

Carl Homstad 2014

## RYUMONJI ZEN MONASTERY

# *The Eight Awarenesses of Great People*

On the night of Shakyamuni Buddha's death, these "Eight Awarenesses" were the final teachings of the Gotama Shakyamuni. These principles are what are realized by great people. We observe the passing of Shakyamuni Buddha on February 15 each year. At that time, we review the Eight Awarenesses of Great People. You too can reflect upon them, and integrate them into your own lives.

### **Having few desires**

The Buddha said, "You should know that people with many desires seek to gain a lot, and therefore their afflictions are also many."

### **Being content**

The Buddha said, "Those who are content may sleep on the ground and still consider it comfortable; those who are not content would be dissatisfied even in heaven."

### **Enjoying quietude**

The Buddha said, "Those who wish quietude should not be pulled around by worldly ties and clinging which will sink you into a multitude of pains, like an old elephant sunk in the mud, unable to get out."

### **Diligence**

The Buddha said, "If you make diligent efforts, it is like even a small stream being able to pierce rock if it continually flows."

### **Right mindfulness**

The Buddha said, "You should concentrate your thoughts and keep mindful. It is like a shield to protect yourself, then one has nothing to fear."

### **Cultivating meditative concentration**

The Buddha said, "If you concentrate the mind, it will be in a state of stability and your mind will not be distracted."

### **Cultivating wisdom**

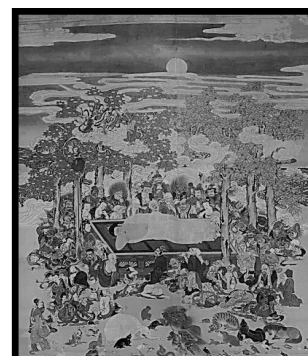
The Buddha said, "If you have wisdom, you will have no greedy attachment. True wisdom is like a secure ship to cross the sea of aging, sickness, and death."

### **Not engaging in vain talk**

The Buddha said, "If you indulge in vain talk, your mind will be disturbed. If you want to attain bliss of tranquility and dispassion, you should extinguish the affliction of vain talk."

This was the Buddha's ultimate discourse at midnight on the fifteenth day of the second month. After this teaching, he didn't preach anymore and finally became utterly extinct. The Buddha said, "You always should single-mindedly seek the path of emancipation. All things in the world, mobile and immobile, are unstable forms which disintegrate. Stop now and don't talk anymore. The time is about past, and I am going to cross over into extinction. This is my last instruction."

The photo here is a traditional scroll of the Buddha's Pari-Nirvana. Zen Master Dogen said, "These awarenesses are the Buddha's Treasury of the Eye of True Teaching (Jap. Shobogenzo), the Sublime Heart of Nirvana. We should learn and practice these teachings life after life, and should explain them to people the same as Shakyamuni Buddha.



Rev. Shoken Winecoff, Abbot of Ryumonji Zen Monastery

## 2021 Virtual Spring Fling

It was approximately a year ago, in the Spring of 2020, that Ryumonji made the decision to suspend all in-person activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. At that time, Ryumonji was preparing to present its first Spring Fling, a repackaging of the traditional Winter Gala dinner and silent auction event. The hope was that moving this major event to later in the year would reduce some of the challenges often presented by inclement weather. Unfortunately, this was not to be in 2020 or in 2021, as the pandemic continues to make it unsafe to gather in person.

Following the success of last Fall's Virtual Taste of Ryumonji, Rev. Kalen McAllister of Laughing Bear Bakery in St. Louis is again offering a virtual event to celebrate the arrival of Spring. More information about Laughing Bear Bakery can be found at: [laughingbearbakery.org](http://laughingbearbakery.org).

Kalen has offered to provide a 3 pound box of Laughing Bear cookies and other treats to anyone who makes a donation of \$100 to the Virtual Spring Fling event. These treats will be delivered directly to your door.

There are several ways to donate. Ryumonji accepts Paypal donations on its website. If you make a Paypal donation, please follow up with an e-mail to: [office@ryumonji.org](mailto:office@ryumonji.org) to provide your name and mailing address for shipping of the Laughing Bear gift. Or you can complete the form below and mail it along with your check to: Ryumonji Zen Monastery, 2452 Ryumon Rd., Dorchester, IA 52140.

Thank you!



**I wish to participate in Ryumonji's 2021 Virtual Spring Fling. Enclosed is my \$100 donation. I am looking forward to receiving my gift of Laughing Bear Bakery products. Please send my gift to:**

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Please note: Ryumonji is a 501(c)3 tax exempt organization. Receipt of any goods or services in return for a donation reduces the amount of the donation by the dollar value of goods or services received. In this case, the value of your gift from Laughing Bear Bakery described above will change the value of your Ryumonji donation to \$60.



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# Ryumonji Happenings . . .

The winter of 2020-2021 has been a quiet one at Ryumonji. Abbot Shoken Winecoff is in residence, along with Vice-Abbot Eido Espe. With the help of some local volunteers, they are maintaining the practice schedule and caring for the monastery buildings and grounds.

All public activities at Ryumonji are still suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. When it is deemed safe to do so in compliance with CDC guidance, the regular monthly sesshin schedule will resume, along with Ryumonji's schedule of Ango practice periods and special events. Hopefully, that time is not far away.

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Although Ryumonji is closed to the public, an active schedule of virtual practice opportunities is available. Ryumonji currently offers Thursday evening and Sunday morning public sitting over Zoom, as well as a monthly one-half day sesshin on the third Saturday of every month. The links to all these events can be found on Ryumonji's web page (<https://www.ryumonji.org/virtual-practice/>).

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As we move toward spring and warmer weather, we are looking forward to resuming outdoor activities. Ryumonji depends on its volunteers to help with a variety of necessary tasks such as mowing, weeding, gardening and forestry work. If you are interested in volunteering for Ryumonji, please e-mail [volunteer@ryumonji.org](mailto:volunteer@ryumonji.org). All COVID-19 protocols will be observed. Volunteers are asked to avoid Ryumonji if they are experiencing any symptoms of illness. Since Ryumonji is closed to the public, no overnight accommodations are available.

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*Passing Through the Dragon Gate*, Rev. Shoken Winecoff's book of essays from past issues of Ryumonji's newsletter, is now available for purchase. You can use the order form on the back page of this issue. If you prefer, you can make your payment using Paypal and send an e-mail to [office@ryumonji.org](mailto:office@ryumonji.org) with your request, including name, address, and the number of books you would like.

**RYUMONJI ZEN  
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