



Dharma Soup

Notes from Karida

El Morro Buddhist Sangha
January 2009

**Don't forget our next meeting at
Inscription Rock Trading Company
on Tuesday, January 20, 7:00pm**

**Throughout this New Year I would
like to present these forms of
meditation for your consideration:**

Shamatha "glass of muddy water"

Vipashana "Taking notice of the smallest
things"

Visualization "when imagination is just as
good as being there"

Chanting "playing on the edge where self and
others meet"

Arts: *Ikebana* "the metaphor of flowers"
Chabana "letting flowers speak for
themselves"

Haiku "fewer words saying more"

Chado "a cup of tea, time stands still"



Building a Raft Together

The most obvious purpose of a vehicle is to get us from one point to another. However, the journey is always about more than simply arriving at one's destination. Any trip may be pleasant or unpleasant, smooth or bumpy, calming or agitating. Certainly we hope the journey itself is a pleasant experience.

Sometimes it's useful to think of our practice of meditation as a journey. As we take this journey, we may become calmer, lower our blood pressure, achieve some peace of mind, or find greater inner strength. However, as valuable as these may be, we sometimes need to remind ourselves that the journey is not the destination.

The other day I met a person who said, "I have never been interested in meditation because I always understood it as something that people did in order to become enlightened." From this perspective, one might as well board a bus bound for the moon. The destination seemed out of reach for this person. Why start?

It is useful to look at the essence of the Kuan Yin. Her very nature is to hear and respond to the cries of suffering in the world. She is created not only by these cries but also by our own ideals and better nature. This "better nature" suggests that both the journey and the destination of meditation have something to do with our actions that benefit others.

The historic Buddha was asked to summarize his teachings. He did so in six words, "Suffering and the relief of suffering." This is the Bodhisattva Way.

In the journey of meditation, we often refer to our beginning point as "this shore" and our destination as "the other shore." The Buddha compared meditation to a raft that we construct in order to cross a stream. And what is on that "other shore?" The innermost point of our original self. When one stands on that other shore and touches that innermost point, the consciousness of all sentient creatures in the universe is brightened. One has made a significant contribution. At that point, it would be absurd to pick up the raft and carry it!

I cannot describe for you that "other shore" destination because it is meaningful only in the context of your own experience—not second hand. However, I can assist you in constructing the raft. It is for this reason we have our Buddhist practices. As we construct our raft we will be careful to make sure that it embodies the principles found in the "Five Aspirations," i.e., the search for truth, fearlessness, ecology of spirit, benefit to others, and the heart. Consider these five the foundation of your meditation.

Be encouraged to start each of your meditation sessions with the mudras and the recitation:

"May my meditation turn the Wheel of the Dharma,
May my meditation be grounded in fearlessness,
May the Earth bear witness to my meditation,
May my meditation benefit all beings,
May my meditation be centered in the heart."

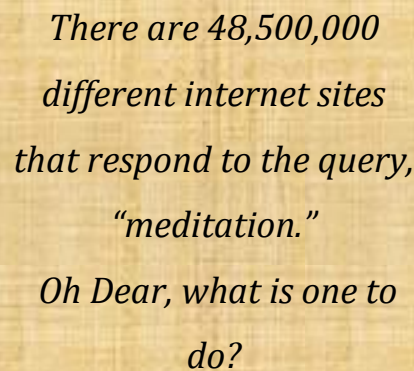
-Roger Irwin

A Glass of Muddy Water

The Sanskrit term *Shamatha* is typically translated as "calm abiding." This is where we start in Karida meditation practice. This particular practice is designed to help reduce what is sometimes called our busy mind "monkey chatter."

Consider a glass of muddy water. If you let it be very still the mud will soon settle so that a significant portion of the water is clear. *Shamatha* meditation is a practice that helps quiet and settle the mind in order to develop a quiet clarity.

In our January meeting we will practice this technique of "calm abiding." This will create for us a foundation to build upon with other practices.



*There are 48,500,000
different internet sites
that respond to the query,
"meditation."
Oh Dear, what is one to
do?*

The Zendo

Wherever we meditate we will consider that place to be the *Zendo* or meditation hall. Our *Zendo* may sometimes be outdoors in a natural setting or it may be indoors. More often than not the *Zendo* is a multi-use space. In many monasteries monks and nuns sleep on pads in the *Zendo* until the time for meditation. Then cushions are altered to make the room into a meditation hall.

We prepare the foundation for our meditation by how we approach the *Zendo*. While in the *Zendo* we must do our utmost to create an atmosphere of harmony, humility, purity, and inner peace. The following *Zendo* suggestions provide some guidance.

1. Shoes should be removed before entering.
2. If you are entering late or leaving early, do so invisibly and silently. Do not leave footprints in other's meditations.
3. After being seated, bow to the teacher to show respect for all teachers. The teacher will, in return, bow to you in recognition that teachers are really students and you yourself are, in fact, the true teacher.

Buddhist Shrines

Shrine tables may occupy the focal point of the *zendo*. You may want to create a special place in your own home for a *zendo* or perhaps just a special place to sit in your home to remind you of the importance of meditation. It helps to leave your cushion or special chair in that spot. The table shouldn't be too cluttered or a mind of busyness will result. Usually Buddhist shrines have something that represents each of the senses, e.g., a bowl of water for touch; a stick of incense for smell; a bowl of fruit for taste; a gong or bell for hearing; or a wall hanging, statue, or other object that brings to mind some aspect that you wish to nurture within yourself.

In the Zen tradition, shrine areas are very simple with few items. The most important thing is that whatever special place you create for your *zendo* should be a place that draws you to meditation.

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. Join Reed Anderson for
abbreviated Wu style movement and basic
Wah Mountain Breathing discipline. Easy for
beginners. Call Reed for info at 783-4067.**