

2nd January 2021

# Global Sangha Newsletter 13

## DARK SIDE TEACHINGS IN HIGH DEMAND

PODCAST GS09

### SEKHA

\*Who will comprehend this earth and this realm of Yama, and this world together with the devas?  
Who will investigate the well-taught path of virtue even as a garland maker will pick flowers?

A sekha (= disciple in training) will comprehend this earth and this realm of Yama, and this world together with the devas. A sekha will investigate the well-taught path of virtue even as a garland maker will pick flowers

Dhammapada 44-45



# HAPPY NEW YEAR OM AMITABHA HUM

## PODCAST GS09

Click the button at the top for the latest podcast.  
You can access transcripts and translations of this podcast series at  
[https://eleusis.ning.com/notes/GLOBAL\\_SANGHA\\_INDEX](https://eleusis.ning.com/notes/GLOBAL_SANGHA_INDEX)

## DISCIPLESHIP IS

- A close relationship with a Dharma teacher
- A way of putting faith into practice
- A training in letting go of ego
- A transmission of the Dharma for future generations

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## COMING EVENTS

All times are Rome time zone

### WEEKLY MEETINGS

#### MONDAYS

Monday 2 - 3.30 pm is **Nembutsu Service** with Vajrapala, Susthama or other Order member. Especially for those who have taken refuge or are thinking about taking refuge or want to go deeper in the theme of refuge

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85954136440?pwd=WmRMMllydlQzaWF2Mi9RbFZWTvRRZz09>

Meeting ID: 859 5413 6440

Passcode: 670414

#### TUESDAYS

17.30 Sangha Group Meeting in Italian

Details from Angela <[ange.romani.2017@gmail.com](mailto:ange.romani.2017@gmail.com)>

#### WEDNESDAYS 14.30 On-line Meeting with Vajrapala

This is a meeting of friends of Amida Benelux Sangha - all welcome - see end of newsletter below

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83616599261?pwd=d3QrL1U0RG9RQXJPQU1yTzJkY3FXUT09>

Meeting ID: 836 1659 9261

Passcode: 129104

**SATURDAY 9th** January and subsequent Saturdays

**14.00 Refuge Group.** Open to all who have taken refuge.

Codes separately notified.

**SATURDAY 9th** January and then 4 weekly

**11.00 Zen Therapy Seminar**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83484765888>

Meeting ID: 834 8476 5888

One tap mobile local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/u/kc0P1T379c>

**SATURDAY 23rd** and then 4 weekly

**19.30 Zen Therapy Seminar**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87560868030>

Meeting ID: 875 6086 8030

One tap mobile local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/u/ky1Zf711X>

**SUNDAY 3rd** January & subsequent Sundays

**11.00 Global Sangha Interest Group**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87840519127>

Meeting ID: 878 4051 9127

One tap mobile local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/u/kWbW3Qs0L>

**SUNDAY 3rd** January & subsequent Sundays

**20.00 Friendship Group**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83106781029>

Meeting ID: 831 0678 1029

EVENTS

To stay informed or sign up for any of the following: [jisshas@googlegroups.com](mailto:jisshas@googlegroups.com)

**JANUARY FULL MOON UPAVASTHA**

**- Koteswara & Dharmavidya**

Thursday-Friday 28-29 January 2021

An on-line retreat consisting of (with approximate start times - Rome time zone)

- 16.00 Assemble
- 16.30 Puja: Nembutsu, Nei Quan Chih Quan, Vajrasattva with short Dharma talk, Sange (Confession of faults) and Refuge Ceremony (Taking refuge & renewal)
- 18.00 Chanting Quan Shi Yin into the night until midnight or later, wherever you are
- Morning meditation
- 10.00 Gathering for sharing
- End before midday

Upavastha signifies the full moon time when the gods come to visit one's home. In Buddhism this is traditionally time for confession, contrition and renewal. This retreat is offered as an experiment. Please book. No cost. If it is popular it can be repeated on other full moon nights.

**FEBRUARY FULL MOON**

Weekend 27th-28th

Programme to be announced

**EASTER RETREAT**

2-5 April 2021

**Dharmavidya & Tineke Osterloh**

A four day on-line event over Easter weekend focussed upon The Summary of Faith & Practice. Study, with discussion, practice, Dharma encounter, chanting, and ritual.

To stay informed or sign up for any of the above: [jisshas@googlegroups.com](mailto:jisshas@googlegroups.com)

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# TRANSMISSION OF MIRROR TEACHINGS

**Dharmavidya & Tineke Osterloh**

THIS PROGRAMME IS NOW FULLY BOOKED  
THERE WILL BE A SECOND IN THE AUTUMN

An initiation into "dark side teachings" based on the book *Dark Side of the Mirror*. Three hours per week. Participants should be fully committed to attendance and have read the book before commencing the course. The mirror teachings bring together Pureland and Zen with some practices from other schools as this teaching reaches the core of the Buddhist message.

This is a private teaching for a small select group of disciples; a heart to heart transmission of the text, meaning experience. Maximum group size 12. The sessions will not be recorded.

Full details: <https://eleusis.ning.com/events/transmission-of-mirror-teachings>

You ask, Am I pure  
or am I a bad person?  
I have no idea.  
Amida knows all of me.  
Amida does everything.

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Article reprinted from Tricycle Magazine

## **AFTER AWAKENING** (Part 1)

**Faith, practice, and enlightenment in Zen master Dogen's Genjokoan**  
**Adapted from a talk by Roshi Robert Althouse**  
**Winter issue of Tricycle Magazine 2020**

*Zen Buddhist Literature has a reputation for being confounding, yet in many cases the challenges of the texts are a positive feature. The verba puzzles called koans, for instance, are designed to be so impenetrable that the student is pushed to break through to a nonconceptual understanding. One of the most influential, and perhaps most perplexing, Zen texts is the Shobogenzo, a collection of writings by the 13th-century master Eihei Dogen, founder of the Japanese Soto Zen school. The Shobogenzo contains nuanced discourses on such subjects the nature of reality, time, and enlightenment.*

*Although Dogen's meaning often can be elusive, his intention was not to bewilder but to expound on subtle subjects as clearly as he could. Many of the passages seem cryptic in part because Dogen alludes to Chinese cultural forms and literature that today's readers do not recognize.*

*At the Zen Life & Meditation Center in Chicago, **Roshi Robert Joshi Althouse** recently gave a dharma talk on the Shobogenzo's most*

*frequently cited section, the Genjokoan.*

When it comes to spiritual truths and the authentic teaching of Buddhism and Zen, they don't get much better than Dogen's *Genjokoan*. I have read many different translations of the *Genjokoan*, and I find Dharmavidya David Brazier's new translation, called *The Dark Side of the Mirror*, to be the clearest. It's often assumed that the *Genjokoan* is a series of different teachings, but what this new translation makes clear is that this teaching is one piece of cloth all the way through.

To understand what Dogen is saying, we need to put ourselves into the mindset of a 13th-century monastic. Our style of practice at the Zen Life & Meditation Center in Chicago is less traditional, and our members are mostly lay practitioners. Dogen, however, was a very religious man, and this is a religious text.

Dogen's early life was full of tragedy and misfortune. He lost his father when he was 2 and his mother when he was 8, and he felt this very acutely. As he was watching the incense smoke rise over his mother's casket, he vowed to ordain as a Buddhist monk, and when he turned 13, he did so. He spent four years at a Tendai monastery on Mount Hiei, which was the main Buddhist center of Japan at the time. While he was there, a deep question arose in him about the teaching of original enlightenment, a dominant teaching that claimed we're already, inherently, intrinsically awake. And the question that arose for him was this: if we are already awake, then why must we practice so rigorously?

Dogen left Mount Hiei to study at Kenninji, a Rinzai Zen monastery in Kyoto. But he was still dissatisfied and traveled with his teacher, Myozen, to study in China, which the Japanese considered to be a more authentic spiritual center. Myozen, and eventually Dogen, were accepted to the temple on Mount Tiantong.

One day, Dogen heard the temple's abbot, Rujing, scolding another monk and telling him to drop off "body-mind," and when Dogen heard that phrase, he had a "sudden awakening," or *kensho*. A year later, Dogen received transmission from Rujing. By the time he returned to Japan about five years later (1233), he was really enthusiastic about teaching the buddhadharma.

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This is when he writes the *Genjokoan*, this profound spiritual text.

To be continued

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### **Chinese Buddhist Encyclopedia (in English)**

The Chinese Buddhist Encyclopedia (in English) was first introduced to the public by Vello Väärtnöu at UC Berkeley in 2012 and has free access to everybody everywhere. The Encyclopedia has currently reached 67,000 crosslinked and illustrated articles, and all work from selecting and entering material to crosslinking and illustrations, has been done personally by Vello Väärtnöu on a voluntary basis.

The Encyclopedia has currently over 3000 plus readers every day, over a million hits a year. Aside from being an effective online tool, the CBE serves as a bridge between the future preservation of Buddhism with that of collecting, categorizing and preserving valuable contributions from two millennia and beyond. It includes both academic and traditional Buddhist views, eight terminology dictionaries - Tibetan, Sanskrit, Chinese, Pali, Japanese, Korea, and contemporary Buddhism-related articles. There is no other similar compendium which collects all possible materials in the same place.

[www.chinabuddhismencyclopedia.com](http://www.chinabuddhismencyclopedia.com)



Photo by Yılmaz Akgünlü - Mountain lake in Cyprus

**QUESTION: IF AMIDA DOES EVERYTHING, WHY DO WE "TRAIN"?**

**SHORT ANSWER: When we realise that Amida does everything we naturally want to do our very best.**

**LONGER ANSWER:** Amida takes care of our spiritual destiny. This is very liberating. In many approaches to the Dharma it is implied that one will not be able to do much until one is enlightened. In Pureland, however, one does not have to worry about that, so one can get on with the business of being a bodhisattva in the world without anxiety about the fact that one will inevitably do this in a less than perfect way. One just does the best one can, but, of course, one naturally wants that best to be as good as it can be. This is especially so because one feels great gratitude.

Thus, one tries to acquire skills in helping others and assisting those who do the Dharma work. One strives to learn from one's mistakes. In all this one realises that one's best efforts are necessarily modest. Our efforts demonstrate human nature. Things follow the "sudden enlightenment, gradual cultivation" model in which gradual cultivation is a natural outcome

gradual cultivation" model in which gradual cultivation is a natural outcome whatever degree of enlightenment one has, even be it ever so small. One need not worry about getting enblightened, only about cultivating in a way that realises what one has already been given.

The fact that one is protected by the Tathagata endows one with freedom a courage. Sometimes people may love you and sometimes they may hate you, but if one's salvation lies with Amida, rather than with social supports o popularity or personal achievement, then one is freed to follow whatever be judgement one has in each of the situations of life.

In other words, one does not really "train" via one's own effort, but one doe reform naturally as a result of deepening faith and understanding. Devoting oneself to a power greater than ego has a very salutary effect.

Correspondingly, when one finds oneself filled with self-pity or trying to asse oneself or ruminating upon one's own performance, one's virtue, rightness, standing, this is generally a sign that one's faith has weakened, that the eg has succeeded in hijacking one's good intention and has sewn doubts in one's mind. In traditional Buddhism, we call this the work of Mara.

There is an essential paradox in this question, recognised by putting "traini in quotation marks. How does one train in spontaneity and naturalness? It seems like a contradiction until one starts to realise just how unnaturally the ordinary person lives and how lacking in real spontaneity one has become through socialisation and through the events of one's worldly life, each of which has left its mark, scar or open wound.

"Just as you are" means "Just as you *really* are" not "Just as one pretends be for social effect" and when we start to see our real nature, we can't help wanting to do something about it, while at the same time recognising that making a saint of oneself by one's own effort is an impossible project. If we can recognise our short-comings, without fleeing into making excuses for oneself, then we see how much we need the help and grace of all the Buddhas. Then our nembutsu becomes sincere and "training" looks after itself.

Namo Amida Bu.  
Dharmavidya

## A PERSONAL NOTE

At the end of 2020 I relinquished the position of head of the Amida Orders which I had held for twenty-five years. I give a big thank you to all those who came to the special service and farewell held on 31st December in recognition of this change, as also to all the many companions who have accompanied me in the Dharma faring while I have occupied this role. As you know I shall, nonetheless, continue to give teachings and put out Dharma programmes to help everybody who wishes to progress on the Buddhist path. Some may come as students, some as practitioners, some as disciples. No doubt there will be some changes over the coming months in the Amida organisation, but this will not affect my teaching programme. At the moment, Global Sangha seems to be going from strength to strength, while the Amida Order will necessarily be going through some vicissitudes during the period of succession. One should not attribute too much importance to such fluctuations. The thing that matters in the Dharma and walking of the Way together, whatever form of organisation may prevail. So, I wish you all a very happy and successful new year and look forward to our continuing progress together.  
Namo Amida Bu - Dharmavidya

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## FROM VAJRA

The end of the year brings much thoughts and feelings, and we were so happy today to be able to share from the heart so much things that came on the sphere of the mind in our sangha meeting. It is good to be together and listen with compassion to each other, trying to understand a bit of the spirit of each other's life's. We try to create a safe place where you are welcome 'just as you are', all what comes up may just be as it is, no need to change yourself or to be 'a better person', to defend or pretend something. Being able to be together in this way is such a liberation. No judgements, no advises to give as all is already complete and you are a complete person.

On Wednesday the 6<sup>th</sup> of January we will have again a meeting of the Friends of Amida Benelux by Zoom - see link above.

**From January 2021 we change the time for our meeting to 2.30 pm (Rome time)** instead of in the morning to give so that more people over the world can join in.

The program will be : Stone-passing (sharing-circle) – nembutsu chanting – reading of the "Life of No regret", which you can find in the Nien Fo Book on page 6 : Susthama is giving Dharmataks to explain us this text which derives from the Larger Pureland Sutra and uses the Tan Butse Ge commentary of Gyomey Kubose – a text that explains the Life of no Regret :

[Tan Butsu Ge.pdf](#)

Nien Fo Book:

<http://www.amidashu.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/NienFoBook-2018.pdf>



Frosty morning at Eleusis :- Photo by Tineke Osterloh

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To myriad tathagatas  
Their offerings they make  
Bowing, rejoicing and returning to  
The land of peace and nurturance

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You can see other Global Sangha materials, past podcasts and articles via :  
[https://eleusis.ning.com/notes/GLOBAL\\_SANGHA\\_INDEX](https://eleusis.ning.com/notes/GLOBAL_SANGHA_INDEX)

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If you wish to contact me personally, you can do so at [dharmavidya@fastmail.fm](mailto:dharmavidya@fastmail.fm) or via my Facebook [@davidbrazierauthor](#) or on my website - click the Global Sangha at Eleusis link below.

Thank you very much  
Namo Amida Bu  
Dharmavidya  
David Brazier

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