

Spirituality and Health in Buddhist Traditions

Global Learning at Lunch #4, Spring 2021

Southeast Community College

Conversation between Dr. Courtney Bruntz, Associate Dean
and Joyce Yupin Chao (Gûo Chéng), Board Member at Lincoln Zen Center

Warm-up Music Playing at Beginning:

➤ **Mantra of the Medicine Buddha**

- Sanskrit – Bhaisajyaguru; Chinese -- 药师佛 Yào shī fó
- Buddha of Healing and Medicine in Mahayana Buddhism
- Described as a doctor who cures suffering
- Chanting Medicine Buddha's mantra is powerful for purifying negative karma and bringing about healing
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oikIw01nzL4>



Other Healing Traditions in Buddhism:

➤ **Tibetan Singing Bowls for Health and Healing:**

- Vibrations are believed to promote relaxation, eliminate toxins, and stimulate stress relief
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gbSeNYzYCiA>



Recent Research on Sound Healing – Solfeggio Frequencies

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333852911_Sound_Healing_using_Solfeggio_Frequencies

Tibetan Monks Creating Sand Mandalas for Peace and Wellness



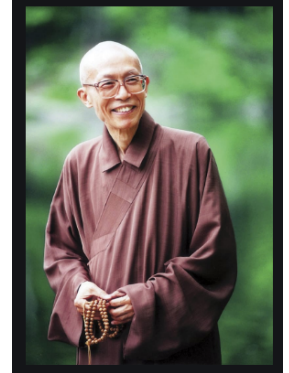
Encountering the Diverse Buddhist Communities in SE Nebraska

Buddhist Communities are greatly diverse in practices, beliefs, cultural traditions, languages, literature, leadership, and even architecture.



Joyce Chao (Gûo Chéng)

Joyce grew up in a Buddhist family in Taiwan and began studying Chan (Zen) with Master Sheng Yen in 1999. She is a Board Member at the Lincoln Zen Center.



Explaining Diversity of Buddhist Traditions

Shakyamuni Buddha (~6th - 5th c. BCE) – compared teachings to a raft:

- Teachings should take one from “shore” of suffering to “shore” of liberation
 - Once “river” is crossed and liberation is reached, the raft (Buddha’s teachings) should be abandoned.



Important Buddhist Teaching of “Upaya” = skillful means:

- An enlightened person can (and should) tailor messages and techniques for reaching liberation to the *specific audience* they are teaching.

➤ **Great Diversity in Buddhist Traditions**

Major “Branches” of Buddhism



Theravada – “Way of the Elders” – Uses Pali Language Texts – Practiced in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar (Burma), Cambodia, Laos

Mahayana – “Greater Vehicle” – Uses Pali *and* Sanskrit Language Texts – Practiced in China, Japan, S. Korea, Vietnam, Tibet, Taiwan, Mongolia

✚ **CHAN/ZEN is within Mahayana Buddhism**



Vajrayana – “Diamond Vehicle” – Uses Pali and Sanskrit Language Texts, *plus* Tantric Techniques (Tantra is a Genre of Literature regarding Esoteric Rituals) – Practiced in many Buddhist communities, but notably in Tibetan Buddhism

His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama, Leader of Tibetan Gelug Buddhist Community, Believed to be the Reincarnation of Former Dalai Lama, and the Bodhisattva of Compassion

Diversity of Buddhist Traditions in SE Nebraska

Lincoln

- Linh Quang Temple (Lincoln)
- An Lac Temple (Lincoln)
- Lincoln Zen Center
- Burmese Buddhist Temple (Lincoln)
- Jewel Heart Tibetan Buddhism (Lincoln)

Plattsmouth

- Wat Buddharama of Nebraska (Plattsmouth)

Omaha

- Quoc An Temple (Omaha)
- Karen Buddhist Society of Omaha
- Nebraska Zen Center (Omaha)
- Soka Gakkai International Center (Omaha)
- Honey Locust Sangha (Omaha)

Grand Island

- Budda Matta Phaaphayaram Lao Buddhist Temple (Grand Island)

Budda Matta Phaaphayaram Lao Buddhist Temple (Grand Island) -- Theravada



Laotian Buddhist Community in Grand Island, Nebraska – Former Church Turned into a Temple



Laotian Buddhist Temple in Wichita, KS – Architecture in Laotian Style

Linh Quang Vietnamese Buddhist Temple (Lincoln – near Denton) – Mahayana

Scenes from the Historical Buddha’s (Shakyamuni) enlightenment



Statue portraying the Future Buddha



7 Windows for the 7 Steps the Buddha took after birth



Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and “Dharma Protectors” (Guardian Kings)

Inside Buddha Hall during Dharma Service



White scarves – worn by mourning family members

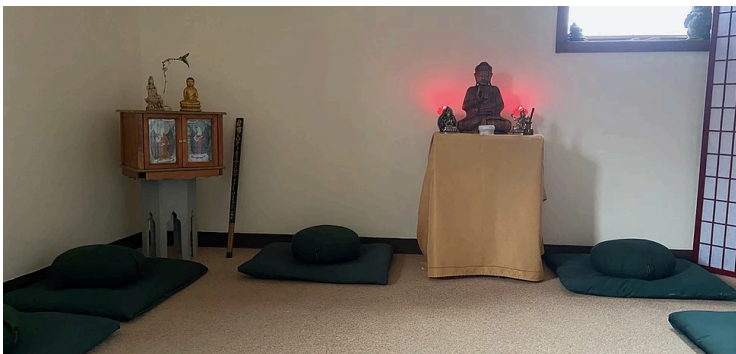
Blue-gray robes worn by many practitioners during services

ZEN BUDDHISM (also part of Mahayana)

- Began in China (5th c. CE) – “Chan”
 - In China, Chan/Zen blends with other schools/denominations



- Transmitted to Japan by 12th century; Zen in JAPAN became separate school/denomination of Buddhism
- Lincoln Zen Center practices in the tradition of **Soto Zen** (subset of Zen)

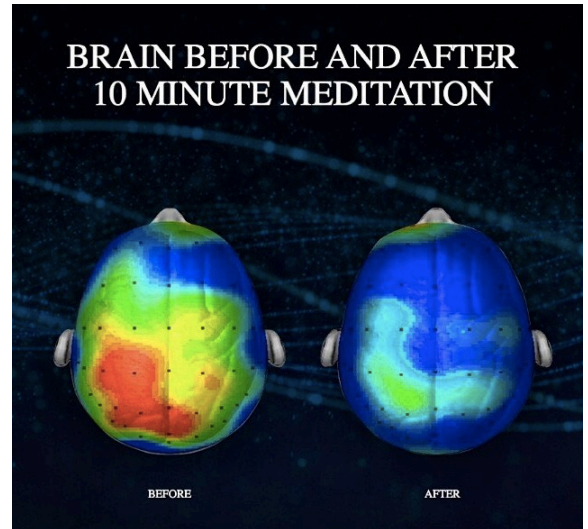
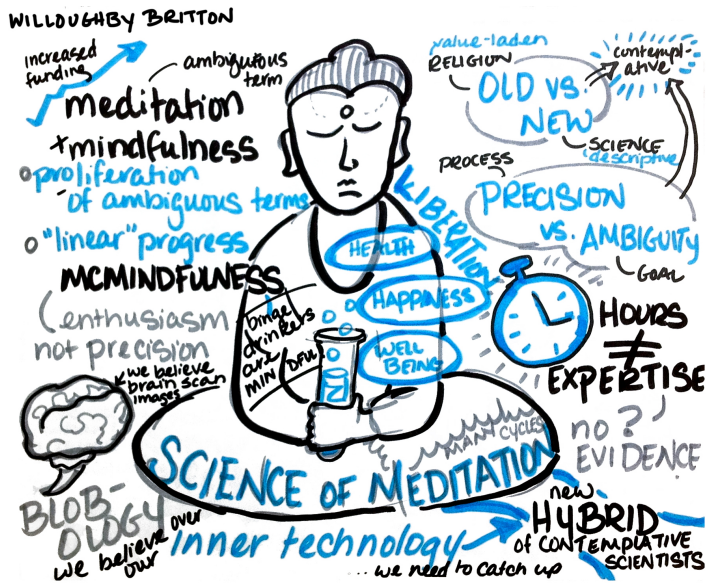


Heart of Zen is selfless meditation -- to be awake to one's universal condition, beyond the transiency and concerns of everyday affairs.

Soto Zen offers a quiet, disciplined practice that enables one to express their inherent wisdom by expanding awareness and setting aside distractions.

Soto Zen practice encourages paying attention to the workings of one's own mind and to the discovery of each person's potential for compassion and universal connection with all life.

Buddhist Traditions and the Intersection of Mental, Physical, and Spiritual Health

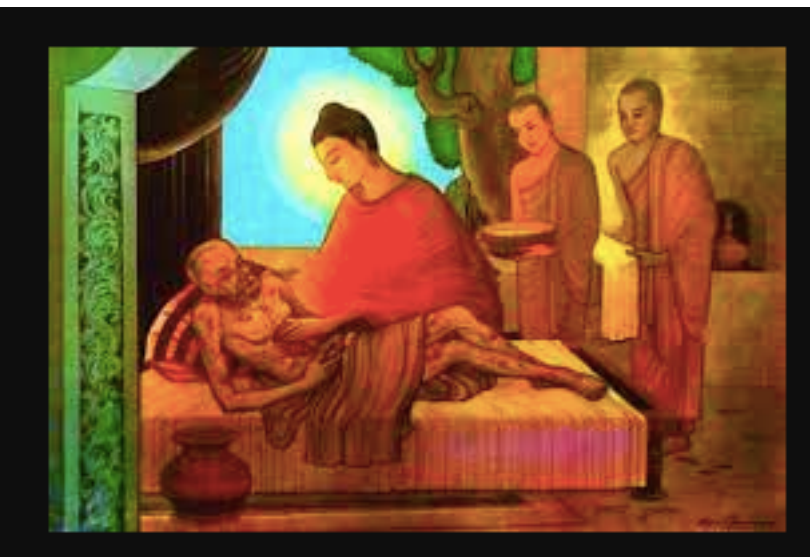
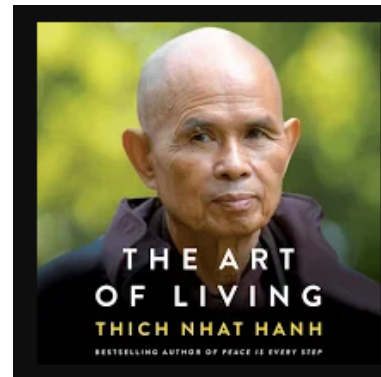


From Vietnamese Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh:

"Meditation is not meant to help us run away from difficulties. It is meant to allow positive healing to take place. To meditate is to learn how to stop being carried away by our regrets about the past, our anger or despair in the present, or our worries about the future.

Most of the time, our head is so full of thoughts that we have no space to listen to ourselves or anyone else.

Silence allows for deep listening and mindful response, the keys to full and honest communication."



In Buddhist texts, the Buddha is often likened to a doctor – suffering in physical and emotional pain stems from our mind states – our thoughts. Physical and Emotional pain are symptoms of the deeper “poison” of selfishness. Practice (meditation and compassion) and Wisdom (interconnectivity and impermanence) are part of the anecdote.

Issues Facing Asian American Buddhists Today – What To Know for Building Inclusivity

Healing and “Meditation” in Buddhist Traditions Looks and Feels Very Different, Depending on the Tradition

- **In Buddhist Communities, often “Meditation” is in the Form of Chanting:**
 - **Video: Healing Ritual in a Vietnamese Temple in Philadelphia:**
 - Annual Medicine Buddha Ceremony
 - <http://www.jivaka.net/philly-healing-rituals/>
 - **Video/Audio: Coronavirus Prayer from Tibetan Tradition:**
 - <https://www.jewelheart.org/daily-healing/>
 - **Story: Monks Chanting Daily for Protection from Coronavirus:**
 - <https://theconversation.com/how-do-buddhists-handle-coronavirus-the-answer-is-not-just-meditation-137966>
 - Also Discusses Role of Talismans, Prayer, and Ritual for Health, Healing, and Protection

Zen Meditation Resources:

- <https://www.lincolnzencenter.org/resources>

Important Account of Experiencing Life in America as an Asian Woman:

- https://www.cnn.com/2021/03/17/opinions/to-be-an-asian-woman-in-america-ho/index.html?fbclid=IwAR3P3g-t0eHWmuJFkHxMqZYNid20ZbpXDgyGd--SGUkt6LyetfpA_ut4cnE

Gathering Ceremony Opportunity to Honor Asian American Ancestors:

- National Buddhist Memorial Ceremony for Asian American Ancestors:
 - https://www.maywegather.org/livestream?fbclid=IwAR3bSLgj63qq6nztrEghzsMLVANuz-nz28DBVgIvLYmzIN-Du-JDV25tZ_Q
 - TUESDAY, MAY 4, 2021 AT 6 PM CDT – 7 PM CDT