

# Myōju

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Jikishoan Zen Buddhist Community Inc. Magazine (A0037927K)



first  
encounters

**First Experiences:**

*A Beginner's Journey with Jikishoan and Zen Practice*

**Zazen:**

*The First Taste of Zen*

**First Encounter:**

*Jinesh talks about his first Zen experiences*

**An Introduction to Dogen Zen:**

*A Dharma talk given by Ekai Korematsu*

**Weekend Workshop**

**Zen Meditation in Rye**

**The ABC of Zazen**

**Book Review**

*The four horses of suffering,*

*The four chariots of compassion;*

*How can one*

*Find the true Way*

*Without riding upon them. !*

## Editorial

Welcome to the third edition of Myoju, the magazine of the Jikishoan Zen Buddhist Community in Melbourne, Australia. The theme of this edition of Myoju is 'the first taste of Zen'. From the perspectives of a long time practitioner, through to those starting out at a Weekend Workshop, the themes that arise centre around a combination of culture shock, clarity, pain, joy, confusion, excitement, pain, and more pain!



For me, when I first began sitting my entire left leg would go to sleep, and I nearly fell over a couple of times when I tried to stand up for kinhin. Now, my leg still goes to sleep, but I know to take my time getting up! Lucy mentions feeling 'aching and exhausted' (p.11) during her first weekend workshop. Similarly, Greg listened to the 'groans and protestations' (p.11) of his body, and Jinesh, an experienced practitioner, recalls that every part of his body 'alternately hurt or went numb' (p.14) during his early experiences.

So why is pain such a built-in part of Zen practice, and why then do people continue with the practice? In the interview with Ekai (pp.6—9), he says that 'the most important part that zazen plays, is that it forces us to face reality... In reality there is no such thing as a world without pain'. He goes on to say that it is important not only to acknowledge and accept it, but to let it go.

The 'four chariots of compassion' are useless without the 'four horses of suffering' to pull them along. It is my hope that having people share their experiences in this issue of Myoju will generate understanding and compassion, as we realise our similarity and connectedness. I know that as I sit this Sunday, I will be mindful that mine aren't the only legs complaining in the room, and on Monday I won't be the only person at work facing pressures and challenges.

Many thanks to the members and friends of Jikishoan who have contributed to this issue of Myoju. I know that expressing and sharing one's personal experiences can be difficult and challenging. Thank you to the members of the publications group. In particular, thank you to Karen for her hard work organising the magazine layout, and organising me! Finally, thank you to Ekai for his teaching, and sometimes — simply his presence.

Gary Youston



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## Publications Group

Ekai Korematsu Osho *Inspiration*  
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Karen Threlfall *Design, Layout and Production*  
Julie Martindale *Proofing*  
Michael Colton *Book Review*  
Rhonda Fletcher *Ballarat Link*

*Diacritical marks on Japanese words and names, such as Dogen Zenji, are not included in this issue, due to their not being able to be accessed through the software package and typefaces used for production.*

<sup>1</sup> Heine, S. (Ed.), 'The Zen Poetry of Dogen: Verses From The Mountain Of Eternal Peace,' Tuttle Publishing, USA, p.107.

*Calligraphy on p.2 by Ikko Narasaki Roshi  
'The true person of no rank'*



JIKI  
direct

SHO  
realisation

AN  
hut

## Jikishoan Zen Buddhist Community

Jikishoan is a growing community of Zen practitioners under the guidance of Ekai Korematsu Osho. All Jikishoan programs are conducted in the spirit of Bendoho, the original way of practise as prescribed by Dogen Zenji in the 13th Century. Jikishoan activities in Melbourne are centred around a small Zendo in Essendon and a weekly Sunday Sanzen-kai in Collingwood. A group also meets weekly in Ballarat. Workshops and retreats are held in Hawthorn, Mt. Eliza and at Dean, near Ballarat.

Ekai Korematsu Osho has practiced and taught Zen Buddhism in Japan, the USA and India for over 25 years. He trained with a number of teachers, including Ikko Narasaki Roshi, deputy Abbot of Eihei-ji Temple in Japan, his Dharma transmission teacher. Ekai founded Friends of the Lotus - the International Zazen Network in 1996. In February 1998 he moved to Melbourne and now lives there with his wife Deniz and young sons Sunao and Shoan. Ekai is the main teacher at Jikishoan and is also Zen practise instructor for Antioch University's study program in India and Japan.

Ekai Korematsu	<i>President (Docho)</i>
Jinesh Wilmot	<i>Vice-President (Ino)</i>
Hannah Forsyth	<i>Head Cook (Tenzo)</i>
Michael Colton	<i>Property Manager (Shissui)</i>
Srecko Radman	<i>Ballarat Zendo Coordinator (Kansu)</i>
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# First Experiences

## A Beginner's Journey with Jikishoan and Zen Practice

*For me, learning Zen practice and becoming involved with Jikishoan, is very much a new experience. I knew nothing about Zen or any other types of Buddhism.*

I had read no books on Zen or Buddhism, and have never been part of a spiritual/religious community. I'd only had brief experiences of meditation through going to yoga classes and studying Shiatsu. I was, and still feel, I am very much a complete beginner to Zen practice and to Buddhism.

When I mentioned to Ekai that I could contribute to Myoju by writing about my first experiences with Zen practice through Jikishoan, Ekai joked about it being like a first love experience, a love story. And yes! Although it is a bit embarrassing to say so, my experience with Jikishoan and Zen practice has been a bit like first love. A little bit obsessional, very devoted, committed and in love. In love with the teachings and the expression of the practice, and at times, totally infatuated by it all. And, like being young and in love, it is very beautiful, quite magical and perhaps a bit naive and innocent. It is also so new and exciting, that it is so hard not to get excited by it all.

So, this will be a love story that I tell you. I'm sure everyone who has experienced the first stages of love (whether it be girl/boy, gardening, spiritual or whatever) can relate to this experience. The first stages; complete with ups and downs, pain and longing, nervousness and fumbling and difficulty in expressing yourself because of insecurities. All that build up till you become more familiar, more intimate and a bit more solid and sure of your relationship and more able to express yourself.

I'm not sure why I was attracted to Jikishoan, it is difficult to say why, I just was. I remember first seeing some brochures around in early 1999 and then they kept on reappearing. I was quite interested and really wanted to find out about it, but didn't have the courage to turn up to the 5 o'clock

Sanzen-kai (Zen meditation) on Sundays, which the brochure informed me of. I was a bit frightened, I didn't know anything about it, and never seemed to be able to get through to the people who I needed to contact (though, I don't think I tried many times, probably only twice!). I also, later on, picked up a brochure for the orientation session, but that was out

in Essendon. I thought 'Oh, too far. I couldn't possibly travel all that way out to Essendon' (I lived in North Fitzroy!).

So, I left it like that. It took me over a year to finally go to Sanzen-kai. Sometimes I got very close to going, as I was studying at the Australian Shiatsu College (where Sanzen-kai is held). I'd be doing a weekend class and at the end of the class, all these Zen people would come in, in their black gear. I was curious, but daylight beckoned me out to the park to play, so I didn't stay.

Then, one day in June last year, after being at the Shiatsu College open day, I met with Dean who I knew from Okido yoga. He had come to sit with Jikishoan, so I stayed and experienced Sanzen-kai too. Before Sanzen-kai started, I was taken through the formalities, the routine of it all. It seemed like so much to remember, all this bowing and turning certain ways and placing hands in certain positions. It was all so

m u c h .  
However, my first sit I remember not being that complex, I suppose it was all fresh in my mind and I just followed. I r e m e m b e r

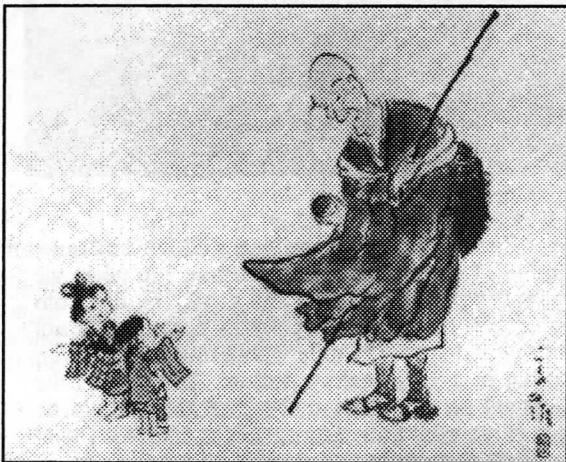
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*... This was the period of my initial attraction to Jikishoan. I liked everything about it, the practice seemed to fit very comfortably with me, but I wasn't willing to put in the effort to go outside my comfort zone. Then, suddenly, (overnight, in fact, from a dream that I had) I was struck ...*

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thinking how lovely and how enjoyable it was just to sit, just sit with a straight spine, and follow the breath and not to have to know anything. Therefore, it must not have been a difficult sit.

After my first sit I had a mid semester break in my studies, so I went away for a couple of weeks down to where my partner lives near Apollo Bay. When I came



back, I started Sanzen-kai again and I remember it becoming a lot more difficult. I started getting terribly nervous, unsure and not knowing whether I was doing things the right way. I had difficulty in expressing to others the problems which I was having. And, unfortunately, due to my reluctance to travel out to Essendon, I didn't start the orientation course, which was being held out there.

This was the period of my initial attraction to Jikishoan. I liked everything about it, the practice seemed to fit very comfortably with me, but I wasn't willing to put in the effort to go outside my comfort zone. Then, suddenly, (overnight, in fact, from a dream that I had) I was struck. This was it! This was my way! My practice, community and teacher. I was in love, love struck! And I would put in any effort required, I would travel any distance, to learn more about this practice and become more familiar with Jikishoan. But it was too late, the orientation course that was being offered before, was not to be held again until November (as Ekai was going overseas and wouldn't be back till then). I had to wait, wait what seemed to me to be like ages (but actually only three and a half months away!). So, I had to be patient. This

was difficult, as I had just encountered an amazing form and practice and an amazing teacher, and I wanted to learn about it, but now I had to wait.

I continued going to Sanzen-kai (in my wobbly way) while Ekai was away and I was supported, encouraged and guided by the members of Jikishoan. It was inspiring and reassuring listening to the members give their talks about their experiences with Zen. I started to feel not so much like I was fumbling around in the dark. And, after getting the courage to ask questions about the form and things that I was uncertain about, practice seemed to flow a lot better. However, I was still very unclear about many things. Therefore, it was good when Ekai came back and I was able to do the orientation course, it clarified things a bit more for me.

Ekai gave a talk just recently about how orientation is like being given a map of the town that you've just arrived at. For me, doing Sanzen-kai without doing the orientation course first was like arriving at the town and being given verbal directions of where to go, but not being given a map. At first, the directions are quite clear, you remember them, but then as you journey, you get distracted, and you start to forget the directions you were given. You become lost and have difficulty in summoning up the courage to ask people the way. You feel that you shouldn't have forgotten the clear directions that you were given. And that you'll cope and eventually will find your way without having to ask others, as they're busy and you don't want to bother them.

However, I am learning that these are just my insecurities. Through asking, I have found that people generally don't mind being asked the way, even if they are busy. They are actually quite obliging and helpful. Therefore, it was a good experience (a difficult but helpful one) to be able to learn this. But it was also good when I was given the map (by doing the orientation course) and was able to see where I was positioned on the map.

Since then, I have become more involved with Jikishoan and through this, my relationship with Jikishoan and Zen practice has deepened and grown and continues to do so. I feel that I have passed through the hesitant, uncertain, fumbling first stages of love. Though I am sure that these reactions will still pop up for me now and again, I have become more intimate, more familiar with the practice and the community, and more easily able to express myself. Now it is the process of becoming more solid with my love, of building my relationship with the practice and with Jikishoan, of growing together and learning together (through thick and thin!). And this takes time, it takes time (and consistent effort), to build, to grow and to become more solid.

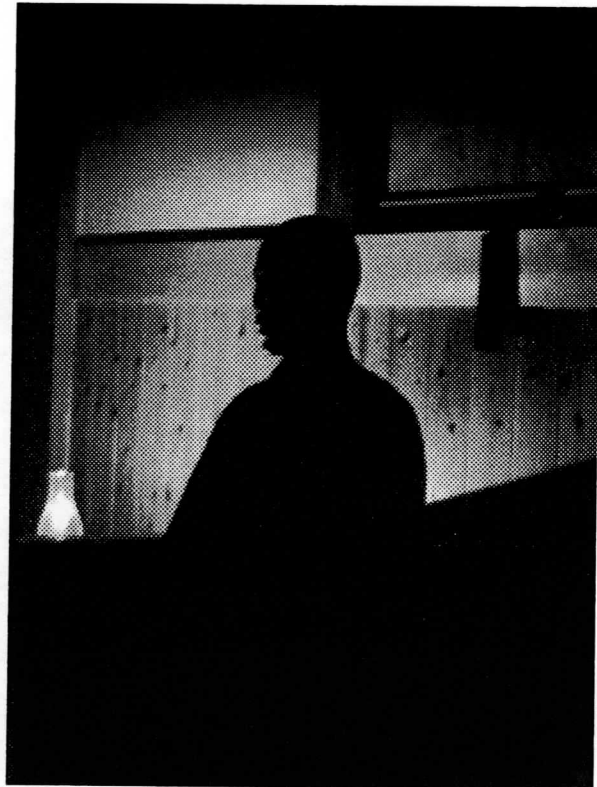
By Fern

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# Zazen

## The first taste of zen

*An interview with Ekai Korematsu*



**Gary:**

*I'll begin with the most obvious question:  
'What is zazen?'*



**Ekai:** Zazen literally means 'you sit down and quiet your mind'. Literally, seated meditation. But when we talk about zazen in Dogen Zenji's way or the Soto School's way the emphasis is upon posture. It's not just sitting and spending time wondering or whatever, but sitting in a very healthy posture. This means the back should be straight and the breathing should be healthy. If we miss these points, sitting like this (hand bent), tilted, then it goes away from the zazen school. But generally speaking zazen is seated meditation.

**Gary:** *So why is there an emphasis upon a straight spine?*

**Ekai:** Again, if we don't focus the spine or centre of ourselves then things do not come together. They can be all over and you can't position yourself. If you want to position yourself you have to make sure that the alignment is

there, in the centre. Then you have an anchor point. But without that, if you are tilted off centre, it doesn't work, as sustaining an effort is difficult and doesn't come naturally. At the beginning when we learn to sit in zazen there is a lot of adjustment, effort or work — correction to the right posture taking place. Your feeling about how you are sitting doesn't necessarily correspond with the way you are sitting. You may feel awkward to sit straight. But it is a matter of course. If you do this once, twice, three times, four times then slowly you begin to feel 'this feels right'.

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*... Without effort there is no practice ...*

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**Gary:** *I remember when I first started, you talked about 'just sitting' and then you would talk about 'making an effort'. These seemed like opposites to me...*

**Ekai:** [laughter] The truth is in how you reconcile what seem to be contradictions. When the gap becomes reconciled, resolved, then you see the practice clearly. Before that there is always contradiction and conflict. So, simply speaking, when we say practice there is an effort, or a slight effort involved. Without effort there is no practice.

**Gary:** *So what is the effort aimed towards?*

**Ekai:** Effort is to point out the very basic, important thing. The important thing is to settle in the right posture and get ready for the body and mind to be able to make an effort. It's all connected. If you want to do zazen practice you have to learn to let go, to set aside a little bit. If you don't make a deliberate effort, bringing all the stuff from your world into the sitting then there's no practice. You are just carrying on the same thing, mundane effort, everyday effort...

**Gary:** *You just happen to be sitting differently!*

**Ekai:** *Y e s !*

Yes!! [laughter]. You don't need to be sitting like that. You could be listening to music or something. A slight effort is important. Right effort. So to make

this effort we have to rely on some thinking level. It doesn't come naturally without paying attention. In zazen we need some instruction. That is the purpose of orientation. It is a kind of general map of the practice, so that you know which direction is the proper direction. If you don't have that and you miss some point, then the further you go the more you deviate. If you have a general kind of idea and this is reinforced by your experience, then it becomes clearer.

**Gary:** *So how does zazen differ from 'meditation'?*

**Ekai:** Zazen includes in a way everything because zazen doesn't separate from anything else. Meditation is a big word. If it means meditation that is very, very strongly based on the body base, then there is a very close relationship with zazen, body sitting. But if the meditation is based only on psychological phenomena, then there is already a deviation. You never get to the body point; it's always whatever you feel you are thinking. You are in the realm of thinking, busy interpreting [laughter]. So the difference would be the emphasis. Zazen is more complete; the emphasis is on what you are actually doing. You don't need to question too much about abstract stuff, about what your mind is doing, but how your body or breath are. You may be having fantastic states of mind but actually if you are spaced out then it's not the realm of Zen. It should be more complete. It doesn't matter whether your mind is clear or confused, but you are still able to actually carry on everyday life. This is of more value. You are not caught up with temporary confusion or mind clutter. You can cut through that. So that is the

characteristic of Zen. In the midst of things, clouds come and go in terms of clarity of the mind. In sitting, you make a concrete effort, to be present. You don't need to try to investigate what this cloud is or where it comes from.

**Gary:** *You don't try to stop thinking?*

**Ekai:** No, no you don't need to. Just allow a natural big space in your structure or framework of practice. Clouds come and go, but you don't play with them. As soon as we notice that we are doing this then we just drop it, without doing anything. Let the thoughts be alone. Give a space and they work themselves out. The clouds in the sky come and then they go away. If there's some fog, it clears, and then again it might come back. [laughter] So the relationship between the ordinary world and zazen is that zazen offers a big vessel or space, so that clarity can appear.

**Gary:** *What part does pain play in zazen? For most people their first experience isn't a blissful state...*

**Ekai:** [laughter] The most important part that zazen plays is that it forces us to face reality. We are often blinded to this or ignore it, either intentionally or

unintentionally. That makes it very difficult to see reality as it is. In reality there is no such world as a world without pain [laughter]. It is hard to

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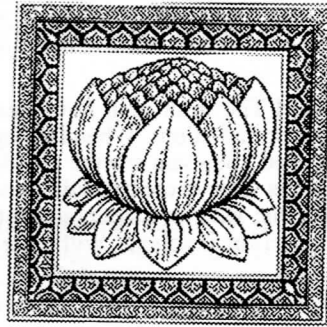
*... Just allow a natural big space in your structure  
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acknowledge that, and not only to acknowledge it but to accept it and let go. And not only to let go but to come to the spiritual crux of Zen: appreciation of that. Without that there is no life. So pain plays a very important role in different stages. The person who sits for the first time finds the pain as an enemy. But sometimes we say that an enemy is a friend that we don't yet know. Once you become friends with your enemy, or what you thought was your enemy, then... best friends. So the process of zazen is to become intimate with some of the blind spots and to learn how to relate. It is important that we make a right effort, and right effort comes through getting to know the pain. As long as we are always reactionary to something we don't like, such as pain, then we never become intimate. If we become more familiar or intimate then naturally understanding comes. Then right actions, the right response, becomes clear. I am explaining in an analytical way a slow process, but actually you don't need to think too much about it. You make a good effort each time. When pain takes over you lose your balance and you can't sit. So before that you learn to stand up and do something else, walking or something. And again, back and forth. If you do this process again and again then you are learning how to be with the pain, accepting, letting go, without destroying ourselves (laughter). We have a problem — whether we destroy the pain or whether we are destroyed by the pain. A kind of fight is going on. 'I'm not practising right' or 'I'm not doing zazen right'. You become upset by it if you can't push or something. The more you are eager to sit, or if you have a strong will.... Strong will can just be a strong ego. It's very hard to tell sometimes.



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**Gary:** *Often when you talk about zazen you use words like close and intimate. Close or intimate to what?*

**Ekai:** With zazen 'intimate' is a term used to express that there is no conflict. There is an intimacy and there are no barriers. So in other words there is already a meeting point. Intimacy means 'more close', more face to face, a more direct connection. And more feeling involved. Closeness is more mechanical.

**Gary:** *Closeness implies physically closer...*

**Ekai:** Yes, but intimacy involves feelings. So it is on all levels. Not only on an idea level but on a feeling level and an experience level. Another way to say it would be that there is comfort. You are comfortable with yourself. You are intimate with yourself. If you are not intimate with yourself then you can never be comfortable. If you are comfortable with others then this means that you are already intimate with yourself. In the context of zazen, at the beginning we do not have this intimacy with our own body and mind, our own self. Because of that it is very difficult to be truly intimate with other selves. If we develop intimacy with our own self, then we come to realise that everybody is just the same as ourselves. At the beginning we don't know it. But once you become intimate or comfortable with yourself then you become open to others. People are at different stages, trying to find this place. Sometimes people are in the wrong spot, just looking for comfort. People are drawn to a 'holiday spot' and want that to last forever. I am not talking about that.

**Gary:** *As you become more 'intimate' and become more transparent to yourself, you see parts of yourself that you had hidden from yourself, and that aren't particularly nice. Do you just accept those parts or do you say 'I need to change those parts'. What do you do?*

**Ekai:** This has something to do with holding onto some idea of progress, or attachment. At the beginning we start to discover parts of ourselves and become

more comfortable with them. This kind of experiences sticks and starts to become more solid. The tendency is to think that we can start from there and use previous experiences as a stepping stone to go further. Often that causes a problem because again, you are holding onto some experience or feeling, or the idea that you are getting better. Actually intimacy involves dropping this notion of achievement. Then we become more and more intimate. So always the effort in the practice is to let go. It's like the breath, as soon as you take a breath in you let go. If you keep accumulating all kinds of goodies ... [laughter]

**Gary:** *Or bad...[laughter]*

**Ekai:** [laughter] Yes it can be that. ...as if these are your own assets then you end up with a monster that you have to deal with [laughter]. Very far away from emptiness. [laughter]

**Gary:** *Is there a prescribed length of time or number of times per week that a person should sit?*

**Ekai:** I think a person who is interested in sitting should sit as much as they can. [laughter]

**Gary:** *I knew you'd say that [laughter].*

**Ekai:** [laughter] So the important thing is to generate an interest in sitting, not how much you sit.

**Gary:** *It's very tempting when you start though to say 'Right, I'm going to sit every day for forty minutes'. Then about four days later you've missed one day and you say 'I must sit tomorrow'. You begin to feel guilty. Then tomorrow comes and you don't sit and the whole thing snowballs...*

**Ekai:** [laughter] The point is how to generate your interest in sitting, and then to sort out and arrange your life so that you are able to provide some space and structure. How much to sit is about how to structure your life. So the basic thing is first to generate interest, reading a book, listening to a dharma talk ... Then you need to work upon a structure that allows the space. If there is too much that is demanding in your life then you are not ready to structure. The real work is how to arrange. Already then, in a broader sense, the practice of zazen has begun. You have started to engage in the process of zazen. It's almost a planning or preparatory state. This is not separate from actually doing zazen. We need to be aware of how to take care of our own daily life outside of the sitting place. So the person who is able to sit more than others has done a lot of



ordinary activity, and everybody accepts that it is something that you do, and you just do it [laughter].

**Gary:** [laughter] *It seems a little anti-social at times: 'I'm going off to sit by myself...'*

these things. They have simplified their life. Because their interest is strong they have made an effort to structure their life in such a way. So first we have to look around our own feet [laughter] and allocate time... For me I have a family and kids so I am not like a single monk, alone in a monastery. So I structure my time. My structured time is pretty much the structured time of Jikishoan Zen Community. So I enjoy the retreats, and sitting in Sunday Sanzen-kai [laughter]. I don't have much luxury myself. Although the zendo is nearly attached to the house, it doesn't mean that I am always coming here [laughter].

**Gary:** *It's a long way... [laughter]*

**Ekai:** [laughter] Yes... In other words, taking care of the family is not separate. There is no contradiction. Taking care of one's life so that one can meditate correlates with the maintenance of the precepts.

**Gary:** *It seems to be that when you are working, or doing things around the house, then zazen can be easily shuffled down the list of priorities...*

**Ekai:** [laughter] Yes, exactly...

**Gary:** *But when you actually get around to sitting you say 'Why didn't I do this before'?*

**Ekai:** [laughter] It's a strange thing isn't it. You are so eager after you meditate. You think 'I have to do this for two hours everyday' or something. You have to go through those periods, bouncing back and forth. It's a process. But the most important thing is just to generate interest, to maintain interest. If interest is maintained then when the chance to sit comes, you don't miss the chance, you just jump in. Just because the condition is not there doesn't mean that there isn't interest. Once the condition is there, then you sit — spontaneous [laughter]. It doesn't happen by accident, it has to come from your own desire or intention.

**Gary:** *But sometimes it is a real effort to sit. When you haven't sat for a long time you have to say 'No, I'm going to go and do it'.*

**Ekai:** Yes, yes. Sometimes we need to make a deliberate effort. That is also because you are interested. Your interest is there under the surface and suddenly it comes to a point where it breaks the surface (laughter). Hopefully this doesn't happen in a devastating way and cause a problem in your relationship and in your own self [laughter].

**Gary:** *Yes, it's a difficult task to balance your 'normal' life and setting aside time to sit.*

**Ekai:** Zen appears to be a very special activity to begin with, but as we practice more it becomes a very

**Ekai:** [laughter] Yes. Yes. This kind of transition, as you begin to relate to the practice and other people see you relate to the practice, is work. The preliminary work or groundwork takes three years. If you are consistent and maintain interest then people say 'Oh, he is serious' and start to accept it [laughter]. Three years is a good chunk of time and it shows some kind of commitment and seriousness. During that period if you continue to practice you become more familiar with your own body, the physical side, and the psychology associated with it. So you become pretty much stable. When you speak to others you are not fluctuating too much. What you said and felt yesterday is not a totally different thing to today. 'Gary, you said yesterday that you don't like sitting, but today you say sitting is great and that you want to do more. How does that work? I can't trust you'. [laughter]. Three years is a good time. It is required for us to know our own self, our body, breath and consciousness, and their relationship especially. Even the pain, at the beginning it is an energy we don't like and we want to remove it. If we continue the face of the pain starts to change. We begin to understand the quality of the pain. Some pain is okay and we know the consequences. You can't do anything about it. More intimacy comes. So keeping the interest in the practice is important. In the beginning we have a kind of map so that you have some direction to go. You can try out, and then return. So this practice is in a way endless. It becomes more refined. We spend less time wondering about this or that, to do or not to do. We usually spend an awful lot of time thinking about doing or not doing [laughter].

Only thinking time, wasting time. Time is up!! [laughter].

**Gary:** [laughter] *And you didn't do anything...*

**Ekai:** [laughter] Try to analyse: 'I have to understand first in order to do...'. [laughter]. Zazen has the effect of computer scanning process. If the computer stuffs up then you go to 'Tools' and it begins scanning...

**Gary:** *But then it asks you, 'Do you want to delete the bad files or do you want to save them?'* [laughter].

**Ekai:** [laughter] If you are not quite sure then leave it alone. To leave it alone is the practice [laughter]. To be safe, leave it alone, don't delete the broken file... [laughter]

**Gary:** [laughter] *You might realise you needed it!*

**Ekai:** [laughter]

**Gary:** *Thank you Ekai.*

**Ekai:** Thank you.

*Calligraphy featured in this article is by Ikegami-san*



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# The ABC of Zazen

*The idea for the ABC of Zazen came from an interview with Ekai in which he referred to the foundations we learn at the beginning of practice as the ABC of Zazen. In this issue we offer quotes on specific practice points from Ekai Osho and Shunryu Suzuki Roshi.*

## Dana

'The practice of dana means giving practice, the perfection of giving practice. It is perfected if you don't have the slightest idea whether you are giving or receiving, no idea which is which — that is the perfection of practice. We are learning to sit, just sit. In sitting zazen, we are learning to give ourselves totally, in this practice, in this moment, here and now. Wherever we are, whatever we are doing, the practice of dana is to give totally.' — E. K.

## Delusion

'Of course, delusion is, for the Zen practitioner, the source of wisdom. Without delusion there is no enlightenment. That is a beautiful part of Zen practice. The more difficulty you have, the more tremendous kind of joy you have in awakening. Without that difficulty, without that confusion there's nothing, no enlightenment, nothing. That is the beautiful part of it.' — E. K.

## Deepening

'Deepening practice is like digging a hole. When you dig a hole, you first mark the place that you want to dig, making the centre very clear. If you want to dig a hole it's obvious that the centre has to be very clear so that each shovel strike deepens in the most effective way. That's how you deepen practice — you dig your hole. Your attention is unwavering. No matter how many times you stick the shovel in the ground, it strikes the same place. If your focus is clear and your attention focused on the marked spot, then things naturally come together and the hole becomes deeper and deeper.' — E. K.

## Dualism

'When you find it difficult to stop your mind while you are sitting, and when you are still trying to stop your mind, this is the stage of "form is emptiness and emptiness is form." But, while you are practicing in this dualistic way, more and more you will have oneness with your goal. And, when your practice becomes effortless, you can stop your mind. This is the stage of "form is form" and "emptiness is emptiness".' — S. S.

## Effort

'Concentrated effort, right effort is important. Concentrated effort means a very concrete effort. It's not something to think too much about — just give yourself wholeheartedly, throw yourself body, breath, mind into this activity again and again.' — E. K.  
'If your practice is good, you may become proud of it. What you do is good, but something more is added to it. Pride is extra. Right effort is to get rid of something extra.' — S. S.

## Emptiness

'If you are concentrated on your breathing you will forget yourself and, if you forget yourself, you will be concentrated on your breathing. I do not know which is first. So actually there is no need to try too hard to be concentrated on your breathing. Just do as much as you can. If you continue this practice, eventually you will experience the true existence which comes from emptiness.' — S. S.

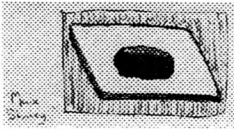
## Enlightenment

'The understanding that has passed down from Buddha to our time is that, when you start zazen, there is enlightenment even without any preparation. Whether you practice zazen or not, you have Buddha nature. Because you have it, there is enlightenment in your practice ... If you are trying to attain enlightenment, that is a part of karma, you are creating and being driven by karma, and you are wasting your time on your black cushion.' — S. S.

## Full Range

'In our practice there's the full range of what is. That's why sometimes we get confused. Sometimes we may be practicing sincerely and it seems like clarity's coming. Then suddenly, next sitting, "What's happening? Am I regressing?" This happens because we practice without tricking our mind, receiving exactly what it is, what it offers. And with this much range, we have true awareness of the here and now, so we are not looking for some particular awareness or concentration, we are in the midst of it, right here. Just right awareness according to the way we are learning to accept, and be one with it, and to drop it.' — E. K.

*Compiled by Johanna Verberne*



## Zen Weekend Workshop

*On March 2nd — 4th this year, a group of people gathered at Glanmore Estate in Melbourne to participate in a Zen Weekend Workshop. Here are some of their experiences.*

I had completed both the Orientation and Deepening courses and felt ready to tackle the Weekend Workshop. Getting up at 5:00am was challenging as was the practice of silence. On Friday evening and Saturday I was my usual uptight self and talked a bit more than was expected.

On Sunday there was a definite shift. I was quieter, calmer, more decisive and self-aware. I usually experience lower back pain and by Saturday evening I was sitting on a chair, not a zafu. I also took breaks when I needed them. I was there, that was the main thing!

I found the weekend truly remarkable. It enabled me to experience Zen practice all day rather than just a couple of hours.

*Mina Shurey*

I've just come home from a weekend Zen retreat, picked up the dog from the kennel and made a sandwich! Now that I've 'stopped' — even though you don't do too much moving when you are at a retreat — I'm aching and exhausted. I'm wondering if this is kind of like snow skiing — the first time you try it, you find out you had more muscles than you ever imagined because they are all aching at the same time. Also, the first time you go skiing (or the first time I went skiing) I wanted to go home early because I just couldn't get it right.

The second time I went skiing (and everyone's different!) I could stand up for about five minutes and stop — in an upright position also!

On my third attempt I found that I got to stand up for longer than ten minutes and began to find out that the exhilaration of 'swishing down the slopes' was worth all the aches.

But the added benefit of a Zen workshop, as compared to skiing, is that sometimes you get some really simple answers to some really simple questions — and there's a lower risk factor!

I don't know if you could really compare zen to skiing, but if what I heard from other participants (about how I might feel after two or three more goes), the experience of a 'workshop' will become more and more positive.

In summary, it was an interesting weekend. Thankyou to Ekai, the other participants and organisers.

*Lucy Alison*

The orientation course that I attended with Ekai opened my eyes to the possibilities that meditation offers. In the dropping off of the 'self' newfound energy and enthusiasm is found for the everyday activities that we so often term 'mundane'. On leaving the zendo after each session I found that I could look at the world with fresh eyes, and this comes out in all interactions with the people that I encounter in my everyday life. For me the experience I had during the orientation course has convinced me that meditation can be of limitless benefit to myself and others — truly by pacifying yourself you create peace in the world around you.

*Tom Eckersley*

The notion of maintaining mindfulness, that is, being rooted in the here-and-now, for a significant portion of even a single day can, for most, seem like an inhuman exertion. Certainly for me, on most days it seems a million miles away. And so, I thought, why not jump in at the 'deep-end' and experience a concentrated 48 hour dose of Zen to help cultivate some mindfulness? Hence the decision to participate in the Weekend Workshop.

In one of the first talks given by Ekai-san to the participants he introduced the metaphor of 'jet-lag' in relation to the schism between body and mind which is often experienced by people in the early stages of Zen retreats. After several sessions of zazen, and as the groans and protestations of my body became louder, it soon became clear to me that I was experiencing a good dose of jet-lag! In my head I kept reminding myself that 'it's only for another 24 hours, or so' whilst all the time my back kept screaming 'I don't care, I want out - NOW!'

But thankfully, some inner strength overcame my physical limitations and carried me through to the conclusion of what was a richly rewarding occasion. It's amazing how much you can learn about yourself in just 2 days, and how much it can enrich you and energize your everyday living.

*Greg Browning*

## Zen Meditation in Rye



In December 1997, after living 20 years right in the heart of Melbourne, I moved my whole world to Rye backbeach on the Mornington Peninsula.

I had just met Ekai and Deniz, and after studying Zen meditation mostly from books for nearly 20 years I was terribly disappointed to be leaving for Rye just when I had found an authentic Zen monk living in Pascoe Vale!

I decided I would start my Zen practice again and see if I could establish a Zen meditation group in Rye. Maybe that way I could lure Ekai down to the coast... for some intensive workshops and teaching. In January 1999 Janise Brown (my neighbour) and I organised the first weekend 'Zen Meditation Intensive' at Rye, using my house as the Zendo, and Janise's house as the eating place. It was a great success.

A lot of time passed, but somehow I held onto the vision of 'Zen

Meditation in Rye'... with Ekai as our teacher! In January 2000 I managed to secure a \$10 000 loan from the bank and turned my carport into a Zendo/studio with an adjoining deck. It is a beautiful space, perfect for zazen, and I knew when it was finished that I no longer had an excuse to avoid my regular practice.

In February 2001 Ekai taught a 1-day intensive at the Zendo (called Oki studio) with a small yet keen group of local meditators. We now meet every Wednesday evening for zazen practice (8:00pm—8:45pm) and hope that Ekai will have the time available to visit us every 3 — 4 months to run 1-day intensives... just to keep us on track!!

If you are interested in attending Wednesday evening zazen or the 1-day intensives, please ring Cherie Whittington on 59 857 276.

*By Cherie Whittington*

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# Introduction to Dogen Zen

## The practice of enlightenment

*The following is an excerpt from the teaching  
'Introduction to Dogen Zen' given by Ekai Korematsu  
Osho at the Buddhist Summer School in January 2001.*



*Portrait of Dogen Zenji, founder of the Soto School  
of Zen Buddhism in Japan.*

The importance of this meditation practice is not how long you meditate, it's not a matter of time, of how long, but that you are really meditating, really doing it that's what matters. This point is particularly important to Dogen Zenji's teachings, often the Zen school is understood as the meditation school or the dhyana meditation school, so there's this idea that the more you sit and meditate the more you develop some kind of state of mind, the more you sit the better you get but it's not that kind of teaching and if you understand Dogen Zen in that way you miss the basic important point, you miss what Zen really means. You quickly conclude that Zen is simply meditation, a period of meditation and you split Zen practice, meditation practice apart from everything else

Traditionally in Buddhist traditions there are three prongs to the teachings: the first part is the precepts, the second part is meditation, dhyana or samadhi, and the third part is wisdom. But if you understand Zen as meditation in that kind of narrow way then you end up believing that after meditation you attain wisdom or something like that! [laughing] That's not what Dogen Zenji is talking about, that's not the way that Dogen is pointing out the practice — zazen, sitting meditation is those three aspects in one practice, they are not separate.

Dogen Zenji introduced this practice, this meditation practice in his work *Fukanzazengi* — *The Universal Principles of Zazen* and in this he clearly points out that Zen practice includes the three aspects of precepts,

meditation, and wisdom, they are not separate or linear, one doesn't lead to the other they are a totality. Meditation isn't separate from wisdom, wisdom isn't separate from the precepts, in fact you can only practice in this way if the precepts are maintained. Precepts are to keep or maintain our ordinary functions, to keep body and mind in order.

In day to day life if we violate the precepts — not to tell a lie, not to kill whatever then that affects your body and mind and causes obstacles. Of course, you can't sit in zazen with your back straight, just learning to settle within that, if you haven't kept the precepts! If you haven't kept the precepts then you can't sit. In zazen you may be very busy, your mind full of thoughts, thoughts coming and going but to be able to sit like that and to be able to settle in the midst of that means the precepts are being maintained or you are practicing the precepts. This meditation practice doesn't split, doesn't separate reality. To be able to sit like that you already have a kind of wisdom, a kind of insight, because you are overcoming all the difficulties that you have in your mind and without wisdom those difficulties cannot be overcome.

So to be able to sit this way with the back straight settling down is final, the final product, the complete form. Nowhere else to go. This is the way we settle down this is exactly the Buddha body although sometimes it doesn't look very fancy, it feels like I can't call this Buddha or something like that. We may feel very humble and modest but, actually, the exact

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mind and body we already have is the Buddha body. If you are able to practice then the exact mind and the thoughts you have are wisdom or at least the potential to be wisdom. If you are able to practice then the mind and the thoughts that you have naturally turn into wisdom and dualities drop naturally but it seems the obstacle is the seed of your awakening. Learn about your self, learn about your own ignorance, a person who learns about his own ignorance is one who is practicing enlightenment, knowing the self clearly, this is the path.

What I am pointing out is the kind of understanding that we need to have in meditation practice in Zen, especially in Dogen Zen. We don't need to try to shift or change anything that we have, actually this is impossible, we can not shift or change anything! What we need to do is learn to settle down with what we already have and whether this is a boon or a hindrance is up to you. Through this process of settling down we receive what we already have, fully. If this is received as a gift or if this is received as a hindrance is up to you. It's an indication of the depth of your practice when you can receive all these gifts without discrimination

When duality drops then your practice is naturally undefiled. Undefiled or purity in Buddhist terms means non dual. If you engage in dualistic practice, if you try to change yourself because you don't like this or you want to throw that away and get some thing else then that is dualistic practice, that is defiled practice. That kind of practice only leads into a karmic cycle — you never settle, you are just wandering all over — but if we learn to practice in undefiled ways from the beginning, in other words, to take everything as it comes and to settle there and through that process to learn about yourself and to illuminate that light that shines in yourself then the darker spots start to shine and become clearer and once things become clearer wisdom arises.

So, in other words, there is no wisdom if you don't have delusions or confusions. There's no light if there isn't darkness. There's no awakening if there isn't any darkness. From the darkness the whole world appears. We are fortunate to have this kind of practice because as an adult human we have developed deep ignorance and through clarifying this ignorance and learning about ourselves we have the opportunity to practice this process of awakening. This is what we mean by a spiritual path, a spiritual awakening.

So from the beginning practice should be based on this awakening, this process of awakening. Dogen Zenji calls this the practice of enlightenment so from the beginning you have to put your own feet in the shoes of the Buddha. It may be that in the beginning the shoes are too big, your feet seem so small and it's hard to feel if practice is going well or not going well or not but through this process through practicing the "practice of enlightenment" reality becomes defined.

*Transcribed and edited by Leesa Davis.  
Tapes of the complete teaching are available for loan  
to members at the Jikishoan Library.*

### **Zazen (Shikantaza)**

*In the stillness,*

*With presence of mind,*

*The self opens illuminating itself.*

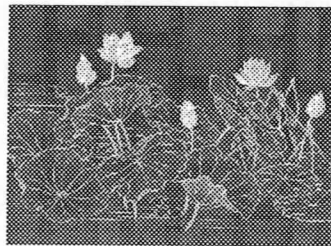
*In an ancient pond,*

*The white lotus blooms,*

*Releases and again fills up ...*

*An empty hand.*

*— Ekai Korematsu*



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# First Encounter

My first encounter with Zen meditation occurred in a small poolside building tucked into the corner of a Perth backyard. I'd been feeling the need for some time to choose one particular meditation practice to throw myself into. Zen seemed the obvious choice for me as my previous teacher had often spoken of Zen and even said 'Zen is the way' on more than one occasion. Also I'd long had an affinity with 'things Japanese'. So when it turned out that a friend of my (then) spouse was a long time Zen practitioner and that there was a Zen group that sat regularly nearby, well, it was all just a phone call away.

On that first night there was I think about 5 or 6 people sitting zazen in that tiny poolside building, together with a 'Creepy Crawly' and several piles of plastic cushions for the garden furniture. I don't remember very much about that first taste except that it was hot!, and the dok...dok...dok... of the neighbours tennis game pushing it's way through the thick and humid night air. One thing I do remember is coming out into the night after meditating for a couple of hours and being hit by the realisation that I was seeing the trees as they really were for the first time — not just seeing them with my eyes — but with my skin as well.

Not long after, the Zen group moved to another venue; a 2 bedroom house somewhere in North Perth, overlooking a small park with a community of ducks. Here there was room for a zendo, a library/office and a tin shed, painted blue, in the backyard that became a dokusan room. There was also a room in which a resident/caretaker could live. My memories of this place are much more vivid, probably because I spent more time there.

My initial approach to Zen was undoubtedly informed by my Martial Arts experiences, and so the first evening I sat with my spine so straight and taut that I'm surprised my head didn't pop off! My meditation was full of such quiet excitement, here now, actually doing 'zazen'. (It was also full of a lot of 'I'). We would sit for 25 minutes at a time, with 10 minutes of kinhin in between. After about 20 minutes my legs would become numb, so my usual plan was to figure out when zazen was just about to end and then position my legs so that the feeling would come trickling back — in time to stand and do kinhin.

Initially my practice consisted of counting my breaths, from one to ten, and then starting again. My experience of this was pretty normal in that at first I rarely got beyond 'twooooo' or 'threeee' before realising that I

was planning what I was going to make for dinner or what to say to the guy fixing my car. I continued with this practice for about 6—8 months, until my first retreat where I had the opportunity to meet a teacher and ask his guidance. The retreat was a 7 day 'Sesshin'. Seven days of rising at 4am, followed by 10—12 hours of zazen/kinhin, and meals eaten in the zendo with breakfast and lunch accompanied by chanting the meal sutras.

Although it was a 7 day retreat I found a couple of reasons (that seemed really good at the time) to only sign on for the first two days. Those two days turned out to be two days of hot, sweaty, painful hell! — and even though I had previously done a 10 day Vipassana retreat I found the Sesshin schedule pretty gruelling. Every part of my body alternately hurt or went numb. At mealtimes my knees felt like they were on fire! So much so that I remember thinking that they could just bring in the food raw and I'd cook it on my own little 'patella hot plate'.

During the zazen periods (38°C), the extremely tenacious W.A. flies seemed to find something of great interest in the corners of my eyes — and often returned for a snack. It's amazing really what you can do with the muscles of your face! One memorable fly performed amazing acrobatic loops and twirls, accelerating to maximum speed before flying straight up my left nostril. Now there's a Zen experience! Strangely, despite the hardship (or perhaps because of it) I was absolutely 'hooked'. And im m e n s e l y




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... One memorable fly performed amazing acrobatic loops and twirls, accelerating to maximum speed before flying straight up my left nostril. Now there's a Zen experience! ...

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grateful.

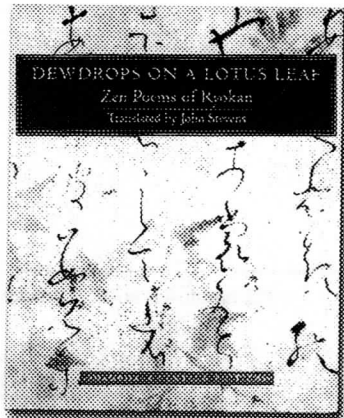
Now I can't even remember what my expectations were when I started Zen, but of course we're advised to let those go as soon and as much as possible. I remember when I first read of Zen masters admonishing their students, telling them to practice for another 10 or 20 years — I was shocked. How could I wait that long? Now as I sit and write this I can't help but reflect on how fortunate I was to have that first encounter, and to have this encounter. And perhaps to have another 10, 20 or 30 years of practice.

In gratitude,

gassho

Jinesh Doku Wilmot

# Book Review



**Dewdrops on a Lotus Leaf – Zen Poems of Ryokan**  
Translated by John Stevens

There have been a number of publications of Ryokan's works, but this small, beautiful edition seems particularly fitting for this poet/hermit who lived out the latter half of his life in a forest hut. The layout and colours, the explanatory notes, and the illustrations by Koshi no Sengei in particular, serve to enhance and extend what the poems so eloquently convey. The translator John Stevens includes an excellent short biography of Ryokan in the introduction to the book. This provides the reader with some vital context and background, which is very helpful in understanding the man and appreciating his life/work. One fact that touched me, and that I think gives an insight into this artist and Zen practitioner, is that though he composed thousands of poems he never held onto any of them. Everything was given as a gift to others. The poems were first collected and published in 1835, a few years after his death by his devoted companion late in life, the nun Teishin, and titled Hachisu no Tsuyu, which translates as 'Dewdrops on a Lotus Leaf'.

By Michael Colton



*Listen to the cicadas in the treetops near the waterfall;  
See how last night's rains have washed away all grime.  
Needless to say, my hut is as empty as can be,  
But I can offer you a window full of the most intoxicating air!*

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## Food for the Heart

*from Ekai Korematsu*

Let mind wander where it will — it's the nature of mind to wander — don't go with it — keep returning to the centre, the straight spine. That's zazen mind, zazen practice.

When you taste a food that is new to you, you don't first ask a lot of questions, 'What is this? How is it made? What does it taste like?' You just taste it, even just a little bit and then the questions come from experience. The question is then yours, born of your experience. Zen practice is like that, questions and understanding are born from experience.

Zen practice is a practice of no separation. If rain is falling outside it is also really falling in you, falling through you, there's no separation — in practice you feel this. This is not a concept — when we say non-duality it becomes a concept — what I am talking about is an experience. Zen is not about concepts, it is experience.

Shikantaza is openness, being totally open, all senses open. To concentrate is to close off, to only focus on one thing. To let go is a crude way of putting it, a crude level, because letting go implies trying, using the mind, you can't let go with the mind you have to let go with the body and mind. Mind alone can't do it, it just becomes another construct. Body engagement is necessary.

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JIKISHOAN 直証庵



*'Tung-shan crossing a river,' by Ma-yuan. It is said that Tung-shan, founder of the Soto school of Zen Buddhism, attained enlightenment when, crossing a river, he changed to see his own reflection in the water.<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>2</sup> *'Zen and Japanese Buddhism,' Daistetz Teitaro Suzuki, Japan Travel Bureau, Japan. p.45.*

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