & Friday

6:00 to 7:00 am

Wednesday

7:00 to 8:00 pm

good intentions were just shoring up our ego one more time, in yet another subtle guise?

Which leaves us with Pai Chang. "Cause and effect are clear." This is wonderful teaching. It means that our actions have consequences, and that these consequences are more important than what we claim are our motives. "But I didn't mean for this to happen!" isn't an excuse. What did we actually do? What actually happened? That's what we have to live with, and there's no way to wiggle out of it. As the temple rules say: be careful! be careful! Pai Chang's teaching makes it clear how important it is to wake up from this dream.



Judy Roitman, JDPSN

Kansas Zen Center Special Events

EVENTS WILL BE HELD AT THE KANSAS ZEN CENTER, LAWRENCE, UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.

Compass of Zen classes--Sundays at noon

August 8 -- lesson 14

October 3 -- lesson 15

November 7 -- lesson 16

November 28 --- lesson 17 (final lesson)

(The syllabus is available at the Kansas Zen Center website)

Retreats at the KZC:

September 17, 6:30 p.m. to Sept. 19, 3 p.m.

November 19, 6:30 p.m. to Nov. 21, 3 p.m.

January 1, 2005 6:30 p.m. to January 6, noon

February 19, 2005 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

March 18, 2005 6:30 p.m. to March 20, 3 p.m.

Other Events:

September 23, Thursday, 7 p.m. at the Lawrence Public Library - public talk by **Zen Master Dae Kwang**, abbot of the Kwan Um School of Zen.

December 12, Sunday – Precepts ceremony, 11 a.m. to noon, followed by Buddha's enlightenment celebration/potluck lunch (no regular practice that day)

Kansas Zen Center
1423 New York
Lawrence, KS 66044