



# Dharma Soup

Notes from Karida

El Morro Buddhist Sangha

- Nov. 2008

Perhaps "Dharma Soup" would be a good name for this occasional collection of thoughts, notes, musings, and announcements. This is going to be a potpourri of randomly assembled thoughts and most probably be like one of my stews of unpredictable content. My stews are usually filling. However, when it comes to this little newsletter my hope is that it will be like the *Kaiseki* meals in Zen monasteries - "meals of insufficiency" leaving one still hungry at the end.

October 21<sup>st</sup> was a special evening with so many people coming out to listen to teachings and experience sutra chanting. Special thanks go to Jon & Pam Pickens for being our hosts and letting us use their Inscription Rocks Trading Post for a first meeting.

I say "first meeting" because enough interest was expressed to continue meeting once a month. Our next meeting will be in the same place and same time (7:00 - 8:30pm) on Tuesday evening the 18<sup>th</sup> of November. You'll get a reminder in the mail. I hope to see you there.

-Roger Irwin

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## Haiku anyone?

Haiku is a very short style of Japanese poetry that is written in three lines. In Japanese the first line has five phonetic units, the second line seven, and the last line five. English haiku does not easily adapt to this rigid form and is loosely written in three lines of 17 or fewer syllables. Usually there is also some reference to a season. Most traditional haiku focus on images of nature. However, this is no longer rigidly adhered to. Consequently there is variety in the English forms and subjects. The shortness of the form, the focus on the experience of the moment, and the way the reader is drawn into the poetic experience, has ensured haiku a significant place in the history of Buddhism: especially that of Zen.

One of my favorites translated from Japanese is:

"Cicada,  
have you yelled until you  
became all sound?"

-anon

One of my own attempts that I trust most of you locals will understand:

"Cold snow,  
open mike night  
warm silliness inside."

Like to know more about haiku? Google came up with no less than 12,300,000 sites related to haiku! Rather than be overwhelmed, a good starting place is:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haiku>.

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## Some Thoughts on the Three Treasures

The Three Treasures come very early in the Karida recitations that we are doing on Tuesday nights. Here are a few thoughts on the meaning.

From the beginning, to be a Buddhist meant to bring to life the teachings in one's own unique way. It also meant to publicly state the Three Jewels or Refuges: refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. "To take refuge" brings to mind getting caught in a storm and finding a safe, dry place to come into for shelter.

*Buddham Saranam Gacchami* - "I take refuge in the Buddha." The Buddha we are usually referring to is *Siddhartha Gautama*, a real person who lived in India about 2500 years ago. He studied the laws of cause and effect and taught his understandings for forty-five years until his passing at the age of eighty. "Taking refuge in the Buddha" means simply that we acknowledge the historic Buddha as a great teacher.

*Dhammam Saranam Gacchami* - "I take Refuge in the Dharma" (Teaching). In a teaching career spanning 45 years there were to be many teachings. I would like to focus on just one of these teachings: the doctrine of interconnectedness. One of the clearest statements of interconnectedness is found in the *Avatamsaka Sutra*:

"There are causes for all human suffering, and there is a way by which they may be ended, because everything in the world is the result of a vast concurrence of causes and conditions, and everything disappears as these causes and conditions change and pass away.

Rain falls, winds blow, plants bloom, leaves mature and are blown away; these phenomena are all interrelated with causes and conditions, are brought about by them, and disappear as the causes and conditions change.

One is born through the conditions of parentage; his body is nourished by food, his spirit by teaching and experience. Therefore, both flesh and spirit are related to conditions and are changed as conditions change.

As a net is made up by a series of ties, so everything in this world is connected by a series of ties. If anyone thinks that the mesh of a net is an independent, isolated thing, he is mistaken. It is called a net because it is made up of a series of connected meshes, and each mesh has its place and responsibilities in relation to other meshes.

Blossoms come about because of a series of conditions that lead up to their blooming; leaves are blown away because a series of conditions lead up to it. Blossoms do not appear unconditioned, nor does a leaf fall of itself. So everything has it coming forth and passing away: nothing can be independent without any change.

It is the everlasting and unchanging rule of this world that everything is created by a series of causes and conditions and everything disappears by the same rule; everything changes, nothing remains without change.”

When we” take refuge in the Dharma” we are publicly stating that we are interested in studying ideas like this that were taught by the Buddha.

*Sangham Saranam Gacchami* –“I take Refuge in the Sangha” (Community). In early Buddhism the Sangha included only those who gathered around the historic Buddha. In later times it included only the monks and nuns of the monastic system. Later, in the 1200s, a radical Japanese Buddhist, Shinran Shonin left the traditional monastery and proclaimed that the Sangha included people like you and me; householders, politicians, farmers, shopkeepers: in short, people from all walks of life. Shinran was able to make this step because he was centered in the heart rather than the form of Buddhism. To dwell in the heart is to dwell in a place that does not establish boundaries but breaks down walls, does not exclude but rather includes.

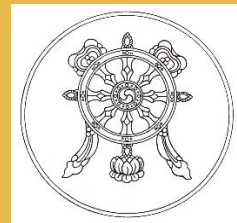
Today our definition of Sangha continues to evolve and expand in an ever-expanding circle of community that does not stop at the threshold of our species and next of kin. I call this the “Sangha of the Heart” and it includes other species, plants, animals, environmental features, unseen ancestors, and future generations. Through finding the Sangha everywhere we turn we find the Heart rather than the form of taking Refuge in the Sangha. Over the many

centuries of Buddhism this “Heart” found its most concentrated expression in the mythos of the Bodhisattva Kuan Shih Yin.

Over sixty years ago, as a four-year-old, I learned that when a grain of sand is inside a clamshell, it irritates the clam. In order to reduce the pain, the clam is able build up layers of protective coating around the irritant. The process by which the clam relieves its own suffering produces a beautiful pearl. Being quite fascinated with this process, I put a pebble in one of my red leather boots and limped around all day in pain so that I could produce a pearl of my very own. Needless to say the experiment ended only in pain. Alas, I could not make a pearl.

In my fiftieth year, as I slept, I dreamed that I was looking out over the ocean. In the light of the full moon Kuan Yin appeared standing on a lotus blossom. She was a beautiful pure white translucent color. Moving slowly toward me from across the waters she brought a gift for me in her outstretched palm: the most beautiful pearl I had ever seen. What I could not create for myself by intellect came many years later as a gift of the heart.

I told you this very personal story because I believe that by taking refuge in the Buddha, because he was a great teacher, by taking refuge in the Dharma, because of the many rich teachings, and by taking refuge in the Sangha, the Community of the Heart, you will find that Kuan Yin holds forth that jewel for you as well . -RJ



**If you haven't done it yet, check out:**  
[www.karidasangha.net](http://www.karidasangha.net)  
**and while you're there light a candle.**

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**Don't forget our next meeting on Tuesday,  
November 18.**

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**TAI CHI WITH REED (at Old School Gallery)  
Sundays, 9:30 am. No class November 16.  
Join Reed Anderson for abbreviated Wu  
style movement and basic Wah Mountain  
Breathing discipline. Easy for beginners.  
Call Reed for info at 783-4067.**