

DHARMA EYE



法眼

News of Soto Zen Buddhism: Teachings and Practice

On Being Appointed Director of the Soto Zen Buddhism Europe Office

Rev. Genshu Imamura,
Director of the Soto Zen Buddhism Europe Office



On August 21, 2004, Rev. Sekkei Harada resigned for personal reasons as Director of the Soto Zen Buddhism Europe Office and I was then appointed to succeed him. It is my deep wish that, in the same way as the former Director, I can make efforts for the benefit of the temples and dojos located throughout the various countries of Europe as well as support the activities of the Kokusai Fukyoshi, Dendokyoshi, and Dendoshi priests. At the same time, I hope to work toward developing a link with the other three Directors of the Soto Zen Offices so there can be an improvement in communication between them. It is my hope that I will receive positive input through opinions and suggestions of other people so that I can be a good staff member of the Soto Zen School. In this way, I would like to join hands with others in their activities such that it can be mutually harmonious and cooperative, and so that the Soto Zen School can continue to develop as a community.

Although it is more than twenty years since the death of the first Director, Rev. Taisen Deshimaru, it can be said that the great influence of his teaching remains mainly in the activities of his numerous disciples throughout Europe. On the other hand, there will be an increase from now on of a new generation of teachers who have practiced in Japanese Zen monasteries. Together, these two groups will acknowledge the experience that each group has attained as well as the dignity of each other's understanding. They will compare and criticize each other, but they will not repeat the mistakes that their predecessors made from time to time. They will reflect on and illuminate their lives and practice only in the spirit of Dogen Zenji and Keizan Zenji. In this way, I think it will be possible that we can proceed with cooperation and a positive tension so that

their practice can further deepen.

Another point is that when I see the earnest activity of the various Kokusai Fukyoshi, Dendokyoshi, and Dendoshi priests in their respective countries, I must convey their opinions and wishes as I am the representative of the Soto Zen school in Europe. This is true of various issues within the Soto school including the pros and cons of the differences, in terms of priest's registration and qualifications, between Japanese priests and non-Japanese priests. This is my job and I feel I must be able to convey their ideas on these matters. With regard to these issues, there are various historical and organizational factors within the Soto School and these cannot be changed overnight, of course. However, I am aware that change takes place on a global scale faster than we can imagine and I do think the time has come to respond quickly. We must work to establish a fair and equal system. I am certain that this will bring about reciprocal contributions in the development of the future Soto Zen School in terms of teaching, study, and proselytization. This is something, of course, that I cannot work on alone. It will require the awareness, harmony, and cooperation of all the countries, regions, and teachers so that the combined voices work to open the door of the Soto School.

There are many viewpoints and opinions within the Soto Zen School concerning the standpoints and current condition of the Kokusai Fukyoshi in Europe. Among them, I think there are some people who have negative opinions. However, if these opinions are based on misunderstandings and biases, then this must be my personal responsibility as I take responsibility for Kokusai

Fukyoshi in Europe. It is not a responsibility to be attributed to our friends in Europe who believe in the zazen practice of the Soto Zen School and who believe and practice the teachings of both Dogen Zenji and Keizan Zenji. (Perhaps it would be more correct to say that they have not been given authority or a sense of duty by the

Soto School).

I am ready to fulfill the responsibility that I have been given on this occasion and will use your good advice for my sustenance. Please excuse any presumptuousness on my part.



Celebrating 100 Years of Soto Zen Buddhism in South America

By Rev. Dokyu Lesniewier,
Soto Zen priest at Anrakuji, Templo Serena Alegria in Buenos Aires, Argentina

Some days after I received the invitation to participate in the 100th anniversary of Soto Zen teaching activities in Peru, I mentioned it to the people I practice zazen with every week. One week later, one of them came to me and said that he had found a website with a reference to Jionji. That same night, after the zazenkai, I came home and straight away switched on the computer and searched for that website. Right away, I found it and there it was an article written by Mr. Hirohito Ota entitled: “First Buddhist Missionaries in Peru: 100 Years of an Unknown History.”

While reading the article, I remembered something I had read in the *Shobogenzo Zuimonki* where Zen Master Dogen said, “At present I am appealing for donations and working as much as possible to construct a *sodo* (Zen monastery). Still, I do not think that this necessarily contributes to the flourishing of the Buddha-dharma.... Moreover, I am working on this for the sake of founding a place for zazen practice for people studying the Way in this age. I will have no regrets even though what I have wished for and begun might not be realized. I do not mind if but one single pillar is erected, as long as people in later generations think that someone had the aspiration to carry out such a project, even though it went uncompleted.”

The program for the celebrations in Peru began with a sesshin from August 24th to 27th. On the following days, the 28th and 29th, different ceremonies were held in Lima and Cañete in connection with Jionji temple and the Japanese community to celebrate 100 years of Soto Zen Buddhism in Peru. When the time came, I flew from Buenos Aires and after arriving in Lima, went directly to the hotel where other Soto Zen priests would stay during the event. By chance on the afternoon of this day, I met

Nestor Castilla, a Peruvian Zen practitioner who collaborated in the organization of these ceremonies. In the best Latin style, as if we had known each for a long time, we spoke about Zen in Peru, some from him, some from me, and some more about the 100th anniversary. I helped him to carry some things to a room on the 5th floor where I met Rev. Furutani and Rev. Nambara, with whom I had made contact through e-mail before coming to Peru. There were the first Japanese words, drinking green tea, and a meeting with some of the senior monks who we practiced together with at Eihei-ji. Soon, there was the feeling that something familiar was starting. Then I went back to my room to finish a speech called “Religion and World Peace” that I would give for a conference to be held on August 28th at the Peruvian –Japanese Association, participating in this talk together with the Catholic priest, Father Hubert Lanssiers.

Early on the morning of August 24th, we departed from the hotel for Pachacamac, 25 km away from Lima, to start the sesshin. Pachacamac is a place for retreats and groups activities, surrounded by a big garden and many trees. It is a very green and quiet place, a good environment to approach the practice of zazen with both beginners and veteran practitioners. Half of them were Peruvians and the rest of us were non-Japanese monks from Brazil, North America and Argentina who had trained in Japan. A curious thing is that we all spoke Japanese as our common language.

Then, the celebration in Lima started on the 28th at the cultural center of the Peruvian-Japanese Association. A few days earlier, the same saloon that was empty was ready to receive 200 guests and on the stage, an altar was set up in the most excellent ceremonial style. On this day, I had the duty of translating the speeches during the ceremony

from Japanese into Spanish. It was very exciting for me to do this kind of new experience. By the time the toast was given at the ceremonial dinner, I felt quieter and so did the faces of the other fellow monks.

However, we still had one more day in Cañete city, 70 km. away from Lima. So, the next day, we departed early in the morning to prepare for the ceremony at Jionji temple. In all 400 people attended, including a delegation of Japanese descendants from all around Lima who came to give their respects to the founder of the temple and their ancestors. I was very impressed by the work in the kitchen. I could feel the energy of all the women who were doing their best in this simple kitchen to prepare for the banquet. Even though there was a problem with a tank of gas, which forced a change to be made in the program, in the end we all ate tastefully prepared food from Cañete. Mochi (pounded rice cake) was also included in the menu. This

meal was the conclusion of all the festivities.

After my return to Buenos Aires, I shared this experience with the people I practice zazen with every week. I read the paragraph of the *Zuimonki* mentioned above, observing that even if a single pillar is erected or not, we continue sitting the same zazen that has been transmitted by all the Buddhas and Patriarchs till the present day, something that is beyond all words, countries, or traditions. In South America, this Dharma is really making its first steps. Also, a new generation of monks is following the path of our ancestors wholeheartedly continuing with this practice of zazen. So, even if we will not see the result, the seeds of Dharma are already spreading in these lands. I hope that in the future others will get together to celebrate the 100th anniversary in a similar way that happened these days in Peru.



Sesshin in Peru

By Zully Garcia

Our sesshin took place from August 24th to 27th at Casa Atinchik in Pachacamac, 25 kilometers south of Lima. This house is located in a nice green area with trees, plants, flowers and a natural landscape that invites reflection and integration with nature.

This was my first sesshin experience and I felt very lucky to participate in it, although I didn't know exactly how it would be. I felt a bit nervous at the beginning when I met the group with their dark-colored robes and peaceful faces. I wondered if I was going to do everything correct during zazen. After I talked with some of the monks and participants, I realized that my worries were quite unnecessary and that we were all there to learn together. During lunch and dinner we had the chance to know each other and talked about ourselves and our experiences with Zen, personally I wanted to know more about their way of living.

Something that impressed me was the Samu (work) hour. When I found Rev. Miyoshi cleaning the garden paths, he had changed his clothes and was wearing some kind of towel on his head. Also Rev. Miyakawa and the

entire group were participating in this activity; this gave us a lesson of humility.

We had fun trying to play Baika (a form of chanting accompanied with bells) and with Rev. Miyakawa; he was really patient and had a great sense of humor teaching us how to do it correctly. His lectures also gave us a better view about Zazen and our expectations about it. After them I felt motivated to reflect about his talks and read more about Zen.

Following the sesshin, there was a ceremony marking the 100th year of the Soto Zen Buddhism mission in Peru. At that time, we were invited to play Baika in front of the public. We were not expecting this, and had to practice a little before the event and even though we were nervous, we did our best. The ceremony with the candles, when they turned the lights off, impressed me also a lot. I could feel that the participants were glad to remember their ancestors in that moment, it was a spiritual moment.

After the sesshin, I had the need to be by myself so I could think about what we had heard and experienced. I decided to continue more seriously practicing zazen. It has helping me to improve my relationships with people, to have compassion, to know more about myself, and I feel it is a continuous learning. After the sesshin experience, our sangha kept together and we are trying to share what we learned with more people. We hope that in the future we can receive a monk here in Lima to fortify the group.



Reflections on the 2004 Dendokyoshi Kenshusho at Zuioji

By Rev. Kairyû Thomas Quitschau
Head Administrator of the German Zen Association

When I recall the period of the Dendokyoshi Kenshusho at Zuioji Monastery (located in Ehime, Japan), I feel deep gratitude for my master L. Tenryû, who enabled me after long and intensive Zen education to go to an authentic place of traditional Zen practice. Gratitude also for our Sangha, without its financial support, the Japan trip would not have been possible. Gratitude also for Tsugen Narasaki-Rôshi and the Zuioji Monastery for the cordial and friendly reception we received as foreign guests. Gratitude for the Sotoshu Shumucho that organized the entire training period with very big expenditure of service and staff and offered a great deal of support to everyone. And to point out above all, the effort of the Shumucho staff members who tried to impart to us, during the 31 days of the Kenshusho, as much as possible of Zen monastic practice. Gratitude for the many Rôshis, some of whom traveled from far in order to give Teishô (lectures) especially for us about many different fundamental topics of our practice. And last but not least, gratitude to the Eiheiji and Sojiji Monasteries, where we were received and put up very kindly.

Since the beginning of my practice, I have always been interested in the traditional Zen way. On the one hand, a strong and stable Sangha developed with us in Germany under the direction of master L. Tenryû, and on the other hand, it has been extremely difficult, in our life rhythm, (at the same time working and practicing Zen) to create the condition for a traditional monastic practice. So, we have concentrated on the essence: Zazen, Service with the most important Sûtras, Ôryoki, Samu, instruction etc. All of this must be coordinated suitably to our life situation, because all disciples must carry out their work, through which they earn their money and practice the Zen way simultaneously. This situation often leads to difficult time and money problems.

So, at the beginning of Kenshusho, it was not so easy for me to be "thrown in" at once into the monastic practice having come directly from the stress of everyday work and then having immediately to follow the program, although very many details were unfamiliar for me. Especially at the beginning, it turned out to be very difficult for me, to follow the typically "Japanese" instruction practice without preparation. It took some time

before I could follow the directions, to do them very quickly, directly and flexibly.

Of course, I had already visited Japanese Zen monasteries earlier and practiced partially also in them, but that was in each case only for a short time. The situation was quite different at Zuioji. I detected immediately on entering the monastery that it was an authentic place of traditional Zen practice. All things were at their original place. The spirit of our predecessors was present. The many centuries of Zen practice of the Buddhas and patriarchs was obvious. There appeared a deep feeling of having arrived at home. Directly and quite practically, I could recognize the origins of the monastic practice and could find out this out through my own practice, together with the other monks.

The Sodo left an especially deep impression. I enjoyed the possibility to sit here together with the other monks in Zazen, to do Services and to eat with the Oryoki and all the other monastery activities. This impression still continues to have an effect at home, so that my long intended wish to build a Sodo in Germany at our own Zen center Jakkôji was reinforced. Unfortunately, we lack the means to do this now, and the redevelopment of the existing buildings is still not completed. However, I hope very much that in future it will be possible at Jakkôji to experience Sodo practice.

Another memorable impression was the cordial and open manner in which the whole Daishû (monks in training) of Zuioji encouraged us and let us participate in their everyday monastic life. I personally would have wished that Tsugen Narasaki Rôshi would not have been so preoccupied with the natural catastrophes (typhoon rains had caused mudslides on the mountain behind the monastery and consequently looking after the reparations took up much of Rôshi's time) as I was very deeply touched by his kind and sympathetic charisma. Also the eagerness and the patience of the Shumucho staff were admirable, above all Daigaku-san who, supplying us the whole time with good comprehensible translations, taught us the many details of monastic practice.

Since time was restricted and the staff of course tried to put as much instruction as possible into the Kenshusho

period, it was sometimes inevitable that stress would arise. Despite some difficulties, however, we could handle all trouble, after we had once adapted to this. A big help in this respect was also the very good relationship of the Kenshūsei (the participants) among each other. This was influenced from openness, mutual respect, humor and interest in the practice of the others. Concerning the Teishō, in my opinion the program was sometimes too long, so that finally I couldn't listen to all of the subjects.

We all especially enjoyed the occasional trips with the Shumucho and some of the Zuioji monks to the hot springs, going on Takuhatsu, or for sightseeing. Also, the small farewell celebration on the eve of our departure especially touched me when the monks reflected their impressions of us.

Now that I am home again, I very often think about this time. The interest of the German Sangha in our Japanese experience is very big. Meanwhile, I have informed a lot of friends through many photos of our Dendokyoshi Kenshusho in Zuioji and the Haito

ceremonies in Eiheiji and Sojiji.

After all, there are only a few things that we can use concretely in our current practice. The essential point however impressed me very deeply. It is the taste of the authentic practice of the Buddhas and patriarchs, the manner of the traditional way. It is the realization that we still can learn very much from Japan, and that mutual exchange is meaningful and necessary.

It is a very good feeling that we could create personal relationships. I believe, whenever we require help or want to visit, for example, a monastery or something like that, we can turn to our new friends. Also, we will try to deepen the new connection to the other Dendokyoshi.

So I can finally say that the time of the Dendokyoshi Kenshusho inspired, enriched and fertilized my own practice. Here and now, however, we must devote ourselves with all our might to what is currently possible: Zazen. In connection with the immovable Zazen posture, the wish arose to deepen the traditional way and to transmit it.



Impressions of the 2004 Dendokyoshi Kenshusho

Rev. Honshu Meiya Wender
Green Gulch Farm, Muir Beach, California, U.S.A.

The Dendokyoshi Kenshusho had a definite, formal beginning and ending, but my experience of it extends in all directions as a miraculous offering, a great gift of Zen practice and training.

The invitation to attend the Kenshusho arrived toward the end of my two year term as tanto at Tassajara. Although I had done monastic practice for close to 10 years, and in a communal setting at Green Gulch for many more, I had never entered the discipline of Japanese monastic practice. Our own monastic forms at Zen Center are based on Eiheiji's, and I have spent many years learning them, practicing them, and teaching them to others. I had long wanted to know more about their Japanese roots, to see more clearly what parts are essential and get a better sense of how to best adapt them for our own circumstances and culture. The monastic practice at Zuioji, with its emphasis on traditional forms as taught by Dogen Zenji, was an excellent opportunity for this study.

Just following the daily monastic schedule was deeply satisfying. It was all very familiar to me, and yet there were elements that were different – stricter or more complex. For example, neither Tassajara nor Green Gulch has a hatto – a Buddha Hall. We sit zazen and then immediately have choka – morning service – in the same hall. I would guess that the Japanese monks don't think about this – they take it for granted that after zazen they get up, wait for the proper bells, and then go together to the hatto, entering during the third round of the bell. For me, entering and participating in services in the hatto was a surprisingly powerful experience. Perhaps the very complexity of the forms, the architecture of the sodo and hatto, and the large altars, demands and allows for greater intimacy and attention. These are questions that I want to continue to examine.

Being a senior “brown-robe monk” and simultaneously a beginner who didn't know all the most basic monastic rules wasn't always easy. Getting onto the tan properly for

zazen, crossing my legs right away, placing my slippers neatly under the tan and then turning around while keeping my robes even slightly neat, was a daily challenge. I thought I knew how to be *jisha* and *jiko*, but found I had a lot to learn from even the junior *Zuioji* monks, who moved with grace, speed and precision. Just when I thought I had mastered wearing the *okesa*, someone would point out to me that the fold wasn't exactly in the right place, or perhaps my *mudra* was crooked.

This kind of detailed instruction - how to bow, how to hold a *kotsu*, the *Eiheiji* and *Sojiji* style of wearing *okesa*, how to be *doshi* - was very helpful.

I am especially interested in *okesa* sewing, *chanoyu*, and *baika*, and was very happy for the opportunity to attend classes with the monks. It was also wonderful to participate in the annual *Bodhidharma* ceremonies, as well as do *takuhatsu*.

An unexpected benefit of the *Kenshusho* was practicing intimately with the other 'kenshusei' (participants in the *Kenshusho*). We came from different lineages and different practice situations, yet sometimes I felt that the eight of us moved through the day as one body. I appreciated our discussions about how *Soto Zen* is being practiced and transmitted in France, Germany, Switzerland, and other parts of the United States.

Throughout the *Kenshusho*, the question of how our experiences would inform our practice after returning home was always present. This will only be answered over time, but I offer a few experiences which occurred soon after:

I go with a friend, to visit a *Soto Zen* temple near Mt. Fuji. They are having an annual festival and my friend plans to offer tea in their teahouse. As we arrive, services are about to begin; I hurry off to put on my robes. Entering the hall, I see chests of *Maha Prajna Paramita* sutras and know that this means that this is a *Sojiji* lineage temple and they are going to revolve the sutras. I have done this exactly one time before - early that very morning at *Sojiji*. There are many visiting priests in the *daima*, and one empty place - right in the center - and they all motion me toward it. I nervously remind myself - "I am now a trained priest" - and join in.

The next morning, the *jushoku* says that he will be doing two memorial services. He asks me to be *doshi*, while he does the more complicated positions of *kokyo* and *doan*. Again, reminding myself of my *Kenshusho* training - "*Sojiji* style, keep *kotsu* upright," - I manage to

do it. Later, the clouds part for a short time and I see Mt. Fuji for the first time.

Aoyama Shundo Roshi graciously invites me to accompany her from the *nisodo* in Nagoya to her home temple, *Muryoji*. As she is a teacher of both *Zen* and *chanoyu*, (as I am also), I have long wanted to meet her. The next morning I join the two resident nuns at *choka*. The forms and liturgy are familiar to me from *Zuioji*, and I (mostly) know what to do. The nuns seem delighted at having an additional voice.

Later, I talk with them about appropriate clothing for *chanoyu*. They look at the *kimono* I have been wearing and exclaim, "This is a man's *kimono*!" I hadn't really thought about this before; the *kimono* was simply what was available, ready-made at a *Butsugu-ten*. Later I wonder about this - not about whether it is ok that my *kimono* sleeves are not women's style, but about the implications of the fact that the *Butsugu-ten*, supplier to major *Soto Zen* temples, apparently does not carry nun's clothing. I wonder: How many nuns are there in Japan? Are there more *Soto* nuns in the West than in Japan? More women in monastic practice in the West? More young women entering *Zen* practice?

Having returned to *Green Gulch*, I talk at a priests' meeting about my experiences at the *Kenshusho* and some of the forms I learned. Some of our *Zen Center* forms vary slightly from the usual *Soto Zen* style, and we discuss the possibility of changing them.

I found the *kenshusho* to be a valuable and unique opportunity to experience traditional *Soto Zen* monastic tradition and practice. The basic format worked well. In future programs, I think increased participation with the Japanese monks, such as joining them for *soji*, would be good. This year we were very fortunate in that there were two Western monks from *Shogoji* who spoke both English and Japanese and helped provide an interface between us and the Japanese monks.

A topic I would have liked to learn more about is the basic structure of the monastic system and the functioning of the '*yakuryo*' - the monastic officers. Another is the role of women practitioners - their training and practice. Perhaps a woman teacher could be invited as one of the guest lecturers.

I am extremely grateful to *Tsugen Narasaki Roshi* and the *Zuioji* monks for hosting us at *Zuioji*, as well as

Daigaku Rumme, Ikki Nambara, Risai Furutani, and the other Sotoshu staff who so kindly and patiently provided excellent instruction. I was grateful for Zuioji's flexibility in meeting our needs and was impressed by their ability to embrace us within their monastic practice. May we continue to practice together.

My Zazen Notebook (14)

Rev. Issho Fujita
Pioneer Valley Zendo

Fragmentary Thought XXIII "Zazen and Knowing"

Within each of us is the strong urge to pursue comfortable sensations, emotional contentment, and intellectual understanding as far as these can be pursued. In other words, an essential human habit is the compulsive desire for possessing all pleasant things as the objects and contents of conscious experiences (as physical sensations and intellectual understanding). This is something that drives us from deep inside ourselves. It can even be said that for human beings, living with consciousness, what can be known as the content of consciousness is everything. ("What-is-known-is-everything-ism").

However, if we open the writings of Dogen Zenji (e.g. *Shobogenzo Genjo-Koan*), we often find statements such as "there is clearly a limit to our knowing. It isn't possible to grasp the limitless enlightenment of the Buddha by means of our limited knowing." Consequently, realization or satori should not be verified by something that can be known as experience. In *Bendowa*, Dogen Zenji states, "If perceptions and understanding (=knowing) are mixed in, then it is not the mark of verification." In Dogen Zenji's teaching of zazen, we see that it transcends the knowing, while embracing it within, and that it is absolutely impossible to become the object of knowing. So it can be called "a state of beyond knowing." (In this case, "beyond" is used in the same sense as in "beyond-thinking", *hishiryō*).

In most other meditation practices, the issues involved take place within the sphere of knowing and from beginning to end, these methods focus on this sphere. In short, the core of the practice is concerned with the regulation and control of conditions in the sphere of knowing. In that sense, they are built on "what-is-known-

is-everything-ism" and we can see that there is no interest in a dimension of beyond-knowing. With regard to this, zazen doesn't ignore the value of knowing, but the main emphasis is put on beyond-knowing which transcends knowing and makes knowing possible. It is precisely for this reason that no matter what happens within the sphere of knowing, it is all right not to deal with such things with your own thoughts and simply entrust yourself to their appearance and disappearance by simply noticing them. In zazen, it is enough to know that such things appear naturally moment to moment within the sphere of knowing. It is not to have the intention of trying to produce some special condition. For us, we do our best to use the ability to know (and that is all there is), however, the totality of zazen is beyond-knowing which transcends knowing. It is necessary then that we keep this in mind in order to practice zazen as beyond-knowing. We mustn't lose sight of this "beyond-knowing-ness" of zazen by being overtaken by our habit of "what-is-known-is-everything-ism."

For example, I have written in previous articles of a subtle "feeling of Oneness" or minute "movements" within zazen. Usually, it would be difficult to experience these sensations that are in one sense pleasant. As our zazen deepens, our perceptive power becomes sharper and so from time to time, we experience strange sensations that transcend the threshold of ordinary sensations coming in through the five sense functions. It is only natural then that some people take a liking to such sensations and end up placing far too much emphasis on them by only being concerned by such feelings. Surely, there are some people who single-mindedly make efforts to head for an experience of satori that is based on their own imagination, which again is based on a common (mis)understanding that "Zen is to attain a mysterious insight of satori by means of zazen."

Surely, such people think they are earnestly seeking something lofty (=seeking the Way), but ultimately, this is nothing more than the manifestation of ordinary, deluded mind that frantically wants to possess certain sensations, emotions, and understanding within the sphere of their own knowing. You can get an idea of this frame of mind if you think of someone who wants to indulge in a feeling of joy by putting something of great value into his/her secret box.

Even though knowing is definitely one part of zazen, it isn't all of zazen. This means that no matter how much we investigate into knowing, that by itself would not be

enough to cover all of zazen. The whole of zazen is expressed in Dogen Zenji's *Fukan-zazengi* as "an activity beyond human hearing and seeing, a principle prior to human knowledge and perception." I would like to continue my investigation of zazen based on this teaching. In zazen, the sense functions of seeing, hearing, and smelling are left completely open to the outside world and so it is only natural that things are reflected in the eyes, sounds in the ears, and odors in the nose. Moreover, various physical sensations are felt throughout the body and there is the experience of all kinds of thoughts and emotions appearing and disappearing. Our knowing is made up of these raw materials that are brought in through the six sense functions (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and thinking). (When I use the word "knowing", I am not referring to individual pieces of the raw materials, but rather to a coherent whole that is comprised of such sensations as an organic structure). Moment-to-moment knowing has its own unique characteristics and these are endlessly changing without a break.

In the same way that the surface of a river is running, constantly expressing a never-ending panorama of configurations, the knowing within zazen keeps running, manifesting endless features. When zazen is practiced as zazen, no matter how knowing is manifested, that is undoubtedly "one facial expression" of zazen; each and every knowing is equally "one scenery" of zazen. Furthermore, for zazen, each "facial expression" and each "scenery" is the absolute truth of each moment. This is to say there is no room to compare those knowings and say, "This knowing is good. That knowing is bad" or "it is good to have this knowing but it's bad to have that knowing." There must be absolutely no value judgments to knowing in zazen, based on comparative good and bad, correct and incorrect. We mustn't enclose the knowing within the confines of our own thought, having unneeded worries such as "Is it all right that this kind of knowing arises? Is it wrong that this kind of knowing arises?" and so on. I understand the teaching present in Dogen Zenji's *Fukan-zazengi*, "Do not think good, do not think bad. Do not administer pros and cons" to mean "Don't bring your narrow views of what is good and bad into zazen. Stop that because it results in suppressing and paralyze the knowing".

One of the most important aspects of psychotherapy is to create a place where the client can open the heart and express everything to the therapist by hiding nothing. Can't we say the same thing about zazen? In short, shouldn't zazen be such a condition where all kinds of knowing can freely appear as it is with nothing hidden and

with no deception? Aren't we aiming for zazen setting the knowing free, instead of zazen restricting the knowing?

Zazen isn't an escapist business of shutting off knowing in order to peacefully dwell in a world of no knowing. For that reason, zazen isn't a narrow, limited matter of trying to expel bothersome knowing. In zazen, knowing isn't something that "If this is here, there is going to be difficulty." In Keizan Zenji's *Zazen Yojinki*, there are the words, "Like one who has died utterly, whose eyes are not clouded by anything, whose feet are not supported by anything. Where is there any dust? Where is there a barrier?" This expresses a condition in zazen where no matter what sort of knowing arises; it does not become an obstacle or trouble. This is because zazen has a magnanimity that allows any kind of knowing to freely play and there isn't the slightest restriction.

Furthermore, zazen isn't a matter of actively or intentionally making an effort to create a preferable knowing. Neither is it a selective activity where we choose to maintain only a certain kind of knowing. We take it for granted to live a life whose center is what we know and never question this way of living. So naturally we are very much concerned about the content of knowing. Methods to control such content have been refined over a long period of time. However, I think that zazen is something that came into existence based on the unique effort to critically transcend "what-is-known-is-everything-ism".

With regard to methods that seek to control the content of knowing, zazen implies an essential criticism. "Knowing isn't our true nature. To only chase after knowing is like chasing after our own shadow, isn't it? How about stopping the impulse to meddle with knowing for a while? If we can do, it will be possible for us to become much more intimate with a vast world..."

Whether we escape from knowing or chase after it, certainly we must assume a certain posture of body and mind when we actually do this. However, the upright sitting of zazen is a unique posture we take where we neither flee from knowing nor chase after it. In martial arts, there is a posture called "*Mugamame* = the posture of nothing" (Kashima Shinryu) or "*Shizentai* = the natural body" (judo) which is said to be neither offensive nor defensive with regard to one's opponent. It is a posture of "voidness" that precedes the "actual" movement. That posture is said to be immovable and at the same time, while not being a dead body (a posture which lacks a potentiality to transform into a technique), within it is

concealed a limitless creativity that can freely give birth to a technique which is able to properly suit the situation. It can be said that the upright sitting called zazen is to face any sort of knowing with this “posture of nothing” and to maintain it. If beforehand we carry fear, animosity, hopes, and expectations with regard to knowing into zazen, and sit with the thought of choosing between likes and dislikes, then it will not be possible to maintain the “posture of nothing” with regard to the continual flow of knowing that appears within zazen. Consequently, it is important to first have a clear understanding that no matter what knowing arises, zazen will not be sullied by it in the least and a strong conviction that it is all right to peacefully aim at sitting zazen with this “posture of nothing” (the basis for this understanding and conviction will be the insight that knowing is essentially contingent and empty) and then after that, it is a matter of embodying and deepening this “posture of nothing” through continuing this practice.

In this way, as long as we are sitting upright in a “natural body” mode to the flow of knowing, it is only a matter of entrusting yourself to knowing as it arises in each moment. It seems to me that the phrase “Not doing anything at all, the six senses inactive” found in *Zazen Yojinki*, points to a person sitting zazen with this attitude. Consequently, even if you are asked why you have such and such knowing at any certain time, the only answer you can give is “I don’t know because I was not consciously involved with it.” This is because that knowing simply happened at that moment, naturally coming out of the totality of zazen.

In the midst of the great sky, various clouds appear from somewhere, going this way and that way, and then they go off, we do not know where they disappear to. In this way, the condition of the whole sky changes from moment to moment. However, there are an unlimited number of factors that contribute to this process of change so it is beyond our ability to explain it in terms of cause and effect. And it is also impossible for us to control this process as we would like to. As for those of us who are watching this process and ask, “Why is it that at this moment this certain condition appears?” or “What condition will it turn into next?” this is something that can only be said to be “mysterious” or “incomprehensible.” (Something that cannot be reached by words or thought). If we were to ask the great sky, it would surely answer, “Don’t know.” Nevertheless, the fact is that the great sky tirelessly continues to freely change its condition. The only thing that we can do is to watch and enjoy it as it is. Isn’t this the same with regard to the knowing during

zazen? For the person sitting zazen who has nothing to do with it, there is the continual appearance of knowing that changes from moment to moment without ever stagnating in the least. That process itself, which transcends the ability to know of the person sitting zazen, is being guided by an unlimited number of conditions that cannot be grasped through knowing. By means of a grace that is beyond our knowing, we are forced to know something. However, that function, that grace itself, in short, that part of “we are forced to” is something that is absolutely not an object of our knowing. And so, it looks to us as if the knowing is operating by itself. This is the foundation for the birth of the fundamental illusion that “There exists the self who knows and it is the subject of knowing.” Nevertheless, the reality is that there is no room at all for the knowing to influence the process. In that sense, the knowing has the same status as “the creature” (what is created) in Christianity in opposition to the Creator. Consequently, “the self who knows” is totally unable to do anything about knowing itself. And so, the only thing that “the self” can do is to receive each condition from moment to moment without complaint, with the attitude of “Let me be just as You like” (the words of Jesus on the cross).

(To be continued)



Dharma Hall at Zuijōji Monastery

The 28th Chapter of *Shobogenzo*: Bodaisatta-Shishobo The Bodhisattva's Four Embracing Actions

Lecture (4)

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(edited by Rev. Zenshin Bradley)

The Buddha said, "When a person who practices dana comes into an assembly, other people watch that person with admiration." We should know that the mind of such a person quietly reaches others. Even if we offer just one word or verse of Dharma, it will become a seed of goodness in this lifetime and in other lives to come. Even if we give humble things – a single penny or a stalk of grass - we plant a root of goodness in this and other ages. Dharma can be a material treasure, and a material treasure can be Dharma. This depends entirely upon the giver's vow and wish.

In this paragraph Dogen Zenji says that our practice of dana influences our personality and creates a peaceful and supportive atmosphere for other people's practice. If we have a tendency to take advantage of others and to try to gain something from everyone we meet, our greed and aggressiveness will make others feel defensive in our presence. Yet one who practices dana allows others to feel safe and peaceful in his presence. "We should know that the mind of such a person quietly reaches others" means that people will respect one who practices dana and her practice will quietly influence others, allowing them to be friendlier. This happens because the virtue of dana is boundless, reaching beyond the separation of self and other.

In Buddhist philosophy, "perfuming" (Jap. *kunju*, 薫習, Skt. *vasana*) is an important concept that refers to the influence of our actions on our personality. It is a keyword in the philosophy of the Yogacara school and is used in the teachings of Mahayana Buddhist texts such as *The Awakening of Faith in Mahayana* (大乘起信論 *Daijo-kishinron*).

In D. T. Suzuki's translation of *The Awakening of Faith* (the version translated to Chinese by Cikshananda) we read;

By "perfuming" we mean that while our worldly

clothes [viz., those which we wear] have no odor of their own, neither offensive nor agreeable, they acquire one or the other according to the nature of the substance with which they are perfumed.

Now suchness is a pure dharma free from defilement. It acquires, however, a quality of defilement owing to the perfuming power of ignorance. On the other hand, ignorance has nothing to do with purity. Nevertheless, we speak of its being able to do the work of purity, because it in its turn is perfumed by suchness." (The Awakening of Faith The Classic Exposition of Mahayana Buddhism, Asvaghosa, translated by Teitaro Suzuki, Dover Publications, New York, 2003. This translation was originally published by the Open Court Publishing Company, 1900.)

According to this text, perfuming is the way suchness and ignorance influence each other and either defile or purify our lives. In quoting an ancient, Dogen Zenji says in *Shobogenzo-Zuimonki* 4-4, "Associating with a good person is like walking through mist and dew; though you will not become drenched, gradually your robes will become damp." Here Dogen is talking about the equivalent of "perfuming". He is saying that if we keep practicing the four embracing actions, we become influenced by these actions and become "damp" with the "moisture" of our own activities. Our own activities as well as the activities of others perfume self and other, and in this way our lives and this world evolve together. Together we may create for ourselves either samsara, which includes heaven and hell, or nirvana.

The Awakening of Faith also explains how suchness, in a concrete way, perfumes ignorance and in turn reduces the delusive desires of the three poisonous minds, which are the root of the suffering experienced in *samsara*:

"All beings since their first aspiration (*cittotpada*) till the attainment of Buddhahood are sheltered under the guardianship of all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who, responding to the requirement of the occasion, transform themselves and assume the actual forms of personality.

Thus for the sake of all beings Buddhas and Bodhisattvas become sometimes their parents, sometimes their wives and children, sometimes their kinsmen, sometimes their servants, sometimes their friends, sometimes their enemies, sometimes reveal themselves as *devas* or in some other forms.

Again Buddhas and Bodhisattvas treat all beings sometimes with the four methods of entertainment, sometimes with the six *paramitas*, or with some other deeds, all of which are the inducement for them to make their knowledge (*bodhi*) perfect.

Thus embracing all beings with their deep compassion (*mahakaruna*), with their meek and tender heart, as well as their immense treasure of blissful wisdom, Buddhas convert them in such a way as to suit their [all beings'] needs and conditions; while all beings thereby are enabled to hear or see Buddhas, and, thinking of Tathagatas or some other personages, to increase their root of merit (*kucakamula*). (P.91-92)

In saying that buddhas and bodhisattvas transform themselves to appear as our parents, friends, enemies, etc., the text tells us that all activities of all beings in our lives are the functioning of buddhas and bodhisattvas. These activities are intended to help us awaken to the reality of all beings and to help us see and hear the Dharma so that we may be liberated from the suffering of *samsara*. From the other point of view, when we engage in practices that are in accordance with the bodhisattva vows, we can help others to reduce their pain and sorrow and to be liberated from delusion. Practices such as offering dharma teachings can become the functioning of buddhas and bodhisattvas and help those around us to attain the Buddha Way. Thus we can all help each other by participating in the buddhas' and bodhisattvas' liberating work for all beings. In a sense, all people and all beings are working to liberate each other, and all people and all beings are constantly revealing the reality of life to each other in order to liberate all people and all beings. This is what Dogen Zenji describes in his *Jijuyu-zanmai* as the function of our zazen practice.

The words "four methods of entertainment" in the text above are Suzuki's translation of *Shishobo* (four embracing actions). These practices are not simply intended to help and guide other people, but they also help to liberate us as we work together with all beings.

Even if we offer just one word or verse of Dharma, it will become a seed of goodness in this lifetime and in other lives to come. Even if we give humble things – a single penny or a stalk of grass - we plant a root of goodness in this and other ages.

To practice *dana* in this way, we may offer either

dharma teachings or material gifts, depending upon our vows and our conditions. Traditionally, Buddhist monks study, practice, set an example of Buddhist living, and offer the Dharma to lay people, while lay people support monks' practice by offering them material goods. Depending upon our vow, we can be either a full-time practitioner or a lay practitioner. However, today many lay people are well educated and can therefore share their knowledge of the Dharma. Such offerings can be *dana* if given as part of the practitioner's bodhisattva vow, and even a practitioner's most simple actions can be *dana* as well. Even if we don't have formal knowledge of the Dharma or if we don't have material goods to offer, a simple offering such as a smile can be very helpful *dana* in certain situations.

For example, the second of the four embracing actions is loving-speech. Loving-speech can be a great practice of *dana*, as I once learned in the 1970's when I was practicing at Pioneer Valley Zendo and working at a tofu shop in a nearby town. We worked in the evening, and since I did not have a driver's license I had to sleep at the shop after work rather than go back to the zendo. Because it was the warmest spot in the shop, I slept next to the furnace on a pile of bags containing soybeans. This spot was warm but noisy, and consequently I could not sleep well. One cold winter morning I awoke and decided to stop by a coffee shop before beginning to hitchhike home. I did not feel particularly bad but I had not slept well the night before. The waitress at the coffee shop, a woman in her sixties, looked at my face as she served me coffee and said, "Smile! It is a beautiful day!" For a while I did not understand why she had said such a thing. I just said, "Thank you!" Later, because of the waitress' words I noticed that although it was very cold, it really was a beautiful day. When I started to walk after having the coffee, I thought, "When she looked at my face, she thought I was desperate". Now I feel that her words were one of the greatest offerings of *dana* that I ever received. Whenever I am having a hard time and forget to smile, I remember the kind words of that waitress.

Offering by a Chinese Emperor

Offering his beard, a Chinese emperor harmonized his minister's mind. Offering sand, a child gained the throne. These people did not covet rewards from others. They simply shared what they had according to their ability. To launch a boat or build a bridge is the practice of dana-paramita. When we understand the meaning of dana, receiving a body and giving up a body are both offering. Earning a livelihood and

managing a business are, nothing other than giving. Trusting flowers to the wind and trusting birds to the season may also be the meritorious action of dana. When we give and when we receive, we should study this principle: Great King Ashoka's offering of half a mango to hundreds of monks was a boundless offering. Not only should we urge ourselves to make offerings, but we must not overlook any opportunity to practice dana. Because we are blessed with the virtue of offering, we have received our present lives.

Here Dogen gives examples of the practice of *dana*. The first is a story of a Taiso, the second emperor of the Tong Dynasty [597-649]. He was the second son of the founding emperor of Tong, who with the help of Taiso united China. Taiso skillfully governed his country with benevolence for twenty-three years, and later generations considered his administration to be an ideal model of Chinese sovereignty. Dogen Zenji refers to stories of Taiso four times in *Shobogenzo Zuimonki*. For example, in section 2-3 of that text we read:

During the reign of Taiso of the Tang dynasty, Gicho (Wei Zheng), one of the ministers, remarked to the emperor, "Some people are slandering your Majesty." The emperor replied, "As a sovereign, if I have virtue, I am not afraid of being slandered by people. I'm more afraid of being praised despite the lack of it."

Dogen commented on this passage saying, "Here is an example of how even a lay person had such an attitude (about virtue). Monks should, first of all, maintain this attitude."

According to another story, when one of Taiso's ministers was sick a doctor recommended roasted bear to cure him. Hearing this, the emperor slaughtered his own bear and gave it to the minister. I am not sure if roasted bear is truly a good medicine, but in this story it is probably a symbol of the emperor's authority. Even if the roasted bear did not really cure the minister's body, the fact that it was the emperor's bear, prepared by the emperor himself, touched the minister and increased his loyalty to the emperor.

Offering by the Indian King Asoka

Dogen Zenji also refers to two stories from the Sutra of King Asoka [阿育王經, Jap. Aikuo-kyo, Taisho:50] about the offerings of the king. One is the story of a boy who offered a handful of sand to Shakyamuni Buddha, and

the other tells of King Asoka's offering half of a mango to the sangha.

According to Japanese scholarly references, King Asoka was the grandson of Candragupta, the king of India who fought against Seleukos, the retainer of Alexander the Great. Alexander invaded India in 326B.C.E. and conquered its northwestern region before returning to the West in 325. Alexander died in the year 323B.C.E. in Babylon, but Seleukos who established his empire in Syria in 306B.C.E., invaded India in 305. After the war with Seleukos ended, Candragupta destroyed the kingdom of Magada and founded the Maurya Dynasty in its place. King Asoka, the grandson of Candragupta, reigned between 268-232B.C.E. He fought against his brothers to become King after his father's death, and after he was enthroned he conquered many kingdoms. It is said that he was a very violent ruler who was good at making war. In the 9th year of his reign, he defeated Kalinga in a battle that united most of India but produced more than 100,000 casualties and caused much suffering for many people. The king experienced great sadness upon witnessing such vast suffering, and as a result he came to believe that war was wrong. He is said to have come to the realization that only the truths of Buddhist teachings (*dharmavijaya*), rather than war and competition, can produce real victories in life. After King Asoka took refuge in Buddhism, he lived near a Buddhist sangha for more than a year and practiced enthusiastically. The king worked to spread Buddhism by ordering the building of stone pillars inscribed with Buddhist teachings, and many of these carvings have been discovered. He declared that he would govern his kingdom based on the *paramita* teachings of the *Dharma*: affection (*daya*), few delusive desires (*alpasrava*), generosity in giving (*dana*), truth (*satya*), purity (*sauca*), and gentleness (*mardava*). King Asoka sent Buddhist envoys to Syria, Egypt, Macedonia, and other countries, and his son, Mahinda, and daughter, Sanghamitta, established Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Thus Buddhism traveled to many places outside of India because of King Asoka's support. Yet the king's Buddhist policies and excessive financial support of Buddhist orders eventually caused the decline of his government. His son and ministers eventually turned against him and his empire disappeared shortly after his death.

The following are stories about King Asoka that Dogen Zenji introduces from the Sutra of King Asoka. Of course these stories are merely traditional images of the great benevolent king (*cakravarti-rajā*) who supported Buddhism rather than presentations of historical facts.

The first story from section one of the sutra creates a connection between King Asoka and Shakyamuni Buddha by relating an event from a past life of the king:

While the World-honored One was begging for food on a big street, he met two boys there playing with sand. The boys saw the 32 features on the Buddha's body, and the first boy took a handful of sand and put it in the Buddha's begging bowl as an offering. The second boy did a *gassho* and joyfully composed a verse about the Buddha; "With natural boundless compassion, a circle of light ornaments my body. Having already departed from life-and-death, now I wholeheartedly concentrate my mind". And of the first boy he recited, "Because I think of the Buddha, I offer this sand with reverence."

At that time, the first boy made a vow saying, "I vow to do Buddha's work within Buddha's dharma. Because of this root of goodness, please make me the king of a country."

Shakyamuni Buddha penetrated the boy's mind and saw that the boy's vow would bear excellent fruit because it was a seed planted in Buddha's field of happiness (*fukuden*). Shakyamuni then accepted the sand with compassion.

Then he said to Ananda, "One hundred years after my entering Nirvana, this boy will be born in the city of Pataliputra and be named Asoka. He will be the Quarter Wheel-Turning King. He will take refuge in the true Dharma, make offerings to Buddha's relics, build Eighty-four thousand stupas, and he will be beneficial to numberless people."

Then Shakyamuni Buddha handed the sand to Ananda saying, "Mix this sand together with cow dung and put it on the ground where the Buddha practices walking meditation."

This was King Asoka's first practice of *dana* for the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Although he only offered a handful of sand, because of his wholehearted vow he received an excellent reward in being reborn as the wheel-turning king.

The second story is from Chapter 5 of the Sutra of King Asoka:

When King Asoka was an old man, a minister said

to the prince, "The great King Asoka will pass away soon. Now the king wants to donate forty thousand gold pieces to the Rooster Temple. For all kings, their source of power is their material wealth. Prince, you should prevent the king from wasting such a huge amount money." The prince accepted this advice and seized control of government money from the king, who was then forced to cancel his donation to the temple.

Now King Asoka's only remaining valuable was a golden plate he used for dining. After finishing his meal, the king sent the golden plate to the Rooster Temple, leaving himself with only half of a mango as his last possession. At that time the King summoned his ministers and said, "On behalf of all people in this country, tell me who is the lord of this land!" A minister stood up, did a *gassho* and said, "Heaven is the only lord of the land. No particular person can be lord." Upon hearing this, King Asoka shed tears like rain.

The king then called one of his close attendants and said to him, "Now I have lost my power and my freedom. Please do a final favor for me now--do just this one thing; take this mango half to the Rooster Temple and tell the monks, "King Asoka prostrates himself at the feet of the monks of the assembly. In the past he owned all the land of the continent; now he only owns half of a mango. This mango is his last offering; monks, please accept this offering. It is small but this offering's virtue will benefit the monks' assembly boundlessly."

The monks accepted the mango half from the king, cut it into tiny pieces, and put the pieces into a stew to serve the assembly. At that time, the aging King Asoka was nearing death. From his bed his attendants propped him up so that he could look around in all four directions. Then the king faced the direction of the temple, did a *gassho* and said, "Now, in addition to the treasures I have given, I offer the entire Earth and its great oceans to the Sangha."

These two offerings of the Great King Asoka, the first made as a boy and the final made as a dying man, were worthless by the standards of society's market value. But because these small offerings were made with purity of heart, Dogen Zenji praised them more than the incalculable number of offerings the King made as a powerful ruler.

We can also find praise for this spirit of offering in the teachings of Jesus Christ:

He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. Then he called his disciples and said to them, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on." (Mark 12/41-44)

These people did not covet rewards from others. They simply shared what they had according to their ability. To launch a boat or build a bridge is the practice of dana-paramita. When we understand the meaning of dana, receiving a body and giving up a body are both offering. Earning a livelihood and managing a business are, nothing other than giving.

When I read this story about King Asoka, I think that when he had great power he gave Buddhist temples more than was required and more than he was capable of. Because of his immeasurable donations, Buddhist temples became wealthy and prosperous and Buddhism spread throughout India and beyond. However, as a result of the Kings contributions, the genuine spirit of practice began to decline in his kingdom because many people joined the Sangha seeking wealth and status rather than true spiritual practice. The financial condition of his government and of his nation also suffered as a result of the king's actions. Since he had responsibility as a ruler to govern the nation, he should have managed his country's resources more carefully. If he had governed the nation according to the teachings of the Dharma, his work as a benevolent ruler would have been the practice of dana. This is what Dogen Zenji meant when he said, "To launch a boat or build a bridge is the practice of dana-paramita." To make those very large material donations to the Buddhist order may have been excessive or even contrary to the genuine spirit of the Dharma. If the king wished to make contributions to the Dharma beyond his means as a ruler, he should have resigned the throne and become a Buddhist monk. It must be very difficult for a person with great power and wealth to know his own limitations, and this is why King Asoka "shed tears like rain" when his ministers turned against him in his final days. But the King truly rose to excellence when he kept his faith in the Dharma after losing his power as a ruler. I feel fortune, as Ryokan did, that I do

not have such a problem. One of Ryokan's *waka* poems echo's the great King's words during his final offering of the Earth and its oceans:

What have I to leave as a keepsake?
In spring, the cherry blossoms
In summer, the warblers song
In autumn, the maple's crimson leaves.

The final three lines of this poem were inspired by Dogen's poem entitled "Original Face" (*Honrai no memmoku*):

In Spring, the cherry blossoms,
In summer, the cuckoo's song,
In autumn, the moon, shining,
In winter, the frozen snow:
How pure and clear are the seasons!

This is what Dogen meant when he said, "Trusting flowers to the wind and trusting birds to the season may also be the meritorious action of dana." Just living together with all beings without trying to possess them is the meritorious action of *dana*. It is truly important to understand that Dogen Zenji did not praise King Asoka as the great patron of Buddhism simply because of the king's great monetary contributions. There are many examples of great patrons of Buddhism who, like Asoka, hindered the Buddhist Sangha with their excessive donations while creating problems for their societies. That is why Dogen says that Asoka's offering of a handful of sand and his giving half of a mango were the king's greatest practices of *dana*.



Dendokyoshi Kenshusho participants
going out for takuhatsu

Treasury of the Eye of the True Dharma
Shobogenzo
Book 36
The Arhat
Arakan

Translated by Stanley Weinstein

Introduction

This chapter of the *Shobogenzo* was composed in the summer of 1242, at Dogen's Koshoji monastery on the southern outskirts of the capital. According to the colophon, it was copied out over thirty years later by Dogen's disciple Ejo. The work, one of the shorter pieces in the *Shobogenzo*, appears as number 36 in both the 75- and 60-chapter versions of the collection.

As its title indicates, the text is a discussion of the arhat, or "worthy," one who has eliminated all his or her spiritual "defilements" (*klesha*) and achieved nirvana. In much Buddhist literature, the term *arhat* was used to refer to any fully realized Buddhist (and, indeed, was applied to the Buddha Shakyamuni himself); but, with the rise of the bodhisattva ideal, the word came to refer specifically to the goal of the Shravakayana, or "vehicle of the hearers," who were held to aspire only to nirvana and not to the *anuttara samyak bodhi* ("supreme, perfect enlightenment") of a buddha.

Dogen's discussion of the term dismisses the distinction between the arhat and the buddha. As in most of the chapters of the *Shobogenzo*, the discussion proceeds by way of comments on passages drawn from earlier literature — in this case, from the *Lotus Sutra* and the sayings of several Chinese Chan masters. Expanding on the famous *Lotus* doctrine that all Buddhism is ultimately intended to guide bodhisattvas to buddhahood, Dogen argues that the true arhat is a fully enlightened buddha. Reiterating a theme found in much of his writing, he argues that true enlightenment is the spiritual practice of the Chan masters.

This translation is based on the text in edited by Kawamura Kodo, in *Dogen zenji zenshu* 1 (Tokyo: Shunjusha, 1991), pp. 403-408. Other English versions can be found in Nishijima and Cross, *Master Dogen's Shobogenzo*, Book 2 (1996); Nishiyama and Stevens, *A Complete English Translation of Dogen Zenji's Shobogenzo*, vol. 3 (1975); and Yokoi Yuhu, *The Shobo-genzo* (1986).

Translation

"[These monks] have already eliminated all the impurities and are further without the mental afflictions. They have gained benefits for themselves and have eliminated all fetters [tying them] to existence; their minds have been set free."¹

These are the great arhats, the ultimate fruition of those who study [the way of] the buddhas. [Their state] is called "the fourth fruition." There are buddha arhats.²

"The impurities" [in this passage] refers to broken ladles missing their handles. Although they have been used for a long time, that they are "already eliminated" means that the whole body of the ladle leaps out. "They have gained benefits for themselves" means that they go in and out of the tops of their heads. "Eliminated all fetters [tying them] to existence" means that nothing has ever been concealed anywhere in the realms of the ten directions. The state in which "their minds have been set free," you should strive to understand as "in a high place, it is high and level; in a low place, it is low and level." For this reason, there are walls, tiles, and pebbles. "Free" means that their minds are manifestations of their full and unfettered capacity to function. "Are further without the mental afflictions" refers to mental afflictions that have not yet arisen; it means that mental afflictions are prevented by mental afflictions.³

The arhat's paranormal powers, wisdom, meditation, preaching of the dharma, guidance, emitting of light, and such, cannot be on the same level as those discussed by the non-Buddhists and Mara. Discussion of seeing a hundred buddha worlds, and the like, must never be equated with the views of the common person. This is the principle that "just when you think the foreigner's beard is red, there is a red-bearded foreigner. Entering nirvana is for the arhat the action of entering his or her own fist. For this reason, it is called "the wondrous mind of nirvana"; it is "not a place to which one escapes." The arhat who enters his or her own nostrils is considered a true arhat; there has never been an arhat who has not gone in and out of his or her own nostrils.⁴

Long ago it was said, "We today, being true arhats, cause all to hear the voice emanating from the Buddha."⁵

The real import of this "cause all to hear" is to cause each and every phenomenon [to be] the voice emanating from the Buddha. How could this be speaking only of

buddhas and disciples? “To cause all” means to cause all those with discernment and knowledge, with skin and flesh, with bones and marrow to hear. “Those with discernment and knowledge” refers to the country and land, grass and trees, fences and walls, tiles, and pebbles. Shaking and falling, flourishing and declining, being born and passing away, going and coming are all “hearing.” The reason behind this “cause all to hear the voice emanating from the Buddha” is not simply the practice and study of the whole world as the ear organ.

Shakyamuni Buddha said, “If my disciples call themselves arhats or pratyekabuddhas but have not heard and do not understand that all buddha-tathagatas teach and nurture only bodhisattvas, then they are not disciples of the Buddha, not arhats, not pratyekabuddhas.”⁶

The words of the Buddha, “teach and nurture only bodhisattvas,” mean “I and the buddhas of the ten directions comprehend this matter well”; they mean “only a buddha and a buddha can thoroughly understand the true characteristics of phenomena”; they mean *anuttara samyak sambodhi*. Therefore, the “calling themselves” of the bodhisattvas and buddhas must be the same as [Shakyamuni Buddha’s disciples] “calling themselves arhats or pratyekabuddhas.” How so? Their calling themselves is their hearing and understanding “that all buddha-tathagatas teach and nurture only bodhisattvas.”⁷

Long ago it was said, “In a sutra for shravakas, the arhat [stage] is termed ‘buddha stage.’”⁸

These words have been verified in the pronouncements of the Buddha; they are not simply a doctrine coming from the bosom of a scholiast; they have the universal norm in the pronouncements of the Buddha. You should practice and learn the truth that [the stage of] an arhat is called the stage of a buddha; you should practice and learn the truth that the stage of a buddha is called [the stage of] an arhat. Apart from arhatship there is not even the slightest scintilla of an extra dharma. How much less will there be *samyak sambodhi*! Apart from *anuttara samyak sambodhi*, there is furthermore not even the slightest scintilla of an extra dharma. How much less will there be the four stages of progress and the four stages of fruition! At the very moment when the dharmas are borne by the arhat, these dharmas are not in fact eight ounces nor are they half a catty. “They are not the mind; they are not the buddha, they are not things”; even the eye of a buddha does not glimpse them. You should not argue about before or after

80,000 kalpas. You should think hard about and master the power to gouge out the eyes. If there is an extra dharma, the entirety of the dharmas is extra.”⁹

Shakyamuni Buddha said, “All these bhikshus and bhikshunis claim that they have already attained arhatship, that this is their final body, that they are in supreme nirvana, and so they did not aspire to and seek *anuttara samyak sambodhi*. You should know that all in this cohort are arrogant people. Why is this so? It could not be the case that there are bhikshus who have truly attained arhatship but do not believe this teaching.”¹⁰

This is to say that, when one believes in *anuttara samyak sambodhi*, it is proof that one is an arhat. Resolutely to believe in this teaching is to entrust this teaching; it is to transmit intact this teaching; it is to practice and verify this teaching. “To have truly attained arhatship” does not mean that “this is their final body, that they are in supreme nirvana,” because they aspire to and seek *anuttara samyak sambodhi*. Seeking *anuttara samyak sambodhi* is “toying with the eyes”; it is “wall face” sitting; it is facing a wall and opening one’s eyes. Although vast as the cosmos, it is “spirits appearing and demons disappearing”; although spanning all time, it is “mutual exchange and a meeting of minds.” To be like this is called “aspiring to and seeking *anuttara samyak sambodhi*.” For this reason, one aspires to and seeks arhatship; seeking arhatship is “having enough gruel and having enough rice.”¹¹

The Chan Master Jiashan Yuanwu (1063-1135) said, “The ancients, after attaining the essence, headed deep into the mountains to stay in bramble huts or caves. For ten or twenty years, they ate rice boiled in a tripod with broken legs; they totally forgot about worldly matters, having permanently taking leave of the realm of defilements. Nowadays, we dare not hope for such as this; instead, we conceal our names and obscure our traces, maintain our original lot, and become old monks with bones like toothpicks, thereby naturally matching what we have verified and experiencing in accordance with our own capacities. We eliminate past karma and melt our longstanding habits. And if we still have some remaining energy, we push ourselves to reach out to others and establish a prajna connection with them, while polishing our heels to maturity. This is just like plucking one or a half [flower] from wild weeds. Together, we understand existence; together, we escape from birth and death,

increasingly benefiting the future, and thereby repaying the buddhas and ancestors for their profound kindness. If from frost and dew the fruit inevitably ripens, we push ourselves to go forth into the world and, according with our relationships, reveal and entrust [the buddha dharma] to humans and devas, in the end not harboring the desire to seek anything. How much less do we undertake deeds [leading to] ceaseless suffering because we have become dependent upon aristocrats, serve as fawning chaplains to prominent laymen, and in our activities cheat common people, deceive holy ones, covet profits, and scheme to achieve fame. Even if we do not have the opportunity [to find able disciples], if we only live our lives like this, without the effects of deeds, this is a true arhat who has escaped from defilements.¹²

Since this is so, a genuine monk of our time is a true arhat who has escaped from defilements. If you wish to know what arhats are like, you should know that they are like this. Do not be misled by the words of the Indian scholiasts and their ilk. The Chinese Chan Master Yuanwu is a buddha and ancestor who is a legitimate heir to the correct transmission.

Chan Master Dazhi of Mt. Baizhang in Hongzhou said, “Eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind do not covet and are not defiled by any phenomena, existent or non-existent; this is what is called ‘holding to the four-line verse’; it is also called ‘the fourth stage of fruition.’”¹³

The eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind in the present transcend self and other; correct from head to tail, they are beyond our ability to comprehend thoroughly. For this reason, one’s whole body, as it is, “does not covet and is not defiled.” It does not covet and is not defiled by the whole of “any phenomena, existent or non-existent.” The wholeness, just as it is, of “holding to the four-line verse,” is called “does not covet and is not defiled”; it is also called “the fourth stage of fruition.” The fourth stage of fruition is the arhat.

Since this is the case, the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind that now appear are none other than the arhat. From root to branch, he will surely, as a matter of course, be emancipated. “At last reaching the sturdy barrier” is “holding to the four-line verse”; it is “the fourth stage of fruition.” The entire body, from the top of the head to the soles of the feet, is manifested, without a hair left out. In the end, what is to be said but the following?¹⁴

When the arhat is in the state of a common person, all dharmas obstruct him. When the arhat is in the state of a holy person, all dharmas set him free. You should know that the arhat and all phenomena are intermixed with each other. Once he has realized arhatship, he is obstructed by arhatship. Therefore, he is an “old fist” before the [eon of the] King of Emptiness.¹⁵

Treasury of the Eye of the True Dharma

The Arhat

Book 36

Presented to the assembly at the Kannon Dori Kosho Horinji in Uji District in Yoshu, fifteenth day of the fifth month, summer of the *mizunoe tora* [year], third year of the Ninji [era] (June 14, 1242).

Copied by Ejo on the sixteenth day of the sixth month, first year of the Kenji [era] (July 15, 1275).

Notes

1. From Chapter 1 of the *Lotus Sutra*.

“These monks” refers to the 12,000 “great monks,” designated arhats, who had gathered around Shakyamuni when he was about to preach the *Lotus Sutra*.

2. “The fourth fruition”: I.e., the last of the “four fruits,” or stages of fruition, into which the arhat path is traditionally divided: stream-enterer, once-returner, never-returner, and arhat.

While the term “arhat” is often applied to the buddha, the term “buddha arhat” seems to have been coined by Dogen.

3. “Broken ladles missing their handles” signifies something useless.

“In a high place, it is high and level; in a low place, it is low and level”: quoting words spoken by the Chan master Yangshan Huiji to Guishan Lingyou.

4. “Seeing a hundred buddha worlds”: Doubtless a reference to discussions in the Buddhist literature of how many realms are seen by the paranormal vision respectively of arhats, pratyekabuddhas, and buddhas.

“Just when you think the foreigner’s beard is red, there is a red-bearded foreigner”: A common saying in Chan texts, generally taken to mean a distinction without a difference.

“The wondrous mind of nirvana”: From the famous lines attributed to the Buddha Shakyamuni: “I have the treasury of the eye of the true dharma, the wondrous mind of nirvana, which I transmit to Mahakashyapa.”

“Not a place to which one escapes”: A line attributed to the Chan master Qinglin Shiqian.

5. From Chapter 4 of the *Lotus Sutra*.

The phrase rendered “the voice emanating from the Buddha” may also be understood as “the voice of the way of the buddha.”

6. Quoting Chapter 2 of the *Lotus Sutra*.

7. The phrases “I and the buddhas of the ten directions comprehend this matter well” and “only a buddha and a buddha can thoroughly understand the true characteristics of phenomena” are both quoted from Chapter 2 of the *Lotus Sutra*.

“*Anuttara samyak sambodhi*”: Dogen is here transliterating the Sanskrit term for the “supreme, perfect enlightenment” of a buddha.

8. From the *Mohe zhiguan*, by the sixth-century Tiantai scholar Zhiyi.

9. “The four stages of progress and the four stages of fruition”: I.e., the four stages of fruition and the practices leading to each.

“They are not the mind; they are not the buddha, they are not things”: A well-known saying found in various Zen texts, reported to have been first used by Nanchuan Puyuan in response to a question put to him by Baizhang Weizheng.

“Before or after 80,000 kalpas”: A reference to the doctrine that one who has attained the first stage of fruition may, after 80,000 kalpas, convert to the Mahayana and attain buddhahood.

10. From Chapter 2 of the *Lotus Sutra*. This passage follows the sentence in the *Lotus* quoted above, at note 6.

11. “Toying with the eyes”: I.e., seeing things as they really are.

“Wall face sitting”: an unusual expression that reverses the

characters in the well-known Zen term for “facing a wall,” the type of meditation associated with Bodhidharma’s legendary nine years of “wall gazing.”

“Spirits appearing and demons disappearing,” “mutual exchange and a meeting of minds”: Expressions taken from the Chan master Yuanwu Kechin.

“Having enough gruel and having enough rice”: An expression of the Chan master Shushan Qiangren.

12. From the *Yuanwu Foguo Chanshi Yulu*.

“Polishing the heels”: I.e., training the self.

“One or a half”: A common Zen phrase indicating a small number of serious disciples.

“Ceaseless suffering”: I.e. the avici hell, the lowest of the hells.

13. From the *Tiansheng guangdenglu*.

Chan Master Dazhi is the posthumous name of Baizhang Huihai (720-814).

“The four-line verse” is likely a reference to the well-known summary of Buddhism: “Do not do evil. Perform good deeds. Purify your mind. This is the teaching of the buddhas.”

“The fourth stage of fruition” here might also be translated as “the four stages of fruition,” but Dogen’s commentary below clearly takes the phrase as a reference to the arhat.

14. “At last reaching the sturdy barrier”: A commonly used phrase signifying the barrier that must be passed before awakening takes place.

15. This paragraph is written in Chinese, apparently by Dogen.

“An old fist” is a common Zen expression for the true person.

“The King of Emptiness” is the name of the buddha who appears in the kalpa of emptiness, which follows the kalpa in which the world is destroyed; often used in the sense “primordial buddha.”



JIZOS for PEACE: An International Project of Remembrance

Jan Chozen Bays,
Great Vow Zen Monastery, Clatskanie, Oregon.

In Buddhism we look at cold, hard facts, such as the coexistence of human life and suffering. It seems that war always has been and always will be a part of that suffering. Even the Buddha could not stop wars in countries where his presence was vivid and his teaching was most potent. How do we reconcile what seems to be the inevitability of war with the urgent prompting of our hearts that makes it imperative that we work for peace?

This is the koan that has come alive for me as I have worked on a project called Jizos for Peace. The project began with my birth, to pacifist parents, on August 9, 1945, the day the atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, three days after the bombing of Hiroshima. That hundreds of thousands of people died in Japan in the few days around my birth has led, I think, in some mysterious way, to my becoming a Zen Buddhist priest in a Japanese lineage in a monastery dedicated to Jizo Bodhisattva.

A few years ago I decided to take sixty clay Jizo statues that we make at the monastery to Nagasaki in August, 2005, the 60th anniversary of the bombing there. Then I visited the Atomic Bomb Museums in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I was very touched by the stories of the thousands of children who were working at the epicenter and who were vaporized. I wondered — could we take a Jizo for every person who perished in the first year? This would be 270,000 Jizos! How to accomplish this?

Kaz Tanahashi, a Japanese-American artist and peace activist, had an idea. We could draw many Jizos on pieces of cloth and sew them together as prayer flags and tapestries. We began this work at a retreat on the eve of the war in Iraq. We drew and painted, chanting the Jizo mantra silently, and sending a prayer for peace out as each Jizo was completed.

This colorful tangible expression of our desire for peace seems to have universal appeal. Panels have come in from Dharma centers, Christian Sunday schools, from children and from people in prison. Now we are getting Jizo panels sent from Japan! Two Japanese women are making 5,000 origami Jizos! It is wonderful to imagine Jizos winging their way cross the Pacific Ocean in both directions. The survivors in Nagasaki and Hiroshima welcome this project.



They are afraid that when they die, a new generation will forget what can happen when humans lose track of their original unified nature <http://www.jizosforpeace.org>. and begin to fight among themselves.

Dogen Zenji said that we do this practice by means of our *bodies*. Everyone who has made Jizos for Peace has found this to be true. Through the activity of our hands and our quiet chanting, our agitated hearts and minds come to peace. In this way the entire world comes to peace. This inner transformation is the most radical form of social action.



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NEWS

Oct. 11-Nov. 10, 2004

The Dendokyoshi Kenshusho (a training/practice session for Dendokyoshi) was held at Zuijōji Monastery in Niihama, Ehime Prefecture, Japan. There were three participants from North America and five from Europe.

International Events

European Soto Zen Conference

Place: Villa Sacro Cuore
Milan, Italy

Date: January 14, 15, and 16

North American Soto Zen Conference

Place: Zenshuji
123 South Hewitt Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Date: February 25, 26, and 27

Jizos for Peace

Rev. Chozen Bays, of Great Vow Monastery in Oregon, has set up an initiative called Jizos for Peace to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima.

For more information see: www.jizosforpeace.org

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