

## ANCIENT DRAGON ZEN GATE Meditation Hall Etiquette

### ***Basic Zendo Forms – Harmonizing our Practice***

The ways we hold our hands, walk, enter, leave, prepare our seat, sit, or chant often take specific forms in the temple. As in our sitting meditation (*zazen*), these forms provide opportunities to free ourselves from discriminative thinking and relax our minds and bodies into simple awareness and attentiveness, moment to moment. Mistakes are natural and unavoidable. The point is really just our to support wholehearted effort and harmony. Just remain aware of what is going on around you, follow along, and please ask questions when opportunities arise. Everyone is happy to help.

#### ***Apparel***

- Wear comfortable, loose fitting clothing suitable for seated meditation. Clothes should be neat and clean.
- Please avoid perfume or strongly scented body products
- Clothes should preferably be dark colors, without dramatic patterns, colors, or logos.
- Jewelry and watches should be removed, except for those who need watches for zendo duties; cell phones should be left in vestibule and turned off.
- Socks and hats are discouraged, but can be used if needed for basic comfort or health reasons.
- legs and shoulders should be covered (i.e. no sleeveless shirts/dresses, shorts, etc.)

#### ***Decorum in the Zendo (meditation hall)***

#### ***Approaching your seat***

- Please maintain silence in the zendo, and keep voices low in ancillary spaces before and during *zazen*.
- Before most periods of *zazen*, there will be three rounds of roll downs on the *han*, at 15, 7, and finally 1 minute before. Please be at or head to your seat at the second roll-down. If you arrive after *zazen* has started, please wait with the greeter in the vestibule. You will be ushered in 10 minutes into the period.
- Upon entering the *zendo*, take one or two steps and bow from the waist with hands in *gassho*. This bow is to the *zendo*, not to the altar—no need to change positions or angle toward the altar. No bow is necessary when leaving the *zendo*.
- Please walk quietly and lightly in the *zendo*, at a moderate pace but with as little sound as possible. Avoid walking heavily on your heels, instead favoring your mid-step or the balls of your feet. Hands should typically be held in *shashu* when walking in the *zendo*.
- You are welcome to sit anywhere there is indicated as reserved.

After you find your seat:

- 1) arrange your cushion (including finding a support cushion if desired)
- 2) place your hands in *gassho* and bow to your seat
- 3) turn clockwise and bow toward the *zendo*.
- 4) Sit down on the cushion and turn yourself around (clockwise) to face the wall.

Three bells are rung by the *doan* to begin the *zazen* period.

To end the period, you will hear either one or two bells.

Two bells signals that it is time for *kinhin*.

One bell signals the end of the period and to just rise.

At the end of *zazen*, smooth, fluff, and brush off your cushions, placing your *zafu* toward the back of your *zabuton* (away from the wall), as you originally found it. If you need a few moments to stretch your legs before standing, please take your time.

When you stand up, bow to your cushion, then turn clockwise and hold your hands in *shashu*.

Once everyone is standing and facing the center, the *doshi* (or *ino* or *doan*, if no *doshi* is present) will initiate all bowing together.

### ***Once Seated – Bowing to others***

When seated and someone approaches empty cushions on either side of you, bow with them as they bow facing their cushion. This includes when someone may be more than one cushion over, but there is no one seated in between. Do not bow again when they bow to the *zendo* (*to the center of the room*). When facing out toward the *zendo altar*, bow in return when someone *directly across from you* bows to the *zendo*. Please note: you do not need to bow to any other person bowing to the *zendo*, except for the acting *doshi* or Dharma teacher present.

Always try to turn clockwise on your *zafu* or from your chair, except when conditions make this difficult.

### ***Service and Chanting***

Basically, bow when others bow during service; but again, do not bow for every single person arriving or bowing to the *zendo* - only with the *doshi*. At the beginning and end of service 3 *prostrations* are usually completed. Do not feel obligated to do prostrations if physically challenged, uncomfortable with the practice, or space doesn't allow. Standing bows are also fine any time.

When doing a prostration, you should gently lower yourself to your knees, place palms down, lower forehead to the floor and pelvis to heels. Then, turn palms upward and lift them up off the floor 3-4 inches, as if you were lifting something up; palms remain parallel to the floor, not tilting up or back. You may then return your hands to the floor and stand back up, or just rise up with hands in *gassho*. It is also OK to use your *zabuton* as a cushion during prostrations. Just move it out from the wall a few inches, and stand behind it.

Chanting of *sutras*, *dharanis* and texts is another method of bringing our meditative awareness into activity and engaging the tradition. Chant from your *hara* (*center*), allowing your voice to merge with other voices, neither too loud nor too soft. It is not necessary to chant at the same tone or pitch as the *kokyo*, but try to find a harmonious one.

### ***Kinhin (walking meditation)***

Typically, on a Sunday morning between *zazen* and the Dharma talk, on Thursday evenings between periods of *zazen*, or any other time there is more than one period of *zazen* (such as during *sesshin*),

we will practice kinhin between periods. Kinhin is a form of walking meditation. It is an opportunity to extend our zazen mind into activity and motion.

When you hear two bells ending the zazen period, get up from your seat and arrange your cushions, bow to your seat, then turn clockwise to face the zendo with hands in the shashu position. When everyone is facing the center, we will bow in gassho together; hands are returned to shashu. Walking is clockwise around the zendo. Space yourself so that there is a relatively equal amount of distance between you and persons in front and in back of you, evenly around the zendo. Hold your hands in shashu and keep your head facing forward, but with your eyes gazing downward slightly in front of you. We walk very slowly. Your pace should follow your breath. Shift your weight onto one foot; on the in-breath, slightly lift the unweighted foot and shift the weight  $\frac{1}{2}$  foot length forward; and on the out-breath place the foot down. During kinhin, it is all right to walk in front of the altar.

Kinhin typically lasts 10 minutes, and it is OK to use the washroom at this time (although it is not considered a break time): simply bow in shashu to excuse yourself from the line, and walk at a normal pace toward the back door of the zendo. When you return from the washroom, find a gap anyplace in the kinhin circle, bow in shashu once you are in the line, and resume kinhin. Adjust distances when people enter or leave accordingly. At the end of the period, the *doan* will hit the clappers once. At this time, everyone bows in shashu together and walks briskly until you reach your seat. When you are at your seat, face the center until everyone else has reached their own place, then bow together in gassho and move on to the next zendo activity.