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To: Adam Tebbe <adam@sweepingzen.com> , Kobutsu Malone

Re: A Letter From Shinge Roshi

Open letter concerning ZSS "Annual Ceremony for Introspection and Purification"

This week I read with interest Shinge Roko Chayat's, the second abbot of the Zen Studies Society (ZSS), proposal to begin this July an "Annual Ceremony for Introspection and Purification" (see:http://hoodiemonks.org/PDFs/20130613_Shinge_SelectedMailing.pdf). She proposes that at such a service the mistakes of the past, presumably around the handling of the Eido Shimano fiasco, can be owned up to and redressed.

It is well known that the founding Abbot of the ZSS, Eido Shimano Roshi, severely abused his position of power and authority over the course of decades. Most egregiously, sexualizing and abusing the most vulnerable and attractive female students under his care and instruction. It is also known that his actions have disrupted and divided the sangha several times during his tenure as abbot. At each major upheaval, the most progressive members of the ZSS board would either leave in disgust at the inaction of the entire board or be forced out. Thus leaving the most conservative members to march on to reestablish a viable, but fundamentally dysfunctional, practice community.

In the most recent upheaval, that began in June of 2010, when yet another student came forward to reveal that she was tired of keeping secret her illicit affair with Shimano, the first of the ZSS board members resigned when Roshi refused to take a leave of absence from teaching after admitting this clear ethical breach of well established policy. I was the last of five to resign in July of 2011.

When it was finally agreed by everyone, including Roshi, that he would no longer teach at ZSS, three days later the board received a proposal from Roshi, dated July 5th, 2011, that he be allowed to teach beginning students at NYC Shobo-Ji (ZSS City Zendo). The board quickly declined this request, but then the rest of the board argued that this letter be kept secret. I could not agree because the letter so clearly demonstrated the depth of his denial and narcissism; therefore, for this and other reasons, I resigned. Of course, once again, those who remained were the least progressive and most tolerant of Eido Shimano's antics. Shinge, who has admitted to being unexpectedly physically molested by him, was in my view the least progressive of those remaining. By the way, everyone should be aware that Eido Shimano continues to teach students in New York and internationally, just not under the auspices of ZSS.

Nevertheless, I like the idea of having an Annual Ceremony for Introspection and Purification, but in my mind it will have little effect or weight before certain essential steps are taken. The continued omission I see in Shinge's letter is the failure to adequately reach out to the many who feel directly harmed or alienated by Eido Shimano or the ZSS board, but are no longer directly associated or affiliated with the insular group that remains centered around her leadership. ZSS still has yet to offer an organizational apology, not adequately delineated all the abuses of power and authority by Eido Shimano, nor admitted any corporate failures or mistakes in addressing problems over decades. Moreover, the ZSS board has as yet not addressed the potential needs of those most directly harmed, nor invited any of those alienated from ZSS to participate or advise in the needed organizational restructuring of ZSS. In Zen organizations who have faced very similar problems, namely ZCLA and SFZC, all these steps have been addressed, or, in the case of Rinzaï-Ji, are scheduled to be addressed.

Shinge's letter is not a public invitation sent to various Buddhist publications and forums to announce a fuller investigation of the harm done or to bare witness to those harmed or alienated. This is what I see is sorely needed and is work that only barely got started in the first and only internal All Sangha Meeting held at Dai Bosatsu Monastery in the Catskills in August of 2011. It has been my long standing opinion, that a Witness Council of independent arbitrators needs to be formed. An initial meeting of this Council will need to be held on neutral ground in New York City, but will only be possible after a deep and genuine organizational apology is made. Furthermore, the Witness Council once formed will need to remain open to receive testimony for several years, as it may take some a considerable amount of time to trust the process.

I have corresponded to Shinge directly about my concerns, and I am very pleased to announce that she has told the ZSS Board to write an organizational apology. In addition, she tells me that she is in contact with an "excellent restorative justice facilitator" to set up a forum to start the Witness Council process. I feel awful that it has taken years to get to this point, but I am in full support of these necessary steps to redress harm and promote healing. If and when these crucial steps come to pass, I will lend whatever energies I can to the process.

With palms together,

Genjo Marinello

Sent from Genjo's iPad