



Dharma Soup

Notes from Karida

El Morro Buddhist Sangha

- December. 2008

**Don't forget our next meeting at
Transcription Rock Trading Co. on
Tuesday, December 9**

Three Worlds: One Earth

Nyogen Sensaki tells us the story of when Hykujo passed away. One of his disciples, Isan, called a younger monk, Kyogen, to his private room and said, "You were with our old teacher for a number of years. Now he has gone, but you ought to know about the Dharma by this time. Tell me, where do you come from, and where are you going?" Kyogen asked Isan to allow him to go to his own room for a few minutes. There he took out his notes, hundreds of sheets of them, trying to find a clue to where he had come from and where he was going.

At last he returned to Isan and said, "I am ashamed to say I do not know. I could not find such an answer in my notes. As one of the older brothers, you should know so please answer the question for me." "What I have attained is mine, not yours," Isan replied, "You have to work it out for yourself."

Kyogen carried out this idea, and retired to a little hut where he lived alone. Each morning he swept the garden, watered the plants, and watched the clouds over nearby mountains. One day as he swept the garden with his bamboo broom, he hit a pebble, which bounced against a bamboo stalk and emitted a "ping." That sound awakened him. He realized where he came from, where he must go, and also how he must live his present life. He thanked his elder brother for his apparent unkindness in pushing him into a corner where he had to learn for himself. He then became a disciple of Isan.

I am struck with the relevance of Isan's question when I begin to think about the condition of our planet Earth. Where do we come from? How must we live our present lives? Where are we going? Past, present and future -three worlds, in time, provide a key to understanding how we are to live on this one Earth in space.

The Buddha's First Noble Truth speaks of the universality of *Dukkha* or suffering. It is my understanding that this suffering includes not only the suffering of humans but also the suffering of the Earth itself. We most clearly see this suffering of the Earth as a result of the deforestation of the rain forests, the eradication of entire species, and the pollution of the air and the oceans.

Too much suffering will prevent us from achieving a bright and beautiful future for ourselves and the planet. So how do we begin to relieve this suffering? It is by embracing the three worlds of past, present and future with the flowing of our lives. To begin to do this, we must increase our awareness and stretch our imagination to touch the totality and not just a part of our potential experience. Shuichi Maida spoke of this when he said: "The most sure thing for a human being is the intuitive fact of human suffering and the desire to transcend it. And what is the way to transcend human suffering? The answer is the way of awareness. And what is awareness? It is to see the totality of the individual, not to see only a part of the self."

So how can we see that totality, how can we find that healing awareness for planet and person? It is through embracing these three worlds with the flowing of our lives.

To begin embracing the world of the future we must learn to live, as any good parent does, in such a way to contribute to the well-being of future generations. If we cannot do that we must, at least, cease living at their expense. Many countries have for years pursued policies which have increased the risk of global disaster while at the same time passing on an enormous expense on to future generations. The enormous debt of the poorest countries, when it is being paid, is being paid not by the bankers and industry and the rich but, in the main, by the poorest of women and children in these countries. Their present burden, as intolerable as it is, is



bearable only insofar as their future generations attempt to pay the bill.

And if all of this were not enough, we have found the ultimate solution to the problem of chemical and nuclear toxic wastes. We are running out of available space for these dangerous wastes: and so the future has become our dumping ground for problems that evade our present solutions.

Shame on us! What good parent would treat a child in such a way? It is time for us to begin to live less selfishly, less affluently, so that future generations inherit a more beautiful, cleaner, healthier house with all the payments up-to-date. A truly loving embrace of the future is one that delivers greater healing rather than greater suffering for the Earth and its inhabitants.

Equally important for our growing awareness is our honoring the world of the past. Embracing the past, the voices of those who have preceded us are heard again as we hold their memory in our hearts. When we stand in the footprints and walk in the paths of the elders we reach beyond ourselves to other worlds completed. In so doing we will not be disappointed.

The world of the past is the storehouse of all the treasures of the Earth and the family of humans. We are the only ones who can protect these treasures- to bring them to new life, to let them speak to us, to allow them to expand our awareness and sense of self worth.

Todo Takatora had lost the lid to a golden tea kettle. The whole household searched and searched for the lid. Finally it was concluded there was no hope. Takatora ordered another lid to be made. The craftsman suggested that due to the high cost of making a new pure gold lid that it would be better to make one of less expensive metal and plate it with gold. However Takatora ordered the new one to be made of pure gold. He said, "it is not impossible that this one may be lost like the first, and if it should be found and discovered not to be pure gold then the reputation of the kettle itself will suffer and people will think that it is only gilt too, One cannot be too careful about the repute of one's family treasures.

We are, when we embrace the world of the past with pure hearts, protecting the reputation of our human family treasures. Those who have long preceded us are like the golden kettle. By bringing the world of the past to life we are creating our own, "lid of pure gold."

Finally, I wish to consider the third world - the present. Embracing the present is perhaps the most difficult of our tasks. To be mindful in the present moment escapes most of us most of the time. We often suffer because we dream of the past and future not in order to affirm those worlds in their own right but rather to escape the world of the present. Grayness begins to set in because we begin to live without really living. In writing about *Life as Art*, Kenji Miyazawa once said, "We must set fire to the grayness of our labor with the art of our own lives. In this kind of creation, every day becomes a pure enjoyment."

When we open ourselves up to an increased awareness of nature- the appreciation of plants and animals, the immediate touching of the beauty of nature, we allow the present to touch us in a very special way that lets us know we are not alone, each day becomes "a pure enjoyment."

Sometimes when I am making something in my woodworking shop there are rare moments when none of my moves have any wasted motion. These are magic moments. I reach for a tool and it's right there. There is, in that moment, a smooth flowing of my life. My brain, my hand, the tool, the object being made is one totality celebrating the world of the present. I can hear Kyogen's pebble hitting the bamboo. There! You surely can heard it too! We embrace the present together. It is too special to miss.

Being made whole is one definition of health. This is the path of awareness. This is reaching for totality. To embrace the three worlds of the past, present, and future is to expand our awareness and to contribute to the relief of suffering for ourselves and the Earth.. This is the essence of the Buddha Dharma.

--Roger Irwin

If you haven't done it yet, check out:
www.karidasangha.net
and while you're there light a candle.

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