

CONTINUOUS DAILY PRACTICE



©Photo: Merlin Daleman

However, continuous daily practice is probably Zen River's most important speciality. The homogeneous core of full-time (at present, thirteen) resident practitioners, together with the inspiring lay-out and interior design of the monastery with all its paraphernalia, provide a rare opportunity for anyone to join a continuing daily programme of zazen, dokusan, lectures, study, ritual, work, and practice in social skills for pretty much any length of time.

During sesshins, the number of participants usually goes up to between thirty and forty, while during the regular daily schedule the Tenzo cooks for between fifteen and twenty people. Al-

The Zen River programme features many different specialities. A brief scroll-down of the website's headlines shows a seemingly endless series of events – Zazenkai, Sesshin, and Ango, together with Hossenshiki, Fusatsu, Segaki, Jukai, Tokudo, and many other ceremonies, plus the regular visits of dignitaries and guest teachers from all over the world, Family Week, Young Rivers Weekend, Open House, and the welcoming of school and other groups interested in Buddhism, and so on.

together this makes for a supportive environment that is highly suitable for learning to develop and express new insights. The idea is that these insights can be put to good use in whatever environment participants return to after they leave – in ordinary work and family situations. In that sense, the monastery can be seen as a laboratory for life. And since there is always more to learn, most of our members return regularly – for a day, a weekend, some weeks, or longer. Continuous practice is a sangha affair.

RED LENTILS WITH ROSEMARY & THYME

Ingredients

1 onion
 2-3 carrots
 2-3 cloves garlic
 300 g (1½ cups) red lentils
 825 ml (3½ cups) water
 3 bay leaves
 2-3 tablespoons olive oil
 1¼ teaspoons dried rosemary
 1¼ teaspoons dried thyme
 Sea salt to taste
 75 g (2½ ounces) baby-leaf spinach

- * Peel and medium-dice the onion.
- * Peel and medium-dice the carrots.
- * Peel and mince, or press, the garlic.

* Heat about 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a frying pan over a medium flame. Add the onions and carrots, and fry until the onions are caramelised, about 8 minutes.

* Put into a soup pot with the water and bay leaves,

and sprinkle with a little sea salt. Set over a medium-high flame and bring to the boil.

* Stir in the red lentils, return to a boil, then turn the flame low and cover with a lid. Simmer for about 20 minutes, or until the lentils are tender. Stir the bottom now and then to prevent sticking. Add a little more water if needed.

* In the same frying pan, over a medium flame, heat about 1 tablespoon of olive oil and add the garlic. When the garlic turns golden, put in the rosemary and thyme and fry for thirty to forty seconds. Remove from the flame.

* When the lentils are tender, turn off the flame and stir in the fried garlic, rosemary and thyme.

* Season to taste with sea salt.

* Finally, add the baby-leaf spinach, which will wilt within seconds.

Tip: Serve alongside sweet potatoes cut into 5cm (2") slices, tossed in olive oil, and baked in a 200 °C (425 °F) oven for 35-40 minutes.

FAITH FROM WITHIN & WITHOUT by Tenkei Roshi

At Zen River, we often talk about Zen practice as a way to find one's specific function in life. According to the Mahayana tradition, we all have something to offer to this world, even though we may be confused about what that could be. Everyone has buddha-nature, which means that each one of us is endowed with excellent bodhisattva qualities. But those qualities are not always apparent or wisely used, and they can flourish only if we are willing to let go of the highly conditioned narratives we have of ourselves and others. This process involves challenging and unexpected yet enlightening transformations that over time allow for more flexibility, giving us a better sense of how to navigate life with wisdom and compassion. It's no wonder Buddhist practitioners are called 'Followers of The Way'.

The Western approach to Zen usually emphasizes individual responsibility: "Nobody is going to practice for me; I have to do it. I have to sit many hours a day, make bows, recite sutras, follow the precepts, and realize The Way for myself. Ultimately, it's all up to me." However true this may be, there is a lot of 'I' and 'me' in this approach, and that can become a hindrance in itself. Jodo Shinshu, a form of Pure Land Buddhism that is also known as Shin Buddhism, refers to this as *jiriki*, or 'self-power', and contrasts it to *tariki*, or other-power – meaning the reliance on Amida Buddha. It emphasizes the basic Mahayana tenet that, indeed, each one of us may someday experience enlightenment, but only if we are willing to ask for help. Shin means 'faith', and Shinran (1173-1263), the founder of Shin Buddhism, made faith the foundation of his teaching. According to him, we live in a degenerate age of the dharma, far removed from Shakyamuni's life, and are therefore unable to realize the Way all by ourselves. Fortunately, we can call upon Amida Buddha, who is happy to welcome us into his Western Paradise where conditions are much more beneficial for attaining realization. That is why Shin Buddhism has a strong devotional character and relying on *jiriki* is seen as a form of pride.

This approach has more in common with the Zen teaching of Dogen Zenji that many of us may realize. In Genjokoan, he clearly states that the 'I' we usually identify with is not the one who can become enlightened; in fact, it is the one we are supposed to forget! What is required is a leap of faith into the unknown. Interestingly, Dogen was a contemporary of Shinran and both had a Tendai background. Some scholars even believe that they may have met.

It is indeed fruitful to compare the approaches of Zen and Shin Buddhism, as I have often noticed in conversation with Rev. Jerry Hirano, the head priest of the Shin Buddhist Temple in Salt Lake City. He became a close friend when Myoho Sensei and I lived there in the nineties, and since then we've maintained an ongoing discussion on exactly this topic. I saw him again last September after the inauguration of the new zendo of Senseis Musho and Mugaku in Southern Utah. Even though Rev. Jerry and I often talk about the same thing, it is always exciting because

we approach it from very different, almost opposite directions. I tend to emphasize the importance of *jiriki*, taking it as our individual responsibility to practice, while he relies more on *tariki*, and often expresses his faith in Amida Buddha. But we always end up finding a dynamic common ground that honors and clarifies the need for both aspects.

Perhaps Zen is for intense people; for those who are determined to try the impossible. We are encouraged to do everything we can to get enlightened – the Sandokai tells us not to waste any time by night or day – until the self is totally exhausted and gives up. That seems to be our policy. It may take a long time, but one day you simply run out of steam and throw in the towel. In a way, the 'I' destroys the 'I'. Yet, in my experience, if you follow through on the instructions of an experienced master, you don't end up feeling diminished or depressed, but actually fulfilled, as if you are suddenly blessed with immense grace, joy, and appreciation. In Shin Buddhism, those qualities are seen as coming directly from Amida Buddha. So we might ask, "Why not put all of one's faith in him from the very beginning? It would save a lot of trouble!" Rev. Jerry is one of the happiest and open-minded people I have ever met; and in terms of faith, he is definitely my great example. But he is also very energetic and works hard for his community. He actually seems to have a lot of positive *jiriki*. So I always wonder how our practice can be inspired by faith from within as well as by faith from without. Where can we find Amida Buddha in Zen? He is said to radiate light that can be found in everything and everyone. The question is do we see it? Where is our *tariki*?

Rev. Jerry visited Zen River with his wife Carmela last summer on the day of Hossenshiki for Joost Fushin Blom. He told me after the ceremony that he was very impressed and deeply moved by not only the sincerity of Fushin's presentation, but also by the wholehearted support he received from the sangha. He called that support a good example of *tariki*. Perhaps Zen indeed has more in common with Shin Buddhism than we may have thought. Obviously, our environment has great influence on our practice; the place and the people around us can be an inspiration or a turn-off. Each place has its own character, too. Buildings and rooms are like faces; they can be hospitable or forbidding. Ideally speaking, a zendo is designed so that you really feel invited to sit down. And in the zendo of Zen River, you are actually never alone. Even if you would enter just by yourself, the beautiful statue of Manjushri happily welcomes you in. It has a strong presence, and is full of secrets. The statue is hollow, with a small opening and a lid on the bottom. Hojo-san (Junyu Kuroda Roshi) donated this Manjushri at the inauguration of our zendo in 2012. He, and the two Chinese masters who conducted the Eye-Opening ceremony, brought tightly-rolled little scrolls inscribed with special messages in calligraphy. These were inserted into the statue beforehand. This may explain some of the magic that one can feel upon entering our zendo. We are reminded that we

FUNDRAISER FALL 2017



DRIVEWAY RESCUE PLAN

Over the years, the image of the Zen River driveway has become iconic. The old ornamental plum trees with their gorgeous pink spring blossoms have welcomed members and friends from all over the world. They have also featured on our website and printed publications almost continuously.

Yet, although hard to accept in this particular case, impermanence strikes trees like anything else. Our dear plum trees had become very sick and old simultaneously, and ran the danger of sudden collapse. So we had no choice other than to remove them in order to make room for a new generation of young and vital trees. As the rest of the driveway had also become overgrown, it seemed best to start from scratch and rework the area from the ground up.

This is quite an undertaking, and we decided to ask the help of one of our neighbours – John Kasteel, who is a professional gardener. Based on the master-plan Jitei White from England drew up for us some time ago, John came up with a beautiful design that not only includes six new *Cornus kousa* trees but also a fitting selection of beech hedgerows, bushes, and colourful flowerbeds to accompany them. The idea is to have the whole renovation take place over winter, so that spring can begin with a fresh start.

Altogether the costs for this driveway rescue plan will add up to €9,000. All contributions, great and small, are highly appreciated. Welcome!

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are not the first ones, nor the only ones, who sit down and turn our light inward. All the buddhas and bodhisattvas are there to support us.

The Sutra on the Buddha of Infinite Life tells the story of a king who, upon hearing the teachings of the buddha of his time, renounced his throne and became a monk named 'Dharmakara'. As an aspiring bodhisattva he made forty-eight vows, which he pursued arduously over many lifetimes. Eventually he became a Buddha called 'Amida'. The most striking of his vows is the eighteenth, known as the 'primal' vow:

If, when I attain Buddhahood, sentient beings in the lands of the ten quarters who sincerely and joyfully entrust

themselves to me, desire to be born in my land and call my Name even ten times, should not be born there, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment. Excluded, however, are those who commit the five grave offenses and abuse the right dharma.*

So whoever has faith in Amida Buddha and recites, "Namu Amida Butsu", will be welcomed into his Western Paradise – where it is apparently much easier to attain enlightenment than in the sinful saha world where ordinary mortals like you and me reside. Many devotees believe, however, that Amida Buddha's paradise is located light years away and can only be entered after one has passed away. But in the Breakthrough Sermon, Bodhidharma, who is

considered to be the founder of the Zen school, claims that there is no reason to wait. According to him, the practice of invoking Amida Buddha's name can have the very same effect as the practice of introspection — which he repeatedly recommends in this sermon. He even states:

If you can simply concentrate your mind's inner light, and behold its outer illumination, you'll dispel the three poisons and drive away the six thieves once and for all. And without effort you'll gain possession of an infinite number of virtues, perfections, and doors to the truth. Seeing through the mundane and witnessing the sublime is less than an eye-blink away. Realization is now.**

This view implies that the Western Paradise is right here, right now, so we can enter it any time. Bodhidharma emphasizes, however, that there is a vast difference between blindly reciting Amida Buddha's name and really invoking him.

As you may know, *Namu* can be translated in different ways. It is a Sanskrit term that is phonetically represented by two Chinese characters, and is usually translated as: to take refuge in, to be intimate with, or to be one with. So, to invoke is not simply a matter of reciting words; it is an invitation to do something, to radically entrust ourselves to Amida Buddha. The question is, then, what does that mean? We do not know what or who he is. We are asked to take a leap of faith and rely on something we don't know. In the Zen tradition, too, we are urged to surrender to the unknown, and some resistance or trepidation might come up. But if we really do submit, it is extremely liberating; isn't it exactly the one we know that gives us so much trouble? To paraphrase Dogen Zenji, when we really forget the self, we are enlightened by all things. It is not me who becomes enlightened, all things light up. The world starts to shine in its true colors. The Chinese T'ang master Huang Po speaks of experiencing all-pervading spotless beauty.***

We could say that Amida Buddha is a symbol for that beauty. He is the Buddha of Light, and he radiates through everything and everyone — whether you can see it or not. The power of beauty is not to be underestimated. In order to realize the Buddha Way and find our true function in life, we need not only inner inspiration, but also a stimulating environment. This is a real koan: do I find Buddha, or

does Buddha find me? I suppose that it would be best if *jiriki* and *tariki* were acknowledged as two sides of the same coin. They can't be separated. Even if I only sit *zazen* and focus entirely on my faith from within, I still entrust myself to the posture of the Buddha. Similarly, following a teacher, studying scriptures, and connecting with a *sangha*, can all be seen as forms of *tariki*. In fact, in Zen ceremonies such as *Fusatsu* and *Jukai*, the term *Namu* is repeatedly recited to explicitly express our reliance on the Three Treasures for realizing The Way.

Personally, I have a strong sense that Amida Buddha wishes to express the Western Paradise in the world we live in, but it is up to us to prepare the ground for him. One of my major efforts in the last fifteen years has been to help make Zen River so beautiful that it welcomes all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. The more the temple can be seen as the Western Paradise manifested, the more Amida's light can shine through every little detail. Of course, the entire universe is already the Western Paradise, but to really experience that for oneself is not easy. So it is wise to start small, by practicing together, cleaning the *zendo*, organizing the *zabutons*, setting up an altar, arranging fresh flowers, and learning to make elegant bows. In these ways we create an environment that continuously reminds us of practice, making it easier to attain realization. We may be quicker to surrender if it is to something beautiful. At some point, of course, we can extend this beautiful and inspiring environment to wherever we happen to live. I fondly remember the old days when I cleared out the attic of my house, transformed it into a *zendo*, and invited friends to sit with me.

Apparently, transformation works both ways: as we change, the environment changes — and vice versa. When Van Gogh moved to the South of France, he obviously went through a major shift. But it seems as if his subject matter — people, trees, fields, clouds — did as well; they look so refreshed in his paintings! Even the grass vibrates, happy to be seen and recognized in its full potential. And, to my surprise, since the day I saw that grass jumping off the canvas so jubilantly, the simple lawn outside my house started to look different as well. Or, had something deep inside of me turned around?

(continued on back page...)

RIGHT SPEECH GUIDELINES *For the weekly Right Speech Class at Zen River.*

- 1) Ask yourself who is being served by you talking.
- 2) Identify with the one listening. / Be aware of:
- 3) Right time, place, position, and amount.
- 4) Make sure to have clear priorities in your presentation. What is the main point you would like to express?
- 5) Be aware of body language, gestures and eye-contact.
- 6) Be aware of grammatical correctness, tempo, articulation, stopgaps / fillers, and volume; listen while talking.
- 7) Do not prove your point by using an exception as an example.
- 8) Balance between impersonal principles and personal experience.
- 9) Allow different perspectives; the dharma is not fixed; unify rather than polarize.
- 10) Refer to your sources (e.g. "in the Lotus Sutra...", "according to our tradition...", or "in my experience...")
- 11) Avoid generalizations; limit using the "you" form.
- 12) Don't take on the position of somebody who "knows" something. Rather share whatever it is that really inspires you.
- 13) Don't pretend that everything can be explained.
- 14) Expressing a vision rather than judgements and opinions.
- 15) Acknowledge somebody's input, and don't start competing.
- 16) Avoid statements that need defending and thus lead to argument.
- 17) Humor; take oneself not too seriously.
- 18) Share how you walk your talk.
- 19) Be aware of the effect of one's speech; there are always shadows.
- 20) Never think that what is being said is the same as what is being heard.
- 21) *Four of the ten grave precepts are about speech: Be truthful and do not lie; See the perfection in others and do not talk about their errors and faults; Be humble; do not elevate oneself and put down others; Esteem the Three Treasures and do not speak ill of them.*

AMAZONS VOICE LOUD & CLEAR by Ryusho Sensei



In Tenkei Roshi's model of the "Four Modes of Meditation," in the third mode we experience that all manifested forms speak to us and verify our inner vision. Their guidance can help us to navigate life and prepare us for the fourth mode, which is Bodhisattva action: how we engage appropriately with the world to the benefit of all beings. But first, we must learn to really listen and to let things speak to us.

One of the striking things about Peru, where I live, is how loudly Mother Nature can speak to us, especially in the Amazon basin. Peru is the country with second largest Amazon territory, blessed with the greatest biodiversity and a range of different climates. The area of the Peruvian Amazon where I am now working in the Peruvian Amazon is the biggest wetland in the world with five million hectares of pristine jungle – there are more fish species than in the Atlantic Ocean, more plant species than in North America and Europe combined, and hundreds of species of mammals and birds. These wetlands are just four per cent of the country's total territory, yet they hold 50% of the country's CO2 reserves. If this area of Amazon rainforest is destroyed, we can say goodbye to the Paris COP 21 climate-protection agreement

Unfortunately, this natural wonder is being attacked from all sides. Last year, twenty-five million hectares of jungle – an area six times the size of the Netherlands – were cut down in Brazil alone. On top of this, the indigenous communities that have maintained this area for the last ten thousand years are at risk and live in precarious circumstances. Once healthy and well-fed Amazonian tribes now suffer from malnutrition and diseases imported from the West.

The best way to protect the Amazon's riches would be to empower these very communities. While our modern science of ecology is only a few decades old, these traditional societies have a deep knowledge of their natural environment that stretches back thousands of years. But they are

no longer isolated and are also part of our modern world. So now we need to ask: How can the Amazon be protected by its own indigenous peoples while they seek a decent and prosperous life and a sustainable future for their children?

When I got to know about all this, I asked myself: is there anything I could possibly do? And the message was loud and clear. These communities are connected to the natural intelligence of their environment: when they need to know something about life, they ask nature directly. The Jivaro communities (Achuar, Kandoshi, Shipivos, and Kechuas) I visited told me: "Help us to create a sustainable economy based on the protection of the forest, by focusing on the fruits of the forest."

Until now, all attempts to generate value out of the Amazon have been extractive and damaging: timber, minerals, and oil. Not only did the local tribes not profit from this, but they have been ignored, pushed aside, sometimes even killed, and their way of life put at risk. To pursue the dream of a prosperous Amazon, the "green gold" must be made more valuable than the black or yellow gold. That way, no one will enter their territory to cut down and kill something that has much more value if left standing and alive. Moreover, the communities would generate an income and would be able to sustain their families by doing what they do best: harvesting, nurturing, and protecting the forest.

Focusing on the "fruits of the forest" – these amazing "super foods" with powerful nutritional and functional properties – could create a potential global market that would benefit the tribes and help protect the Amazonian wetland. This would mean that businesses and the market start to serve – rather than exploit – nature.

This is one example of how a simple question – How can I help? – can become a wonderful GPS for guiding our lives. And how, if we really listen to the natural world (third mode), we can learn how best to act (fourth mode) to the benefit of all. So, are we ready to listen?

Ryusho Sensei is a Lay Dharma successor to Tenkei Roshi and founder of the Zen River groups in Lima and Madrid. He also works as Chief Communication and Sustainability Officer for a Peruvian beverage company with a wide presence in Latin America, Asia and Africa. They are one of the first global companies to employ business practices using the principles of G.N.H. (Gross National Happiness).

I think that it can work the same way around a Zen teacher. While I was living with Genpo Roshi, it did not always feel that he was teaching as such. He seemed, rather, to create a situation in which each member of the community could find their own role; and it was obvious that we, in turn, affected him and his functioning. As another example, when we established Zen River, the building seemed to welcome us in, as if it was aching for a new function. So, we cleaned and got to work renovating the rooms, the kitchen, the hallways, the toilets and showers, the attic and basement, and of course the extensive garden. We found new ways of using the various parts of the property. Yet it always felt as if the building itself was telling us what to do; it's really been a great teacher from the very beginning. Now, after fifteen years, every square inch has been examined and given a specific role in our practice program; and it has become obvious that we, too, have been transformed in the process. Zen River started with a strong little team, but we didn't necessarily plan everything beforehand. Over time, surprising

talents surfaced in different sangha members: some were happy to work in the office, others in the kitchen, the maintenance and electric departments, the sewing room or the garden. This development continues organically; it is almost as if the various functions arise as new members join. We have faith in our project, but the project also seems to have faith in us!

Perhaps we are living in a degenerate age; the news channels of today certainly paint a very dark picture. In response, we not only need to muster all the faith we can find within, we may also need to muster all the faith we can find without in order to discover our true functioning. After turning my own light inward during morning zazen, I am happy to start service and take refuge in all the buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Call of the Infinite, the Way of Shin Buddhism, John Paraskevopoulos, Sofia Perennis, p. 45-46. **The Zen Teaching of Bodhidharma, translated by Red Pine, North Point Press, p. 112/113. *The Zen Teaching of Huang Po, translated by John Blofeld, Grove Press, p. 93*

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SHUSŌ TIMO MYŌGAKU BIEBER

We are happy to announce that Myōgaku Bieber will be shuso for this Winter Ango training period. Myogaku first began Zen practice in 1998 at Jujisan Dojo, an alternative Soto-Zen style group in Berlin. He has been practising with and helping to manage this group ever since.



He received Jukai from Nishiyama Kozen in 2003, and later priest ordination from his teacher Rev. Jakob Myozen Gimiotti in 2013. In recent years, Myōgaku has frequently practised at Zen River.

At university he earned a master's degree in comparative religion. His interest in Zen and Japan led him to learn calligraphy with Suiko Shimon of Saga Gyōru. Myōgaku also works as a sommelier and branch manager for a major German wine store, and is an enthusiastic vintner for a communal vineyard in Kreuzberg where, he says, he works "deep in mud and water".

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

NOV. 25–FEB. 24, 2018 WINTER ANGO
Nov. 25–December 2.....Rohatsu Sesshin
Dec. 27–January 1 2018.....New Year Sesshin
January 19–21.....Weekend Sesshin
January 27/28.....Intro Weekend
February 3/4Young Rivers Weekend
February 17–24.....Ango Closing Sesshin
February 24.....Shuso Hossenshiki
March 23–25.....Weekend Sesshin
April 21–26.....Sakura Spring Sesshin

MAY 26 –AUGUST 25 SUMMER ANGO
June 2/3.....Intro Weekend
June 22–24.....Weekend Sesshin
July 28–Aug. 25.....Summer Monthlong Sesshin

AT OTHER LOCATIONS

Lima, Peru.....Zazenkai w/ Tenkei Roshi, Nov.18/19
Madrid.....Teisho w/ Myoho Sensei, Feb.5
..... Zazenkai w/ Tenkei Roshi, April 15
Düsseldorf....Sesshin w/ Daishin Sensei, Nov.11/12
.....Zazenkai w/ Daishin Sensei, May 26
Nijmegen.....Sesshin w/ Senko Sensei, Feb. 3/4
Hengelo...Zazenkai Jan.6;March 3; April 28, June 9
Den Haag.....Teisho w/ Doin Sensei, Nov. 16
Wageningen.....Teisho w/ Jifu Sensei, Dec.13