

DHARMA EYE



法眼

News of Soto Zen Buddhism: Teachings and Practice

## A Greeting

Rev. Yoyu Miyashita

Director, Division of Dissemination and Education  
The Administrative Headquarters of Soto Zen Buddhism



Flowers are beginning to bloom in the southern part of Japan, but here in Tokyo the wind is still cold and it feels as if spring is still far away. And yet, the plum blossoms tell us that spring is on its way. I trust this finds you all in good health.

With the standstill we see in regard to the unsettled social conditions today, isn't it the case that we live in a world in which people really don't know what to think about life or how to live it? People are confused because they only think of their own personal affairs, are unable to be free of their attachments, and because of the conflicts that arise in their lives. Aren't people forgetting their innate virtue? It seems like politics and economics have completely become games that are excitedly played without virtue, a situation where it is possible for some to become intoxicated only with maintaining their own rank and fortune. In the following teaching, Dogen Zenji explains the way human beings must be, "Past masters in former ages were all clear about cause and effect. Later, students in recent times were all deluded about cause and effect. But even in the present age, those who, with a dauntless bodhi-mind, study the Buddhadharma for the sake of the Buddhadharma, will be able to clarify cause and effect just as past masters did. To say there are no causes and no effects is heretical and not the Buddhist teaching." Buddhism is something universal. It is not something that is swayed by the state of the world or by political entities. In the Buddha's teaching, there is the

vow of a Mahayana bodhisattva to "save all beings before saving ourselves." This is because the essence of compassion is the principle of wisdom.

Isn't it the case that if we are able to bring even one more person into contact with the Buddha's teaching and that we are able to feel sympathy for others by forgetting ourselves, we are then able to live a spiritually rich life? In the Sotoshu, we must foster and train monks and priests who engage in spreading the Buddha's teaching. The foundation for this training is in Japan, but the underpinnings for this way of fostering and training monks are being put into place in the West as well: for the past two years a Sotoshu training monastery has been set up in France. The burden of setting up such a Sotoshu training monastery is a big task. Nevertheless, various groups are cooperating in this endeavor and this provides the power of support that will make it possible to continue this Sotoshu training monastery.

The overhaul of the Sotoshu Statues is also steadily progressing. The "Regulations Regarding Dendoshi and Dendokyoshi" and the "Regulations Concerning the Ranks of Priests and Ranks of Kyoshi of the Sotoshu" have been standardized. The proposed changes of repealing the rules for the Sotoshu Dendokyoshi Kenshusho and the proposed changes for the "Regulations Regarding International Dissemination of Sotoshu" have been submitted to the Sotoshu Assembly.

---

With regard to the Soto Zen Text Project, the English translations of the *Shobogenzo*, the *Denkoroku*, the *Gyoji Kihan* (“Standard Observances of the Soto School”) will be published when they are ready, following the already published *Soto School Scriptures for Daily Services and Practice*. In order to have as many people as possible view the official Sotoshu website (<http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp>), we plan to include the quarterly magazines *Zen Quarterly*, *Zen Friends*, and *Camino Zen*. We plan, of course, to make changes in these quarterlies and while carrying out this new plan, we hope to provide information and opinions gathered from the Soto Zen Buddhism International Center, Soto Zen Buddhism Hawaii Office, the Soto Zen Buddhism North America Office, the Soto Zen Buddhism South America Office, and the Soto Zen Buddhism Europe Office.

Finally, let me refer to the saying of Dogen Zenji’s

quoted in the words of wisdom of Fukuyama Taiho Zenji, Abbot of Eihei-ji, “Remember, kind speech arises from a loving mind and the seed of a loving mind is compassion.” Words of intimacy and compassion that pour out of a compassionate heart not only make other people happy, but they also leave a deep impression and have the power to move the heavens. We must think of others as ourselves and live with a gentle mind, the same way we are when we are in front of babies. We must not forget to be able to straightforwardly praise virtuous actions and feel pity for those who are unable to be virtuous. I think that it is precisely in these present social conditions that we must clarify the self and live with a compassionate heart.

Allow me to conclude this greeting with the hope that as many people as possible will find the light of Shakyamuni Buddha’s teachings.



## The Bodhisattva Practice of Zazen

Rev. Shomyo Aihara  
Sotoshu Special Dissemination Teacher

Green Gulch Farm,  
Nov. 2, 2008  
Muir Beach, CA, USA.

Good morning, my name is Shomyo Aihara. I have come from Japan. It is a great pleasure to be here this morning.

First of all, I would like to take some time to speak with the children who have come this morning.

It’s a very hot day. Two friends are walking through the desert, me and another person. Hot, hot, hot. “I’m thirsty, I want to drink some water,” I thought. Both my friend and I want to drink lots of water. We had water. There was a container of water there, like this flower vase. Then, close by, there was also another container that was

big enough to hold more than half of the water in the other container. Well, how could we divide the water in a way that we wouldn’t quarrel about it? I would like not only the children, but the grownups as well to think about this. The reason is that this is a difficult problem. There is a very good way. There is a good way to divide the water so that the two people do not argue about it. Do you know what it is? If this container was a measuring cup, then it would probably be possible to divide the water and both of us would have the same amount. But unfortunately, it wasn’t a measuring cup and neither was the other cup. So, it wasn’t possible to accurately divide the water. But there is a good way to do it.

I put about half of the water from this container into the cup. Then, I have you choose first. If I divide the water into what I think are equal amounts, then there would be no reason for me to get angry if I took either

---

part. For you, the one who chooses first, you don't know exactly which part is more, but since you choose first, you also would have no reason to get angry. This means we wouldn't quarrel. What do you think about this answer? I think it is a very Buddhist answer. The quantity may not be equal, but it's fair. Please remember this. When you and a friend have something to share by dividing it, I think this is an interesting way to think about it. That is the end of the talk for the children.

I've been told that you have come here today to practice zazen. What sort of thoughts do you have about zazen? I imagined to myself what you might think. Some people may think of zazen as meditation, time to comfort and soothe the mind and your feelings. Some people are perhaps looking for a new self by becoming "no-mind." Some may think of zazen as a way to recapture yourself. Others may think that if they sit in zazen a special power will emerge and they will then be able to do supernatural things. There are many ways of thinking about zazen. In any event, I will give a Dharma talk today in the context of practicing zazen. In other words, I will speak about the Buddha's teaching.

In Japan, the Sotoshu is a school of Buddhism in which zazen is the center of practice. In the *Shobogenzo*, a book written by Dogen Zenji, the great Japanese priest who brought the Soto teaching from China to Japan and the man we call the founder of Sotoshu in Japan, there is the following story:

One day, Zen master Pao-ch'e of Mt. Mayu was fanning himself. A monk came up to him and asked, "The nature of wind is constant. There is no place it doesn't reach. Why then do you use a fan?" Zen master Pao-ch'e said, "You only know that the nature of wind is constant. But you do not understand the principle that there is no place the wind doesn't reach." The monk asked, "What is the principle that there is no place it doesn't reach?" The master only fanned himself. The monk bowed deeply.

The *Shobogenzo* was written nearly 800 years ago, so this short story is quite difficult for modern-day Japanese to understand, as the original is written in an old style of our language. There are two important points in this story. Right now, there is no wind blowing in this room,

but wind can arise. There is also no fire here, although it is possible to light a candle. We don't see any water, although there is water here in this cup. We also don't see any earth, but if we go outside we can walk on the ground.

In the East, particularly in Buddhism, Shakyamuni Buddha said that all things in the world are comprised of four basic elements: "air", something that moves and is cool; "fire", something that burns and is hot; "water", something that flows and is cold; and "earth", something that gives life and is warm. These are the elements of Nature and the Universe, even though we cannot always see them. "Emptiness" is what we say includes all of these four elements. The "emptiness" that appears in the *Heart Sutra*, "form is emptiness; emptiness is form", is the condition now. This is one important element of the story.

The property of air is completely present here, but we cannot feel it. By using this fan, wind arises and then for the first time I can feel it and know it, if the wind is directed toward me. Things we can see and cannot see, things we can feel and cannot feel...if, for example, I use this fan, I can see it and feel the wind, but we must remember of course that wind can arise through other means as well.

The second important point of this story concerns Shakyamuni Buddha who realized the truth of this world, which is the law of causality. I am here and these things are here. With regard to the circumstances that bring anything about, there is certainly a cause and tying together the cause of the present condition are what we call conditions. The property of air fills the world and that is the cause. Using a fan like Zen master Pao-ch'e is a condition. The result is that I feel cool and that feels good. You have been sitting in zazen. I think you feel very good while you are sitting in zazen, but when you stop doing zazen, your self returns. So, if you continue with zazen, in other words, you continue to use the fan, you will always feel cool. I speak about this because this is a condition that is close to your everyday life.

Next, I would like you to take a quick look at your fingernails. Do fingernails grow? Your fingernails do grow, don't they? Fingernails are on the very tips of your body, so try giving them an order. Tell them to stop

---

growing. I would like any of you here who can stop your fingernails from growing to raise your hand. No one has raised their hand. Fingernails grow and we cannot stop them from growing. No one disagrees with this, right? What do you do when your fingernails grow? We cut them when they reach a certain length. It is a reality of this world that fingernails grow and that we cannot stop them from growing. Human wisdom is to cut the fingernails when they grow. This is only to be expected. This is a metaphor, of course.

In Buddhism, there is the teaching that “all things are impermanent.” Shakyamuni Buddha saw all things that exist in the world are the manifestation of life. Human beings and animals, grass and trees, the shape of mountains and flowing rivers – he saw all things as a manifestation of life. So, all of life is continually changing. You told me that it isn’t possible to stop fingernails from growing and this corresponds to the teaching that “all things have no self.” All life that we see is continually changing but that change doesn’t occur the way we want it to. Does this ring any bells? When fingernails grow, we cut them. This corresponds to the expression “Nirvana is pure and tranquil.” We can see our fingernails and hair, so we can cut them and wash them when they are dirty. But what about the mind and thoughts? What do we do with them? If, for example, when you are facing another person, whether that person is a parent, a child, a friend or whoever, does that person change as you want them to? Isn’t it the case that more often than not they don’t change in the way you would like them to? In those cases when they do not change in the way I want them to, I find that sometimes I want to change the other person’s mind or I get angry or I think silly things or I complain about them. How about you? We can trim our fingernails, but how can we set in order those kinds of thoughts? Our biggest wish as Buddhists is to put these thoughts in order; it is, in other words, to enter the world where Nirvana is pure and tranquil. This is a very difficult thing, but you have already met a wonderful thing and that is zazen.

If we look at Shakyamuni Buddha’s teaching from a slightly different angle. Buddhism is said to be a religion of self-awakening and compassion. Self-awakening or realization is to know and understand conditions and this

includes everything, regardless of whether they can or cannot be seen, can or cannot be studied, exist or do not exist, can or cannot be understood. I think it is nearly impossible to study and understand all of these conditions. Nevertheless, I think that at least we can become aware of the conditions in our own lives. This includes all of you, of course. In my own case, however, I didn’t understand the conditions of my own life. In other words, why am I here, how did it come to be this way, how should I live my life – I didn’t understand any of these things. However, I was able to come to some self-awareness from an event that took place eighteen years ago. I met a priest who was born in 1965 and was quite a bit younger than myself. I heard him give a speech that was about twenty minutes long at a certain study meeting we were both attending. I don’t remember all of it, but the part I would like to relate to you left a deep impression on me. This young man was from Kokura, a town in the northern part of Kyushu which is in the western part of Japan. I think he was twenty-five or twenty-six at the time.

This is what he said; “On August 9, 1945, a single bomber plane flew up from the south toward Japan. It was headed for Kokura in northern Kyushu. However, the sky was cloudy in Kokura that day. For that reason, the airplane couldn’t find the bomb target, so the nose of the airplane turned to the west. After flying for some time, the streets of the city that was the second-priority target came into sight. There were some clouds in the sky over this city, but because there was concern about the amount of fuel needed to return, the second of a new type of bomb was dropped on the city. In other words, the airplane dropped an atomic bomb and left. That town was the port city of Nagasaki. It seems that Nagasaki was not the first-priority target, but was the second priority.”

The young priest continued, “I learned this fact from materials released by the United States following World War II. As a young person, I know that in history and in human life, we don’t talk about “what if” such and such had happened and so on, but I did think about it. If, on that particular day, the skies above Kokura had been clear, there is no doubt that the atomic bomb would have been dropped on Kokura and not Nagasaki. In that case, my mother would have been struck by the bomb, as she

---

attended an elementary school in the middle of the Kokura. From the devastation caused in Nagasaki, I know that it's highly probable that she would have died. If my mother had been killed, I wouldn't have been born."

He continued, "If I think about it this way, then the bomb dropped on Nagasaki isn't somebody else's problem. The atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima isn't someone else's problem. Then, I realized that World War II, the war that over twenty years before I was born, is not something unconnected to me."

My intention in relating this story today is not to speak about whether dropping the atom bomb was right or wrong. I would rather like you to understand this to mean that this negative cause for mankind's misfortune is also related to my own life. I think my life is connected to those things I'm aware of as well as to all those things that I cannot see or know, as in this story. My life is connected to conditions all the way back to the far, far past. This isn't only true for me, but is also true for all of you. It is because of those conditions and circumstances that I'm here and you're here. How will you use that life that has come about through these conditions? Will we simply entrust our life to greed, anger, and ignorance or will we aim to live our life in an orderly way like trimming our fingernails? Which will it be? My intention is to walk the Way of Buddha, the way of bringing joy to my life. I'm certain that zazen is the center part of that. However, there are cases where zazen has no meaning, if we only think of it in terms of sitting and folding our legs. As I mentioned earlier, I would like to think about how we are going to use those many conditions that have resulted in our lives here, right now. I would like to convey that message to you.

### **Words of Wisdom from the Head Priest Regarding Sotoshu Teaching Activities in 2008**

"Remember, kind speech arises from a loving mind, and the seed of a loving mind is compassion."

Kind speech is words to give life to people, guiding them on the Way of Buddha. Kind speech begins with love for people. Loving mind is the basis for the heart of compassion we have for each other and comes through the realization that we are supported by and support each

other within limitless conditions.

Has there ever been a time such as the present one where language has become so corrupt? Rough and sloppy use of language causes disturbance in the world and drives society to become a place where there isn't loving mind or compassion and where there is disdain for life.

Language is an expression of thought; it isn't simply words or a means to communicate. It is pregnant with each person's personality and it creates our individual character. We must be careful with each and every word we say.

In fact, family life as well as international society moves with language. Favorable relations are connected with agreeable words. Let's speak to each other with the same mind that can be gentle and kind in front of an infant child. While praising virtuous actions without hesitation, we mustn't forget to be compassionate precisely at those times when people are unable to be virtuous.

The fulfillment of the slogan set up by the Sotoshu of "Human rights, peace, and the environment" isn't something that is separate from everyday life. The practice of kind speech is to cultivate people who are flexible, who foster the self which cares for others, who consequently respect human rights, who vow to make peace, and who are concerned about the environment.

By inheriting the teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha and practicing kind speech based on genuine faith, we take the first step in building a society that overflows with compassion.

Let us remember to use kind speech every day.  
Namu Shakyamuni Buddha."

This is a message from the Head Priest of the Sotoshu, Fukuyama Taiho Zenji. There isn't time for me to explain this message word for word, but I would like to have you clearly understand this in the context of the zazen we practice. It is to live our life – this life that arises through conditions – in a way that is connected to and directed toward things other than ourselves. This also applies to the words we use – true loving words coming from that heart – that have the power to greatly change

---

the values of another person. A person who lives like this is a person who walks the way that approaches Shakyamuni Buddha – in other words, the way a Bodhisattva lives. The basis for this is zazen, of course. Nevertheless, as I said at the beginning, there isn't much meaning if you only feel good while you are sitting in zazen. This is the same as quitting and yet it would be very difficult to live our life so that we are sitting twenty four hours every day. We cannot do that, but we can live a life of zazen.

Among Dogen Zenji's words are the following instructions for zazen, "Sit upright in the correct position leaning neither to the left nor to the right, neither forward nor backward." If something comes toward you that you are not good at or a person who you find difficult to deal with or something that you don't want to encounter, don't you try to escape? If someone who has a pleasing appearance, someone you like, something good, someone

who is a smooth talker comes along, don't you approach those things? If you feel sad or miserable, you lean forward, don't you? If something good happens or you succeed at something, don't you find yourself leaning back a little with your nose in the air? Yes, we do have those inclinations, but not doing those things is the life of zazen. Then, living itself becomes the life of zazen and not only when you are sitting in zazen. This is something very difficult. But you have this opportunity to practice zazen, so my wish is that you will practice zazen in a way that is directed toward things outside of your own life. Then, zazen will have connections with the problems mentioned in the Sotoshu slogan, "Human rights, peace, and the environment." I hope you will live in a way that is like the example I mentioned of keeping your fingernails clean and trimmed. I hope you will be able to come close to Shakyamuni Buddha.

Here, I would like to conclude today's Dharma talk.



## "Bukkyo Tozen – Buddhism in American Life" Part II

Speaker: Dr. Rev. Duncan Ryuken Williams  
University of California, Berkeley  
Associate Professor of Japanese Buddhism  
Chair, Center for Japanese Studies

The well-known Vietnamese teacher, Thich Nhat Hahn, talks about Buddhist ethics as if it were, "like the North Star." As you know in the times of slavery in the United States, African-American slaves moved to the North (and thereby freedom) would use the North Star at night to help guide them toward freedom, toward liberation. And Thich Nhat Hahn suggests using that metaphor to think about ethics, and that is to say we use these principles – do not kill, do not lie – as guideposts, as directional guides toward which we walk because that will get us to freedom. But we don't actually go to the North Star. Why? Because there is no oxygen up there. In other words, the point is not to get to the North Star. The point is to move north. And so, in other words, Buddhism is encouraging us to move north, to move towards freedom. We may fall off the path once in a while, but we're trying

to move north. That's our task as fellow Buddhists to help each other to move in that direction.

Ultimately the guiding principle that underlies all the precepts is that of non-suffering. If suffering is our Buddhist problematic, the alleviation of suffering is also our project. This is another important contribution we Buddhists could make to discussions of ethics and to discussions about the environment. When we say "Do not kill" we don't just mean do not kill other human beings, but in the Indic-Buddhist tradition, ethics was expanded to all sentient beings – animals, plants, our entire eco-system. So, our responsibility is not just to each other as human beings, our ethical responsibility is to all of us together in this interconnected jewel that is called Planet Earth. It's a common problem, if we think about

---

it. If we expand our notion of ethics in that way, then it becomes difficult to keep precepts, you know, let's just take do not kill. Let's say, you know, in some Buddhist countries like in Taiwan there are lots of groups of Buddhists who practice vegetarianism and there is a tradition of vegetarianism in Japanese Buddhism. At Eiheiji and Sojiji, they serve "shojin ryori", or vegetarian cuisine. This idea of not taking life in that sense has always been a part of the Buddhist tradition. But Dogen and others kind of pushed us on this question. Because he's says, "Well, how about "Somoku jobutsu?" In other words, plants and trees also are part of that Buddha-nature, are also part of the ethical world in which we live. Mountains and rivers, plants and trees, that's part of our world, part of our responsibility. So, even if you are vegetarian, you are still killing. You're still taking life, right? So, how do we do that? And so, among the Jains in India, they took that principle even further, they were very famous, they had these special ways of walking so they would never step on insects, they would take these filters so that whenever they drank water, no insects would be in it. And in the Jain tradition, actually very few people did this, but they became the great masters and exemplars of that tradition if they would actually starve themselves to death. So, they would start to become vegetarian, they would start to eat only things that fall from trees, and eventually focused on total raw foods and then ultimately their point was self-extinction. Why? Because they share with Buddhists this idea of suffering, that this world involves suffering. And they also wanted to alleviate it. They thought the best thing to do was to simply disappear; in other words, they thought that simply by being alive you cause suffering. And it's quite true, right? Because we consume, we say stupid things to other people and make them suffer. We blunder and make mistakes all the time in our families and affect our parents or children, our siblings in unfortunate ways. Our existence involves suffering, we cause it all the time. And so, the Jains' solution to this was self-extinction, self-annihilation. But the Buddha's point was, you know what, you can't go to that kind of extreme because the Buddha always advocated the Middle Path. So, his point was "even if you do that and you self-extinguish yourself and think that's freedom, that's liberation, you're still killing someone, yourself. It's a kind of suicide." So, the Buddha did not advocate suicide. He also did not

advocate "indulgence" in a way that imposes, impinges on, and causes suffering in others. So, he advocated a Middle Path one that recognized that we do by our very existence live in a world of suffering, cause suffering, and are the recipients of suffering and that the Buddhist project is to somehow alleviate that but not through self-extinction. So, we have to live, we have to find ways of taking all these ethical principles, but we have to do it in a way that sees, just like that North Star metaphor, sees the Path for what it is and don't get stuck on the concepts as an absolute, unchangeable things, but rather as a guidepost that helps us move towards freedom, move towards liberation, gives us some sense of what that ethical path is about. And I think this particular attitude is helpful, not only with all of these things that we personally face, but in thinking about larger social questions, about bigger environmental questions. We know that can't move from our modern consumer society all of a sudden back to the Stone Age, which is what some environmentalists propose that we do. We need to find a way—for example, the Toyota Prius, Japanese makers of environmentally-friendly refrigerators, I think these are good things. In other words, they are positive steps, I mean is it better not to drive than to drive? Sure. But if you're going to drive let's do it in a way that uses less oil, that finds new methods to reduce our dependence on oil. If we're going to have the convenience of life before refrigerators versus what we have today, we probably want refrigerators in our lives, but can we possibly encourage our economy and our policy makers to build in incentives not only to consumers but to manufacturers to have environmentally-friendly, low-impact, washing machines and refrigerators? That, I think, is a good idea. These are things, I think, Buddhists can advocate for. That is to say a Buddhist position isn't, "Well, we can't keep any precepts, we can't live ethically and therefore we just live a life of indulgence and we just spend money and buy as many things as possible. Who cares about whether this destroys other people's lives or the environment?" I think that the position we want to reject. We also, I think, are conscious that we cannot live perfect lives, we cannot live a life completely free from causing suffering, well, then, maybe we might envision in a very idealistic sense of a time before human beings started develop technology, human beings started to develop markets and consumer culture. There are some people in the environmental

---

movement that would advocate a kind of return to those more simple times. I think that Buddhists would understand that although that's a wonderful vision, although like the North Star is a wonderful direction we might think about, but we cannot live in this kind of perfect, idealistic world, but we are always confronted with choices, decisions, and sometimes we are forced to make the best choice possible. We have to choose the better of two not-so-good choices. But I think that's another wonderful thing about Buddhism. Buddhism is a realistic religion. It's about realism. Not about how we wish things to be, but how things actually are and how we take things from there and go on and live it out. And we have some wonderful teachings to help us think about how we can do that.

Let me enter the third and final treasure of our tradition and that's the Sangha. I think I mentioned this kind of narrow idea of Sangha in early texts talk about the four parts of the Sangha which are the monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen, the people for whom the Buddha is the vision, the Dharma is the teaching and the transmission of that teaching into our daily lives, and the Sangha is the community that helps to support us to do that. It is the community also, I would suggest in the broader sense, of the larger bio-living community in which we find ourselves embedded, in which we find our individual jewels reflecting and reflected by all the rest of the universe. And that's our Sangha. Buddhists not only have something to offer, they have already been very involved in forming a Sangha-community, forms of Sangha communal living and lifestyle that has already made an impact on the environmental movement. There are already so many people in the environmental movement who have found Buddhism to be a wonderful resource not only for vision, but for action; not only for how to envision a new human-nature- society, but how to, in their own lives, as environmental activists employ Buddhism. For example, in environmental activism as many social movements, it's easy to get angry, it's easy to be upset, and it's easy to be disgusted by a certain company polluting a certain place, to be disgusted by our government that doesn't seem to care. It's easy to be upset and some people, such as environmental activists who are engaged in the world, use that anger as a motivator, to motivate their actions. And I think what people have

learned over time is that you can't sustain your own activism and you can't sustain a movement with anger. Otherwise, once you stop getting angry, you lose your motivation. You have to artificially find a way to get angry again. And it's actually not only a very destructive thing for yourself, but it's destructive for organizations and communities and practices. And I think people look to Buddhism precisely to offer ways to deal with the internal environment and the external environment, ways to deal with and handle a proper demeanor towards our engagement in the world. And so, there are lots of different environmentalists, people like Bill Devall, the founder of the so-called Deep Ecology movement in the United States, people like John Seed, the founder of Rainforest Action Network, people like Joanna Macy, who also helped found Rainforest Action Network, as well as these movements for thinking about nuclear waste, Jim Thompson the head of the National Resource Defense Council the largest environmental law group, and the former head of the Sierra Club is a Buddhist. There are lots of people in these movements who have found something valuable in our tradition. And not only as individuals, but in terms of Sangha.

And I'm thinking of examples not only here in the United States but in Asia. I think one of the most inspiring movements we've seen in Myanmar/Burma, all those Buddhist monks, you know, recently in a very dignified, silent way conducted themselves to attest to a wrong. We know that in Burma, however bad the repression of that regime, people look to Buddhist monks as a source of moral strength. Buddhist monks are not trying to create a new political party, but simply in a quiet and dignified way, they, at their temples and sometimes on the streets when they are collecting alms, do very simple acts like putting down their alms bowls towards members of the regime that are involved in gross violations of human rights. They are saying, "Until you change the way you treat people, we will not give you moral sanction to do what you're doing." In a quiet and dignified way, they have been contributing and I'm thinking of similar kinds of movements in other parts of Southeast Asia. There is a very inspiring story of the so-called "ecology monks" in the northeastern parts of Thailand. I'm ashamed to say that some of our Japanese multi-nationals went into Sarawak and Thailand to log in

---

rainforests in a very unsustainable way. As you know, there are ways to log...so this is kind of the Buddhist Middle Path, so there are ways to log...it's not a matter of not logging at all (we need pieces of paper and wood products), but logging in sustainable ways, ones where we leave forests for our children and grandchildren and future generations. And so, when we engage in certain kinds of clear cutting, it entirely demolishes a forest in a way that doesn't allow it to regrow again, which is what this particular Japanese company is doing in Southeast Asia. In Thailand, a group of monks got together and proclaimed "This is our home" because literally it is their home, they are so-called "forest monks." They don't live in the cities or temples, they practice in the forests and they practice meditation there for years. They receive visitors and help them out. They are people who live in the forests, practicing meditation very deeply. They know about the local ecology, they know which herbs help to cure people. People come to see them from villages nearby. They are very intimately connected to the forest and so it's not only a threat to their existences, it's a very threat to Buddhism as they know it. You can't practice that kind of Buddhism in a city and the Buddha himself trained in a forest. He himself attained enlightenment under the Bodhi tree. He understood. I mean that's why we say every temple has a "mountain name." So we understand that a Buddhist temple where we practice our Buddhism, sometimes need to happen in nature. Which is why in China, Japan, and Korea, we have a temple name but we also have a so-called "mountain name", that in the natural context is a place where we can practice our Buddhism in a very particular way. So these monks, concerned about not only their personal habitat being destroyed, but their concern about the natural environment of Thailand being destroyed. They went around and ordained trees. It seems like a very strange concept, ordaining trees. What does it mean? We know that in the Japanese tradition we have an interesting combination of robes where we wear a Japanese kimono and a Confucian scholar's black robe and then a Buddhist *okesa* robe on top of that. We have this tripartite, interesting cultural dimension, but in Thailand and in Southeast Asia, the monks wear saffron-colored robes. So, what these monks did is that people in that part of Asia know that that color of robe, that sort of cloth represents a Buddhist monk. We have the precept do not kill. But in Southeast Asia,

the killing of a monk is a particularly grave offense. And so what they did is that they took strips of saffron-colored cloth and then entered these massive forests and they would pick trees in very strategic, in terms of logging, locations, the largest trees, and they would tie these saffron robes around these trees. And although the company was Japanese and the managers and onsite managers were Japanese, it was local Thai people that were on the logging crews. When they saw these trees with the Buddhist monastic robes, in other words, the monks had done a ceremony as it were to ordain these trees as monks and as a symbol of that they had a robe around them. And when the local Thai people saw that, somewhere in their hearts they couldn't get themselves to go on logging. They all went on strike. And that allowed enough of a moment for local environmentalists to negotiate with the Japanese company that ended up practicing a much more sustainable kind of logging practice in that part of the world. So this is a very concrete although small example, I think, of people who in community decide that protecting the environment is not only good thing as modern people, but it's also a Buddhist value. That when Dogen says that "mountains and rivers preach the Dharma," he isn't talking about it metaphorically. People in medieval Japan like Dogen and all those people involved in Shugendo, the mountain practice, they walked. You know, there's that wonderful fascicle in the *Shobogenzo* called "Mountains and Rivers Sutra." I often interpret that sutra not only metaphorically, I mean you could interpret that as a metaphor for form and emptiness and there are different levels of interpretation we could give to that, but I believe Dogen walked those mountains and he saw those waterfalls and some of them literally were preaching the Dharma. As modern people, we don't tend to think in those terms, it's always a metaphor about how Nature embodies something, but he saw the waterfall chant, reciting the 84,000 scriptures. This is something he writes. So, I think there is something about as a Buddhist not allowing simply because of corporate greed or simply because of certain kinds of notions of the development to destroy our natural environment, but we need to keep our mountains and our rivers because that is where the Dharma is preaching to us. So, that's just one example.

In the area I come from and our fellow Sotoshu people

---

across the Bay associated with the San Francisco Zen Center, I think they've done something very interesting: the Green Gulch Zen Center and Farm. In San Francisco Bay area, there's the City Center and the monastery at Tassajara and then this farm. I think it exemplifies something about the Sangha as a community dedicating oneself in an intentional way. We can all do that in our temples, too. We can find ways to live lighter. In Japan, I know of lots of Sotoshu temples that have put solar panels on their roofs. I know one temple in Sendai, you know it's a big temple, so they get all of those people coming at Obon who leave all of the flowers they bring. And every year, they had to throw all of those flowers out and there were tons of them because it was a huge temple. So the priest came up with a plan that not only during Obon but throughout the year to start a composting program that local junior high school students and a local farm and that students would learn about how composting works and how farming works and how organic farming works. So, that kind of thing already happens in Japan and in the United States. I think Green Gulch Farm is a great example of the Sangha saying "You know, let's take this environmental issue seriously as part of our Buddhist practice and not just as a project. And so, people there, you know they have a similar schedule as everybody else. They wake up in the morning and they chant and the morning thing and they have evening zazen, etc. But during the day, the residents engage in farming and I think it's a very interesting concept because it's an organic farm. They learn about the land on which they live, they take that food and eat it themselves, but also in an interesting move, they find a way of growing vegetables and understanding organic principles and thinking about their ecology and watershed there, but translating that also into another spoke of the Buddhist path and that is "right livelihood."

You know we have the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, one of the spokes of the Eightfold Path is "right livelihood." How do we live a life in which we can earn money and think about how we earn our living in a way that is extremely interesting and suggestive for us? They take their produce and sell it to a great number of institutions in the San Francisco area, in particular Greens, a well-known restaurant that members of the San Francisco Zen Center founded in the beginning. And

they found a way to sell their produce, a way to make something that is not causing suffering, but actually trying to reduce suffering by not using pesticides, by finding ways to live lightly on the Earth. And people benefit from that by getting a supply of organic produce and they benefit from that by having an income source. And I think there's the Buddhist concept of "self benefiting other and other benefiting self like one big circle." I think that is a key concept in Buddhism that helps engage us in ethical behavior in Sangha. And in Sangha in a way thought more broadly.

So, let's apply this idea to economics. How do you run a company? Because most companies in modern Western capitalism is about how do you meet the bottom line? How do you get your fourth quarter numbers up? It's about how do one makes a profit without considering others. And in fact, others are your competitors. So, what are Buddhist ideas about economics? First, we understand that we live in this jeweled net in this interconnected world and that how we act as a business as an economic entity has impacts beyond ourselves, that when you make a product that is actually based on polluting the river, we have to take that into account. That is also a cost that we all bear in some other way. It may be a superfund kind of thing that the taxpayers have to pay for sometime down the line or something else. Or maybe the fish are dying and the fishermen who depend on it, that industry is affected. But then somehow we need to find a way to think about our economic activity in the larger context of how it impacts other people and that can be everything from management styles within the company, how do you treat your employees, do you use Buddhist ideas of kindness and mutual alleviation of suffering or do we only think of ourselves in this kind of greedy, self-centered way. We know that the two main ways that the Buddha provides us with reducing suffering, because there are some things you can't help. You can't help dying, you can't help getting sick, and that's part of life. But there are two parts of that chain where we can break suffering and one part is ignorance, right? That's the Buddha part, the way we see things. If we change it from an ignorant perspective to one imbued with wisdom, we can reduce suffering. The other big one is greed. Dogen talks about increasing wisdom and decreasing greed, that's another teaching that he gives us. The idea that the best way to

---

live a Buddhist life is to let go of ignorance and increase wisdom and decrease greed. And what is its replacement? It's compassion. So, greed is self-centered. If greed is about "how can this benefit me," compassion is about "how can this benefit me and others." Its not altruism, in contrast with Christianity. You know Catholic charity is a great thing, you know with homeless shelters and so on, but the attitude is kind of like "Oh, those poor homeless people." It's like "We're better and they're in this unfortunate thing, so we've got to help them out." It's a fairly common kind of attitude. I think it's misleading, but the Buddha teaches us something else. He doesn't say we should think "I'm better than those people; I'm morally or financially better and off so on." We help other people because they are in suffering and we are in suffering with them. That is the meaning of compassion. If you look at the root of compassion it is "con + passio." "Passio" means "suffering" and "con" means "together with", and so to have compassion means that we suffer together with others. So, it's not because we are on a high horse and we think we're better and so we're going to help these poor people out. We help people out because that's our life. We help people out because they're us and we're them. Because we live in this interrelated jeweled net.

In conclusion, Buddhism provides us with these three major things. It's provides us with a vision, the Buddha, a way of seeing the world that leads to liberation. It provides us with the Dharma, the various teachings of how to put that vision into practice, how to embody that vision, how to take those teachings into our lives, live them out in internal life, in our social life, in our family life, in our broader political and economic and environmental life. And then we do that not as individuals. You know sometimes in American Buddhism you get this idea like well, you just sit on a cushion doing zazen and that's it. But you all know at the temple that's not true. We practice Buddhism by being community with each other. That's Sangha.

Jakusho Kwong, a Sotoshu person, once gave a wonderful image of Sangha, he said that he once went to Japan and he went to Suzuki Roshi's son's temple and he was asked for one of the meals to wash some potatoes, those Japanese potatoes that have little roots coming out of them. And so he was trying to clean them very carefully

one by one and Suzuki Roshi's son came by and said "No, no, no." He took a bucket and put all of the potatoes in there and started to rub them against each other and get them clean and those little knobs off that way. Well, that's Sangha. We know that in our community or temple life, we rub against each other, but that rubbing against each other in community, if we do it in the right way, gives us strength. That's what Sangha is about, giving us a strength and a community, that we're not alone in this world. We're not alone doing Buddhism. We do Buddhism as part of a community, as part of our temple life and this is one of the great things, I think, of this particular gathering of Sotoshu members. You are the members that make up this community.

When I became a priest, my teacher Ogasawara Sensei said, "Duncan, do you even know what it means to be a priest?" I didn't know. And he sort of wanted to test me so he goes "Do you know what it means to be a priest?" And I said, "No, I don't. Please tell me." And he said, "When you become a priest, you won't have any more time." And then he went on to explain, "Well, if you're a priest, it means you offer to serve the community, the Sangha. And that means that people can come by at midnight. You can't say 'Don't come.' As a priest, you have to welcome people all the time. And when you put robes on, that means 'How can I help you?' So, when you put your robes on, it means you let go of yourself; your own personal time, your own personal space, you let go of that and you say 'How can I help you?'" So, I said, "I'll still like to become a priest." But you know what, a priest can't do anything unless there are people there. So, all of you being there, you are helping the priests, which is to help with the Dharma. And all of you being there are like those potatoes rubbing against each other creating energy and creating community and the strength for each other and for the priest to go in that direction.

It's not always perfect, right? We fall off the path often, but the Sangha reminds us that we can always get back on the path when we practice zazen together, for instance. We have a monitor going around and we notice "The monitor's coming around and I'm all bent this way or I'm totally not here." It gives us strength to get back on the path. So, I just want to end with this thought that together, if we practice together this way, that if we

---

embody the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, that we will actually create something new in North America. This is an opportunity for us to do what the Buddha prophesized. He prophesized that Buddhism would always move eastward. Now, I'm not sure if he actually thought about this conference, but I think he had some inkling that the Dharma could spread and that it could spread to places that may be unlikely and it is somewhat

unlikely that Buddhism will become part of the American religious landscape, but our presence, your work at your temples is precisely doing the work of the Buddha, is precisely embodying and fulfilling the prophesy of "Bukkyo Tozen." So, I thank you for your work, I thank you for your efforts, and I hope we'll have a wonderful time this afternoon as different Sanghas get together. Thank you.



## About the 2008 Sotoshu Ango in Europe Ango: Refreshing Our Practice

By Rev. Genshin Laurent Strim  
Dojo du Chatelet, France (Disciple of Rev. Hakudo Fujii)

It is one thing to practice Zen in one's everyday life and it is another thing to leave one's everyday life to practice Zen. It is one thing to study Zen teachings in everyday life and it is another thing to study everyday life in the light of Zen. Ango is to refresh our practice, like diving into its source.

The first angou organized by Sotoshu Shumuchō in Europe, in the autumn of the year 2007, brought together eleven European monks and nuns, all of them being quite long-standing practitioners of Zen. Three of them, including myself, were lucky enough to also join the second angou, which was held in the autumn of 2008. Moreover, I had the opportunity to experience angou in Japan at Sojiji Soin Monastery, where my teacher lives. One could be tempted to make a list of the differences between angou in Japan and angou in Europe, or between the two European angous, knowing that there was twice the number of participants at the second one and that they were coming from different continents. There were cultural differences, linguistic obstacles, and sometimes small divergences between the teachings received or the expectations of all the participants.

In any event, angou is always, for everybody, a break with his or her habits. We are not in our own home, we are in the home of the Buddha and ancestors, following

rules they established beyond time and boundaries. Even if we have been practicing Zen for a long time and even if we are usually living in a temple as a monk, when we enter the sodo (monastery) we become beginners again. We have to learn again how to sit, how to eat, and we must study new teachings and new manners. We have to forget what we thought to be the right manner, and sometimes what we thought to be the best mental attitude.

In the life of the temple also, angou is a kind of a new beginning, sometimes even an occasion for a new departure. Beginners and senior monks must meet each other. Beginners must learn new gestures, new chants. Senior monks must remember the gestures of last year or of the last season. Those lapses in remembering the forms for rituals that have been forgotten or that have become so natural the body knows how to perform them but the mind cannot explain – all those procedures by trial and error are everywhere and always the same. During that last angou in La Gendronniere, we were often discussing together – the staff, senior monks and beginners – about how we should do this or that, or even what we should or should not do. We have to come to terms with the circumstances (for example, the number or the age of the participants) and create a fresh and vivid atmosphere.

Angou means also new relationships. It is not only that

we meet new companions of practice and have to support each other, not only that we have the opportunity to receive the teachings of different teachers with different views, but living together in the boat of *ango* for three months, 24 hours upon 24 hours, people become more quickly and more deeply intimate with each other. Even people that we knew before reveal a new face. To meet friends in the *dharma*, to become intimate and to weave a network of good relations is not the least of the benefits of *ango*.

Of course this everyday life with the others is not always idyllic and it takes time to find harmony between people. And this harmony always remains very precarious. We have to find how to be with others, to refrain from our outbursts of temper, not to stagnate in negative moods, to transform our whole life in practice whatever happens.

Ceremonies have a special importance in the setting up of the harmony in the temple. It takes time for the voices to come in tune during the chanting, or for the movements of the *jisha* to be in synch with the movements of the *doshi*. Our behavior during ceremonies is a very good mirror of our state of mind, of the depth of our involvement in the present moment, of the attention we pay to others. Several times, the atmosphere of this *ango* was disturbed by groups of incomers. It was during ceremonies that this disturbance was the more noticeable. The voices while chanting sutras got out of tune. When the incomers left, we found harmony again, like the sea becoming quiet again after a wave has passed. If the incomers stayed a little bit longer, they joined us in the learning of rituals and we could find harmony together.

The training moments were also very precious time. To learn rituals is for everybody to be confronted with himself or herself, with his own inhibitions, with his fear to do wrong and to disturb the others, with her difficulties to learn new things and sometime the lack of meaning of what she is doing. In the end, everyone enters into the game, trying to go further his or her own limitations and accepting the teachings from his own mistakes as from the others' mistakes.

Without understanding, we drift with the very simple

life of *ango*, we let the *Dharma* turn us until we understand that each of us, interacting with others, is turning the *Dharma* Wheel and creating this spontaneous and infectious joy of *ango*. For this, I feel very grateful to the people who made this *ango* possible and hope this kind of practice will take root everywhere people feel the need to refresh their practice by studying the ancient way.



Breakfast



Morning Service



---

## Including Others

By Rev. Denshō Quintero  
Daishinji, Colombia (Disciple of Rev. Shohaku Okumura)

In order to build a serious practice in Colombia, there is no doubt that we must seek nourishment from and follow the regulations of our Soto School and tradition. According to the regulations for monks, in order to become certified as a teacher, it is necessary to attend a certain number of angos, depending on one's academic education. Until now, it was necessary to enter a Japanese temple to have access to official training. This was a difficult endeavour for westerners, partially because of language barriers. So even though some present-day western teachers have obtained certification after training in Japan, the percentage they represent is very small – especially considering the amount of monks and the diversity of temples and centers in the West. There is no doubt that in this part of the world there is a growing need to receive this type of training. It is clearly evident in the growing number of participants in the Ango – both the first one held in Europe in 2007 and the second one in 2008.

In my case, my attendance in the Ango was not only motivated by my interest in becoming certified as a teacher, but also in my desire to learn as much as I could from the tradition and Japanese monks. Further, I was motivated by the aspiration to share what I learned with the people who practice with me in Colombia. Since the time I decided to develop a practice center in Bogota many years ago, my main motivation was to awaken in others the consciousness that we are all part of the same Living Net – and that whatever we do affects all other beings. Furthermore, I am convinced that no matter how much we devote ourselves to the Way, if we do not include others in our own practice it is senseless. So when I received the invitation sent by Soto Zen Buddhism North American Office to participate in this Ango, I knew that attending was important not only for my personal path, but essential to the propagation work we are doing in Colombia. We are sure that these teachings can be helpful to build a more peaceful and helpful society, which is so needed in our country. In order to

attend to the Ango, I received great support from all the members of our sangha and from many friends. I am grateful to everyone.

For me, it was very emotional to return to La Gendronnière, the monastery where the Ango was held, and where, 21 years earlier, I had received Tokudo for the first time. The first thing that surprised me was the average age of the practitioners was over forty, and most of the participants had been practicing for many years. Nevertheless, all of us were there together, for three months, to learn and to carry out a practice conforming to the Japanese Soto School standards. Since the very first day, everyone showed a wonderful beginner's mind, willing to bring the best of him or herself forward to develop a harmonious practice. I have great memories of every one of the monks in training, and from each of them I learned a lot.

Two instructions we often heard there were: “Do not be afraid to make mistakes”, and “to make mistakes is OK”. However, Rev. Yokoyama, through his compassionate scolding, made sure we had understood that all mistakes were in the past. Not grasping onto the past and making efforts to be present and awaken in the actual responsibility, which meant not making mistakes, was very important. It was clear from the beginning that even though we were there to practice following the daily schedule of Japanese Soto Zen temples, our true practice was “*to study ourselves*” through those daily activities. To do that, it was necessary “*to forget ourselves*” – to forget what we thought we knew, to forget our personal way of doing things, to forget our own views and personal interests, and do all of our practice for the benefit of the community. “*To be verified by, and included in the practice of others*” was for me actualizing the famous teaching in Dogen Zenji's *Genjokoan*.

One of the greatest lessons I received during this Ango was the example of each of the Sotoshu staff members and

the availability of every Japanese monk who came to practice with us. I am very grateful for all their work and commitment and I am very sorry I cannot name and thank everyone. Nevertheless, the Abbot, Imamura Roshi, and Rev. Yokoyama left a deep impression on me; Imamura Roshi, because of his silent practice, his subtle way of doing things and his presence, was a permanent example. Rev. Yokoyama guided and taught us with admirable commitment, deep passion, and without reserve. He was always present and available, with his eyes and ears wide open, willing to give his best to help us in whatever was needed. To both of them I wish to express my deepest and most respectful gratitude.

Personally, the Ango experience was very enriching. To practice the things I learned, and to try not to let my mistakes disturb the rhythm of daily temple life was very challenging. During the Ango, there were times when we did physical work and what I enjoyed most was working outdoors in the forest, carrying lumber in the middle of a fantastic landscape. Regarding the study, I learned a lot and I took pleasure in the lectures given by different teachers. One of them was my Teacher Okumura Roshi, who gave amazing lectures about the *Tenzo Kyokun*. I think that the schedule – consisting of study, work and zazen practice – was well balanced.

Both the organization of the Ango, and the supporting materials given during it were impeccable as well. I recognize that an Ango with these characteristics requires a lot of money, energy, and human resources. There is no doubt that Sotoshu is making big effort to carry the practice beyond the boundaries of Japan, allowing monks and nuns in the West to deepen their practice and to continue their process of becoming certified teachers, able to transmit the tradition in a way that is alive. We know it took centuries for Zen to mature and to acquire the characteristics of the school that arrived to us. And even though Zen has been practiced by natives for decades in the United States and in Europe before it arrived in Colombia, we cannot deny that in any of the countries where participants in the Ango came from, practice is still very young compared with Japan. It will take many more years before it grows deep roots and takes its own expression in these new soils.

I think that for those of us who are trying to develop this practice in our own countries, we have to receive nourishment from the source of Japanese Zen and at the same time, offer to Japan the youthful energy of a sincere and devoted practice. That is why I think that if the Japanese Soto School truly wants to become a universal practice, it is important to keep making effort to allow more and more practitioners to have access to this education. I wish that this type of Ango could become not only more frequent, but also that there can be the establishment of permanent education centers outside Japan, or allowing already existent temples to become a training monastery.

These days, it seems clear that humankind is governed by the three poisonous minds. I refer to my own country as an example because of the prevalence of violence, social injustice, poverty, discrimination, and inequality, and therefore of the urgency of expanding our practice. We must create the resources for this mission to expand – not only from a center point (Japan), but from many places. If we consider our effort as bringing the light of Dharma to the world through our practice, we must realize that one lonely light does not shine as brightly as many lights from diverse corners.



Opening Ceremony

---

## Shobogenzo Zazenshin - A Free Translation (4)

Rev. Issho Fujita, Leader of the Masenkai

When Nangaku said, “Is it right to hit the cart or is it right to hit the ox?” he wasn’t asking to choose between hitting the cart or hitting the ox, like forcing to choose only between A or B. He wasn’t asking to choose which one is correct. (Putting this into the context of zazen, he wasn’t saying we must choose one or the other, based on the dualism of practice /realization.) No, he was saying that surely it can be “hitting the cart” as well as “hitting the ox.” It meant that “It is sometimes all right to hit the cart and it’s sometimes all right to hit the ox as well.” Does this mean hitting the cart and hitting the ox are the same? Or are they not the same? Since a person riding in a cart pulled by an ox is used as a metaphor for sitting in zazen and “person-ox-cart” is seen as one unified whole, then it is possible to understand this to mean that both hitting the cart and hitting the ox are pointing to practicing zazen in which a person is hitting(practicing) the ox-cart .

At the same time, however, we mustn’t overlook the difference between them. Hitting the cart is a metaphor of the practice of zazen and hitting the ox is a metaphor of the verification of becoming buddha. The two things are neither one nor two. It is a relationship in which those two are “not the same” and also” not separate.” In the everyday world when the ox-cart doesn’t move forward, there is no principle of hitting the cart. In the world of common, deluded human beings, there is no way of hitting the cart, but we learn through Nangaku’s words that in the Way of Buddha there is this principle of hitting the cart. In the study of the Way, this is the important point and the place we must keep our attention on. Nevertheless, even if we learn that in the Way of Buddha there is this principle of hitting the cart, we mustn’t simply assume that this is the same as hitting the ox. Regarding this point, we must closely investigate it. We must really delve into the principles of zazen (=hitting the cart).

Also, even though there is, in the everyday world, this principle that we would usually hit the ox when the ox-cart doesn’t move forward, we mustn’t take it for granted that hitting the ox in the context of the Buddhadharma is

the same way of hitting the ox as it is done in the context of the usual way of doing this in the everyday world. We must look into this question further and really investigate it. That is to say we must delve into the question: what is the ox in the Buddhadharma and what does it mean to hit or prod? Is it to hit a water buffalo? (This is the ox that appears in the koan of Nansen Fugan and Isan Reiyu.) Is it to hit an iron ox? (This is the ox that appears in the koan of Zengetsu Koen and Fuketsu Ensho.) Is it to hit a mud ox? (An ox referred to in the words of Ryuzan.) (These are the references to cows and oxen in famous Zen koans. The metaphor of the ox is a representative example of an expression used to describe the way of “making Buddha” which takes place within zazen). Shall we hit the ox with a whip? Shall we hit it with the whole universe? (This is to do zazen as the universal Self). Shall we hit the ox with the whole mind? (This is to do zazen with the whole mind which is “one mind is all dharmas, all dharmas are one mind.”) Shall we hit it fast and furiously so that it reaches the marrow of the bones? (This is to do zazen so that it penetrates the bone marrow of our being). Is it to hit the ox with the fist? It is to proceed with such questions. Furthermore, it should be that the fist hits the fist and there should also be the ox hitting the ox. When hitting something, we usually suppose that there are two separate things: the thing hitting and the things being hit. But here, this dualism is rejected. In zazen, this means that the fist hitting and the ox being hit are one, that the whole is all fist and that the whole is all ox.

Baso didn’t respond to this. This lack of confrontation was not such that he couldn’t respond because he could not find the answer. The correct way we must read this is that it isn’t possible to express in words that “there is no making buddha other than zazen” and that he is completely avoiding saying anything about this with his non-confrontational activity. Baso’s non-confrontation is based firmly on deep understanding the meaning of Nangaku’s words “Is it right to hit the cart or is it right to hit the ox?” So, we mustn’t fail to understand the true meaning of Baso’s silence.

In Buddhism and particularly in the Zen world of mondo, we mustn’t easily overlook the meaning of non-confrontational answer with deep silence. Baso’s non-confrontation is like “Throwing away a tile and pulling in

---

a jewel.” (This is a saying of Joshu’s which if we read literally means to make a choice. Here, however, in the same way as polishing a tile to make a mirror, it means that throwing away a tile and pulling in a jewel are the same.) and “Turning around the head and changing the features.”(This means to replace the same thing with the same thing. The thing itself is turned and it is still the same thing. This is to say that no matter how Buddha-nature is transformed, it is still Buddha-nature.) We mustn’t snatch away this precious non-confrontation and sell it cheaply.

Nangaku teaches further and says, “Your study of zazen is, in other words, to study sitting buddha.” By investigating these words (this isn’t to memorize words and theory but to actually practice zazen with your body and understand by thoroughly experiencing with the body that zazen is sitting buddha), we must swallow and digest by clearly mastering the activity (zazen) which is the core or essence of the successive ancestors. What is this “studying zazen” that is referred to here? It is absolutely impossible for this person who is sitting in zazen with all his body and mind to experience or understand this, but through Nangaku’s words, he/she was able to understand that studying zazen is no other than “studying sitting buddha.” If it is not those who have inherited the lineage of the correct Buddhadharmā, how will they be able to clearly say that studying zazen is studying sitting buddha? The following is something that we must really understand: the zazen practiced by someone who has just entered the Way of Buddha is the first zazen. Since the first zazen is the first sitting buddha, this means that there is no difference at all between the zazen of a beginner and that of someone who has been practicing for a long time.

“In words describing zazen, it is said that ‘If we study zazen, Zen is not restricted to sitting or lying down.’” In Dogen Zenji’s text, “if” should not be read as “in the case that” but rather as “now that” and “not restricted to” is not simply a denial, but must be understood to mean “beyond.” This is often the case and I have often mentioned it previously. This also applies to the usage here. What he is trying to say in this line is “Zazen is always zazen and it is different from an ordinary way of sitting as only one of all the various gestures of our

everyday life.” It is sitting that transcends the usual form of sitting and so we mustn’t simply call it sitting but rather “zazen.” In that sense, we mustn’t discuss zazen as if it were the same thing as everyday sitting. The same thing can be said about lying down. When lying down is lying down buddha, it must be called lying down Zen and not discussed as if it were the same as lying down in everyday life. In short, when saying Zen, this isn’t restricted only to zazen, but refers to all activities imbued with the transcendental quality.

So, these words are saying that “Zazen is zazen. While it looks like a form, sitting or lying down, the ordinary sense of sitting or lying down is transcended, liberated, and cast off.” Through purely being transmitted with this sort of insight and firmly making it your own mastery, sitting and lying down (=zazen) will evolve limitlessly as your original self. At that time, there will be no need at all to try to find the dualistic separations and ask whether sitting and lying down and the self are intimate or estranged; there will be no need to discuss the distinction between delusion and enlightenment. Furthermore, there will be no room for human agency to intrude and try to cut off delusive desire by means of wisdom. This is because there is no object that must be cut off.

Nangaku said, “If you study sitting buddha, that buddha is not a fixed form.” (Here as well, we must understand “if” as “now that” and “not” as “beyond.” We mustn’t read “buddha is not a fixed form” as denying form). If we clearly convey what must be said, then it will truly be said like this masterly expression. In these words, Nangaku is saying that “When we study zazen, it is sitting Buddha that is studying and that buddha has a form of beyond-form.” The buddha that sits in zazen takes various ways of being from one moment to another. It adorns (embodies) with the transcendence of any set form (taking the form of no fixed form). Saying that “Buddha is beyond fixed form” precisely expresses the form of buddha. Since buddha is free of any limitations or constraints, is adaptable and without hindrance, it is perfectly natural that we cannot avoid the fact that zazen (=embodiment of beyond fixed form) is sitting Buddha. Since it is this way, we must understand that zazen isn’t the limitation into a particular form, but rather is the clear manifestation into a concrete form of the free,

unobstructed buddha (Yokoyama Sodo Roshi said “The sitting form is the advent of Buddha.”) Stated another way, since zazen is the specific manifestation (adornment) of the formless buddha, we can state that “studying zazen is sitting buddha.” (When we study zazen, that is nothing other than the buddha itself sitting in zazen.) In the “non-abiding Dharma” (this is a word similar to “beyond fixed form”, a way of not dwelling in a specific, fixed place), it isn’t possible to make a choice of throwing it away because it is not a buddha or of taking it because it is a buddha. It is precisely because the possibility of making choices has fallen away from the beginning that it is a buddha.

## The 2nd Chapter of Shobogenzo: Maka-Hannya-Haramitsu (Maha-Prajna-Paramita)

### Lecture (3)

Rev. Shohaku Okumura  
Director, Soto Zen Buddhism International Center

### All the Elements of Our Lives Are Themselves Prajna Paramita

[Text]

*The twelve sense-fields are twelve instances of prajna paramita. Also, there are eighteen instances of prajna: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind; form, sound, smell, taste, touch, objects of mind; as well as the consciousnesses of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind.*

In the Pali Vinaya, there is a section entitled "Mahavagga" (Great Affairs) in which Shakyamuni Buddha's life is described. According to some Buddhist scholars, the story of the Buddha's life that appears in this text might be an origin of the later biographies of the Buddha. Within this biography, there is a quit a long story in which Shakyamuni Buddha converted 1000 mat-haired ascetics who worshipped fire. Shortly after the Buddha started to teach in the Deer Park and the five monks became his disciples as the first Buddhist sangha, he approached the three Kassapa brothers, Urubela Kassapa, Nadi Kassapa and Gaya Kassapa, who were religious leaders respected in the area. The oldest brother, Uruvela Kassapa, had 500 ascetic disciples, Nadi Kassapa had 300 disciples, and Gaya Kassapa had 200 disciples. This was an important step for Shakyamuni in the process of establishing the Buddhist sangha. I would like to introduce this story using the English translation of the Pali Vinaya (*The Book of the Discipline*; translated by I. B. Horner and in the book *Gotama Buddha: a Biography Based on the Most Reliable Texts* by Hajime Nakamura; Kosei Publishing Co.).

In order to convert Uruvela Kassapa, Shakyamuni Buddha visited the mat-haired ascetic's hermitage and asked him to stay overnight at his sacred fire hall.

Uruvela Kassapa said, "It isn't an inconvenience for



---

me, Great Samana, but there is a fierce *naga* king with magical power in that hall, a terribly venomous serpent. I hope that it will not cause you any harm."

The Buddha said, "It will not do anything to harm me. Allow me, Kassapa, the use of the hall of the sacred fire." The Buddha entered the hall of the sacred fire, spread out a grass mat, and sat down cross-legged, his body upright, being mindful to what was before him. Then, that naga, seeing the Buddha had entered, grew distressed and displeased and belched smoke. The Buddha thought, "I will extinguish the power of his fire with my fire, without harming his skin, hide, flesh, ligaments, bones, or marrow."

The Buddha displayed his superhuman powers and sent forth smoke. The *naga*, not being able to conquer anger, emitted flames. The Buddha, permeating the principle of fire entered into the condition of fire, also sent forth flames. When they had both sent forth their flames, the hall of the sacred fire looked as if it were on fire, flaming and blazing. Then, the mat-haired ascetics, surrounding the hall of the sacred fire, said, "The great recluse is indeed beautiful, but perhaps he will be harmed by the serpent."

When the night had passed, the Buddha, without having harmed the *naga's* skin, hide, flesh, ligaments, bones, or marrow and having extinguished the power of the *naga's* fire with his own, placed the *naga* in his alms bowl and showed it to Uruvela Kassapa, saying, "Kassapa, here is your *naga*. The power of his fire was mastered by the power of mine."

Uruvela Kassapa thought, "The great recluse has mighty superhuman power and great spiritual power, for he has been able to extinguish the power of the fire of that fierce *naga* king with magical power, that terribly venomous serpent, with his own fire. However, he is not an *arhat* like me."

Thus, the Buddha had a competition of supernatural power with the fierce serpent with magical power. The story of the conversion of the three Kassapa brothers continues for several more pages. The text says that the Buddha displayed 3,500 miracles to convert them. Finally, each of the three Kassapa brothers became the

Buddha's disciples, together with their 1,000 disciples. After that event, the Buddha went to Mount Gayasisa (Elephant's Head Peak) with his new monks. He gave a discourse about "the fire" to them.

"Monks, everything is burning. And what, monks, is everything that is burning? The eye is burning, the form (objects seen by the eye) is burning, the consciousness based on the eye is burning, the contact of the eye with visible objects and the consciousness is burning. The sensations produced by the contact of the eye, whether pleasant, unpleasant, or neither pleasant nor unpleasant, is burning. By what are they burning? I tell you they are burning with the fire of greed, with the fire of hatred, and with the fire of ignorance. They are burning with birth, ageing, dying, grief, sorrow, suffering, lamentation and despair."

The Buddha continues the same thing about the rest of the six sense organs; 'ear', 'nose', 'tongue', 'body', 'mind' and their objects; 'sound', 'smell', 'taste', 'touch' and 'objects of mind,' and the consciousness caused by the contact between the six sense organs and the six objects of sense organs. The six sense organs and their objects are called twelve sense fields (Skt. *Ayatana*). *Ayatana* means "place of entry" or "that which enters." (*Essentials of Buddhism*, by Kogen Mizuno, Kosei Publishing Co.) The six consciousnesses, in addition to the twelve fields, are called eighteen elements of existence (Skt. *astadasa dhatavah*). These eighteen elements of existence refer to all the elements of our life. This is another way to categorize all the elements of our lives in terms of relation among the sense organs, the objects of the sense organs, and consciousness caused by the contact of subject and object. According to the early Buddhist teachings, there is nothing other than these eighteen elements. When the Buddha said these eighteen elements are burning, it means that our entire life is burning.

The image of the flame of our lives in this story became the motif of the burning house of the triple world in the *Lotus Sutra*.

Then the Buddha continues; "A disciple who is well learned, monks, when he considers things in this way, grows weary of the eye, grows weary of objects seen by the

eye, grows weary of the consciousness based on the eyes, grows weary of the contact of the eye with the objects seen by the eyes and consciousness, grows weary of the sensations produced by the contact of the eye, whether pleasant, unpleasant, or neither pleasant nor unpleasant. He grows weary of the ear -----, nose ---, tongue---, body---, mind---. Growing weary of them, he rids himself of greed. Being rid of greed, he is liberated. Being liberated, he becomes aware of his liberation and realizes that birth is exhausted, that the pure practice is fulfilled, that what is necessary has been done, and that he will not return to this world again." And at the end of the story, it is said, "When he had uttered these words of affirmation, those one thousand monks lost all attachment and their minds were liberated from all defilement."

I introduced this story at San Francisco Zen Center Genzo-e sesshin held in January, 2009 as an introduction to Dogen Zenji's *Shobogenzo Jinzu* ("Spiritual Power"). This is a very interesting story to understand the meaning of the supernatural power in Buddha's teachings. The story of the competition between the Buddha and the venomous serpent (*naga*) is an introduction of the Buddha's essential teaching on the fire of the three poisonous minds. Our six sense organs, the objects of the six sense organs, and the consciousness caused by the contact of the sense organs and their objects are burning with the fire of the three poisonous minds. That makes our lives into suffering. What the Buddha taught was the path of practice to extinguish the fire.

But the important point to me is that the Buddha extinguished the fire of the three poisonous minds with his own fire. What is the Buddha's fire? That is the fire of wisdom. Later in Vajrayana Buddhism, Fudo-myō-ō (Acalanatha) the incarnation of Vairocana Tathagata has an angry face, holds the sword of wisdom, and is surrounded by the fire. I think that is the image of the Buddha's fire to extinguish the fire of the three poisonous minds. When the fire of the three poisonous minds is extinguished, we don't become lifeless dead ash. We are still alive with the fire of wisdom. What Dogen Zenji is talking about here is how our life looks when we see with the fire of wisdom that is our *zazen* practice.

As we are familiar in the *Heart Sutra*, these eighteen

elements are negated with the word '*mu* (no)' in front of each of them.

"無限・耳・鼻・舌・身・意、無色・声・香・味・触・法、無限界乃至無意識界 (Mu gen, ni, bi, zetsu, shin, i; Mu shiki, sho, ko, mi, soku, ho; Mu genkai, naishi Mu ishiki kai)"

"No eyes, no ears, no nose, no tongue, no body no mind; No sight, no sound, no smell, no taste, no touch, no object of mind; No realm of sight --- no realm of mind consciousness."

The negation of all these eighteen elements of existence in the *Heart Sutra* means all of them are empty. When we truly see the emptiness of the eighteen elements, we are released from the three poisonous minds toward them and the fire is extinguished. The negation *Mu* (無) does not mean those eighteen elements cease to be and we become dead ash, but these eighteen elements become free from the defilements of the three poisonous minds and function as the seamlessness of complete reality.

This essential teaching in early Buddhism permeates the teaching of Mahayana Buddhism such as the *Heart Sutra* and Zen Buddhism.

In *Shobogenzo Jinzu* ("Spiritual Power"), Dogen Zenji quotes a saying of Zen Master Rinzai (Linji) about the six spiritual powers. Rinzai said that the six spiritual powers of the Buddha are not the supernatural powers such as the ability to go anywhere, to see anything, etc. rather, the six sense organs function without being deceived by the six objects.

"What this mountain monk has mentioned are all karmic powers; they are not like the six powers of the Buddha. He enters the realm of form without being deluded by form, enters the realm of sound without being deluded by sound, enters the realm of smell without being deluded by smell, enters the realm of taste without being deluded by taste, enters the realm of touch without being deluded by touch, enters the realm of dharma without being deluded by dharma. Therefore, when he realizes that the six types -form, sound, smell, taste, touch, and dharma - are all empty marks, they cannot bind this

person of the way who depends on nothing." (translation by Carl Bielefeldt)

What Rinzai said is that when we see the emptiness of the eighteen elements of existence, we can freely enter the realm of any of them, and yet we are not deluded or deceived by any of them. Often Dogen Zenji does not appreciate Rinzai's words; however, it seems as if he agrees with him at least on this point. This is what he meant in this writing, "*The twelve sense-fields are twelve instances of prajna paramita. Also, there are eighteen instances of prajna: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind; form, sound, smell, taste, touch, objects of mind; as well as the consciousnesses of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind.*"

Dogen Zenji turns the negative expression in the *Heart Sutra* around and expresses the same meaning in a positive way. All these eighteen elements of existence are nothing other than the instances of the *prajna paramita* that express the emptiness of all things, neither being nor non-being. One thing we should be careful about is that, Dogen Zenji says these elements themselves are prajna paramita. Prajna is not some kind of device like a pair of reading glass that helps us to see the reality of emptiness. Rather, the reality of the eighteen elements themselves is prajna paramita.

The original word Dogen Zenji uses for "instance" is *mai* (枚). This word is used in Japanese when we count the number of something that is thin and flat like dishes, sheets of paper, or wooden boards, for example. So, I'm not sure if "instance" is a good translation or not. It is like twelve or eighteen "pieces" of *prajna*.

There is a waka poem by Dogen Zenji,

"*Kiku mamani / Mata kokoro naki / Minishi areba / Onore nari keri / Noki no tama mizu*" (Just hearing/ Because there is no mind that is separate /It is nothing other than myself/ The jewel-like drops of rain/ Dripping from the eaves.)

## The Four Noble Truths and Bodhisattva Practices are also Prajna Paramita

[Text]

*Also, there are four instances of prajna: suffering, its cause, its cessation, and the path [to cessation]. Also, there are six*

*instances of prajna: generosity, pure precepts, calm patience, diligence, quiet meditation, and wisdom. There is also a single instance of prajna manifesting itself right now -- unsurpassable complete, perfect awakening. Also, there are three instances of prajna: past, present, and future. Also, there are six instances of prajna: earth, water, fire, wind, space, and consciousness. Also, four instances of prajna are going on daily: walking, standing, sitting, and lying down.*

*Also, there are four instances of prajna: suffering, its cause, its cessation, and the path [to cessation].* Of course, these are the Four Noble Truths. In the *Dhammacakka Sutta* (the "Wheel of Dhamma Discourse", translated in *The First Discourse of the Buddha*, by Dr. Rewata Dhamma, Wisdom Publications), the Four Noble Truths are mentioned as follows:

### The Four Noble Truths

V. "This, O bhikkus, is the Noble Truth of suffering (*dukkha*): Birth is suffering, aging is suffering, sickness is suffering, death is suffering, sorrow, and lamentation, pain, grief, and despair are suffering, association with the unloved or unpleasant condition is suffering, separation from the beloved or pleasant condition is suffering, not to get what one wants is suffering. In brief, the five aggregates of attachment are suffering.

VI. "This, O bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the origin of suffering: It is craving which produces rebirth, bound up with pleasure and greed. It finds delight in this and that, in other words, craving for sense pleasures, craving for existence or becoming and craving for nonexistence or self-annihilation.

VII. "This, O bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the cessation of suffering: It is the complete cessation of suffering; giving up, renouncing, relinquishing, detaching from craving.

VIII. "This, O bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the path leading to the cessation of suffering. It is simply the Noble Eightfold Path, namely: right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right awareness, and tight concentration.

The Four Noble Truths are a very basic teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha. Why is "Mu (no)" put in front of

---

each of the noble truths in the *Heart Sutra*?

I can think of two reasons for this.

First, according to some commentaries on the *Heart Sutra* made in Japan, the negation of the Four Noble Truths is a criticism of *śravakas*, meaning in other words, the Buddha's disciples. This negation is a criticism of the orders of Buddhist monks who lived in monasteries during the first century BCE or CE when Mahayana Buddhism was emerging. From the Mahayana Buddhist's point of view, these monks believed that to eliminate ignorance and delusory desires and be liberated from suffering, thereby attaining the stage of arhat and entering nirvana, they had to study and practice in quiet monasteries regulated by the Vinaya precepts. They concentrated on meditation practice and philosophical discussions about what the Buddha taught. The result of the several centuries of continuous debates was that they had constructed the lofty system of doctrines called "Abhidharma." This systematic doctrine was so scholastic and the texts were so large that only the expert monk/scholars could thoroughly understand it.

After the Buddhist order received the support of King Ashoka, it seems that the monks did not have much contact with common lay people. In ordinary society, they would encounter difficult situations that could cause anger, hatred, or competition. This could lead to transmigration through *samsara*. To become emancipated from their own ignorance and desire, it seems that the monks lived apart from the rest of the society. They did not make special efforts to help lay people who needed their spiritual guidance. From the Mahayana Buddhist's point of view, those monks' practice seemed selfish. Such monks studied and practiced Buddha's teachings only for their own liberation. They were not eager to help others. Mahayana Buddhists did not feel that this selfish attitude was consistent with the spirit of Shakyamuni Buddha's practice. They thought these monks attached themselves to the Buddha's teaching but acted without the true spirit of the Buddha's practice. Many of the Jataka stories say Shakyamuni Buddha practiced as a Bodhisattva for many lifetimes for the sake of all living beings. The historical Shakyamuni Buddha walked all over India teaching for forty years.

Mahayana Buddhists referred to the monks who practiced for their own sake in monasteries as *Hinayana* (the smaller vehicle). Mahayana Buddhists believed that practice for the sake of others was most important. The theoretical basis for this belief is the *prajna* of emptiness. The Bodhisattva vow to save all beings was essential to them.

The second reason is a more existential one. If we seriously practice the Four Noble Truths, we have to face a self-contradiction. As Shakyamuni Buddha said using the metaphor of burning fire of eighteen elements, when we encounter objects with our sense organs, desires arise in our minds. When we encounter things that give us a pleasant sensation, greed arises and we chase after them. When we encounter things that give us an unpleasant sensation, we want to stay away, and yet they still come to us. We become angry and we hate them, so we try to escape from them. Thus, our lives become a condition of running after some things and escaping from other things. We are always running and lose the sight of a stable and peaceful foundation for our lives. This is what transmigrating within *samsara* means.

When we see that such a way of life is not healthy and meaningful, we start to seek for a healthier way of life. We study, for example, Buddhist teachings and practice meditation. I think this is a typical way for many of us to begin practice Buddhism. However, within this attitude of our practice, there is a basic contradiction. The suffering/*samsara* is something we dislike therefore we need to escape from it. The cessation of suffering/nirvana becomes something we want to reach. We escape from *samsara* and chase after nirvana. The objects we want are different but the actual things happening in our minds are the same. We lack something therefore we want to fill the emptiness with something positive, and then hope that we will become satisfied. As long as we practice with this kind of attitude, the motivation that makes us practice is not really different from the cause of the burning house of *samsara*. We eventually find that the motivation called "way-seeking" mind is not really different from the desire for satisfaction. This is the dead-end for our personal efforts because we find that the motivation to make such personal efforts is the cause of the entire problem. When we face this dead-end of our self-power efforts, we cannot

---

continue to practice in the same way we have been, and yet, we cannot return to the self-centered way of life because we know it is not a healthy way of life.

I believe the teaching of "no suffering, no cause of suffering, no cessation of suffering, no path leading to the cessation of suffering" was the answer to the bodhisattva practitioners who faced this problem. From this understanding, we find that our practice is without "gaining." This negative expression does not mean, however, that we don't need to practice. It means that we need to just practice without any expectation of gaining something. We practice just for the sake of practice. This is the source of the attitude of practice without "gaining mind." This refers to the expression in the *Heart Sutra*, "*Mushotoku* (with nothing to attain)." Bodhidharma's answer to Emperor Wu, "no merit," Dogen Zenji's "shikantaza (just sitting)," and "*mushotoku no joshoin* (continuous diligent practice without gaining mind) means the same thing." Sawaki Roshi's expression, "Zazen is good for nothing." All these teachings came from the same source.

In *Shobogenzo Makahannyaharamitsu*, Dogen Zenji writes, "*Also, there are four instances of prajna: suffering, its cause, its cessation, and the path [to cessation].*"

Each of the four truths is themselves prajna, the wisdom that sees emptiness. Emptiness means neither "u" (being) nor "mu" (non-being). We simply practice without attachment to ourselves, to our practice, or to the goal of the practice (nirvana, cessation of suffering). With this attitude, cessation of suffering manifests itself within the practice. What Dogen Zenji meant is the same as the negative expression in the *Heart Sutra*, but here he uses a positive expression.

*Also, there are six instances of prajna: generosity, pure precepts, calm patience, diligence, quiet meditation, and wisdom.*

These are the practices of the six *paramitas*. Each of these six practices is nothing other than prajna. Therefore, we need to practice them without gaining mind and without attachment to ourselves, to our practice, or to the result of our practice.

*There is also a single instance of prajna manifesting itself right now -- unsurpassable complete, perfect awakening.*

In the *Diamond Sutra*, the Buddha asked Subhuti, "Has the Tathagata attained the unsurpassable complete, perfect awakening?" Subhuti replied, "As I understand the meaning of what the Buddha taught, there is no such dharma called the unsurpassable complete, perfect awakening."

And yet, in the next paragraph, it says, "All the buddhas and buddhas' unsurpassable, complete, perfect awakening is born from this sutra."

"This sutra" refers not to the *Diamond Sutra* as a written text, but to the prajna and the reality of all things clearly seen by the eye of prajna. That is why Dogen Zenji says that the unsurpassable complete, perfect awakening manifests itself right now within each and every being.

*Also, there are three instances of prajna: past, present, and future.*

As Dogen Zenji discusses in *Shobogenzo Uji*, time and beings are one and the same. Past, present and future are all prajna, all empty, neither u (being) nor mu (non-being).

*Also, there are six instances of prajna: earth, water, fire, wind, space, and consciousness.* Earth, water, fire, and wind are called the four great elements. For example, in our body, the solidness of bones is the earth element. Body fluids such as blood and stomach juices, etc. are the water element. Body heat is the fire element. Movement is the wind element. In the Mahayana teachings, space where these things existed was added. And in the Vajrayana teachings, consciousness was added. These are other categorizations of the elements of all beings. And Dogen Zenji says that these are all prajna.

*Also, four instances of prajna are going on daily: walking, standing, sitting, and lying down.*

Walking, standing, sitting, and lying down are called "the four dignified conducts" (igi in Jap.; *iryapatha* in Skt.). These four refer to all our daily activities of body

and mind. In *Shobogenzo Gyobutsuigi* ("The Dignified Conduct of Practice Buddha"), Dogen Zenji says, "All buddhas, without exception, fully practice dignified conduct: this [practice] is Practice Buddha. Because this Practice Buddha actualizes dignified conduct through each and every action, dignified conduct is actualized through its body. Practice Buddha's transformative functions flow out in its speech throughout all time, all directions, all buddhas, and all practice."



## Treasury of the Eye of the True Dharma Book 55

### The Ten Directions (*Jippo*)

Translated by Carl Bielefeldt

#### INTRODUCTION

This fascicle of the *Shobogenzo* was composed late in 1243, at Kippoji, the monastery in the province of Echizen (modern Fukui prefecture) where Dogen resided following his departure from Kyoto in the summer of that year. It occurs as book 55 of the 75-fascicle redaction of the *Shobogenzo* and book 45 in the 60-fascicle redaction.

As its title indicates, this text focuses on several passages using the expression "the ten directions" (i.e., the four cardinal and four ordinal points, plus the zenith and nadir), a standard Buddhist locution for "all directions," "everywhere." The discussion opens with comments on a reference, by the Buddha Shakyamuni, to "buddha lands of the ten directions." Dogen warns us not to think of the buddhas, their lands, and the ten directions as separate, much less to judge among the various buddhas — no doubt a criticism of those among his contemporaries who favored the western Pure Land of the Buddha Amitabha over our defiled Saha realm of the Buddha Shakyamuni. He goes on to identify the ten directions with the "one direction," or location, in which each thing occurs, and concludes, "the buddhas and buddha lands are not two . . . they are just the ten directions."

The text then takes up a series of sayings, by the ninth-century Chan Master Changsha Jingcen, that identify "all the worlds in the ten directions" with the eye, speech, and body of a monk, and with the "radiance of the self." After commenting on two more Chan sayings, the work ends with the remark, "In sum, we just study that the living nose is the ten directions."

This translation is based on the edition of the text in Kawamura Kodo, *Dogen zenji zenshu*, volume 2 (1993), pp. 92-97. Due to space constraints, we have kept the

---

notes here to a minimum; a more fully annotated version can be found on the Soto Zen Text Project website: <http://hcbss.stanford.edu/research/projects/sztp>. Other English renderings of this work can be found in Kosen Nishiyama and John Stevens, *Shobogenzo*, volume 1 (1975), pp. 103-107; Yuho Yokoi, *The Shobo-genzo* (1986), pp. 645-650; Gudo Nishijima and Chodo Cross, *Master Dogen's Shobogenzo*, Book 3 (1997), pp. 185-190; and Hubert Nearman, *The Treasure House of the Eye of the True Teaching* (2007), pp. 696-702.

## Treasury of the Eye of the True Dharma Book 55

### The Ten Directions (*Jippo*)

A single fist is just the ten directions; a single bare mind is the ten directions crystal clear. The marrow is beat from the bones.

The Buddha Shakyamuni addressed the great assembly saying, "In the buddha lands of the ten directions, there is only the dharma of the one vehicle."<sup>1</sup>

These "ten directions" have been formed by grasping "the buddha lands." Therefore, if we did not take up "the buddha lands," there would be no "ten directions." Since they are "buddha lands," a buddha is their ruler, as this Saha world is the buddha land of the Buddha Shakyamuni. Holding up this Saha world and noting clearly "eight tael and a half catty," we should study that the buddha lands of the ten directions are "seven feet or eight feet."<sup>2</sup>

These ten directions enter one direction, enter one buddha. Therefore, they have manifested the ten directions. Because the ten directions are one direction, this direction, one's own direction, the present direction, they are the direction of the eye, the direction of the fist, the direction of the column, the direction of the lantern. The buddhas of the ten directions of such "buddha lands

in the ten directions" are not large or small, are not pure or dirty. Therefore, "only a buddha and a buddha" in the ten directions praise and admire each other. They do not take condemning each other, talking of their strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes, as turning the wheel of dharma and preaching the dharma. As buddhas and buddhas' children, they assist and inquire of each other.

In receiving the dharma of the buddhas and ancestors, one studies in this way. One does not slander and insult over rights and wrongs like the alien ways [of non-Buddhists] and the minions of Mara. When we peruse the scriptures of the Buddha transmitted to the country of Chinasthana [i.e., China] and look at the entirety of his ministry, the Buddha Shakyamuni never preached that the buddhas of other directions are inferior, or preached that the buddhas of other directions are superior; nor did he preach that the buddhas of other directions are not buddhas. In general, what one does not see in all the teachings of his entire life is a word of the Buddha judging other buddhas; nor has there been transmitted any word of a buddha in which the buddhas of the other directions judge the Buddha Shakyamuni.

Therefore, the Buddha Shakyamuni addressed the great assembly saying, "I alone know their marks, and the buddhas in the ten directions are also like this."

We should know that the "mark" in "I alone know their marks" is "making a circular mark." The circular mark is "this bamboo is this long; that bamboo is that short." In the words of the buddhas in the ten directions, they say, "I alone know their marks, and the Buddha Shakyamuni is also like this." "I alone verify their marks, and the buddha of one's own direction is also like this." They are the mark of "I," the mark of "know," the mark of "their," the mark of "all," the mark of "the ten directions," the mark of "the land of Saha," the mark of "the Buddha Shakyamuni."<sup>3</sup>

The purport of this teaching is the scripture of the buddha. The buddhas and the lands of the buddhas are not two; they are not sentient or insentient; not deluded or awakened; not good, bad, or neutral; not pure, not dirty; not formation, not continuation, not destruction, not emptiness; not permanent, not impermanent; not

---

existent, not nonexistent; not themselves. They are free from the four propositions; they have cut off the hundred negations. They are just the ten directions; they are just the buddha lands. Hence, the ten directions are just “a fellow with a head and without a tail.”

\* \* \* \* \*

The Chan Master Changsha Jingcen addressed the great assembly saying, “All the worlds in the ten directions are a single eye of the *shramana* [i.e., monk].”

What is referred to here is one of the eyes of the Shramana Gautama. The eye of the Shramana Gautama is [his saying] “I have the treasury of the eye of the true dharma.” No matter to whom it is transmitted, it is the eye of the Shramana Gautama. Each “horn” and each “point” of all the worlds in the ten directions is the eye of Gautama. “All the worlds in the ten directions” here is one among the eyes of the *shramana*. Beyond this, he has so many eyes.

All the worlds in the ten directions are the everyday words of the *shramana*.<sup>4</sup>

The “everyday” is the ordinary; in the vernacular idiom of the land of Japan, we say “the common.” Thus, the common language in the house of the shramana is all the worlds in the ten directions. “The speech is straightforward; the words are straightforward.” Because the everyday words are all the worlds in the ten directions, we should clearly study the principle that all the worlds in the ten directions are everyday words. Because these “ten directions” are inexhaustible, they exhaust the ten directions. We use these words in everyday [speech]. They are like that “requesting a horse, requesting salt, requesting water, and requesting a bowl”; like “offering water, offering a bowl, offering salt, and offering a horse.”<sup>5</sup> Who knows how the immeasurably great person turns his body and turns his brain within this flow of words? He turns the words within the flow of words. The mouth of the ocean and the tongue of the mountain — these are the “everyday” [language] of “speech straightforward and words direct.” Therefore, “covering the mouth” and “covering the ears” are what the ten directions truly are.

All the worlds in the ten directions are the entire body of the *shramana*.

“One hand pointing to the heavens” is heaven; “one hand pointing to the earth” is the earth. Although they are such, “in the heavens above and beneath the heavens, I alone am honored.”<sup>6</sup> This is all the worlds of the ten directions as “the entire body of the *shramana*.” The head, eye, nose, skin and flesh, bones and marrow — each is the body of the *shramana* that passes through and beyond all the ten directions. It is like this without moving all the ten directions; it does not depend on considering and thinking. In taking up the body of the *shramana* of all worlds in the ten directions, one sees the body of the *shramana* of all worlds in the ten directions.

All the worlds in the ten directions are the radiance of the self.

“The self” means the nose “before your father and mother were born.” The nose inadvertently in the hand of the self is called “all the ten directions.” Still, when the self is realized, it is “the realized koan”; it is “opening the hall and seeing the buddha.” Nevertheless, “the eye has been switched by another for a soapberry seed.” Nevertheless, coming at it head on, one should be able to encounter the great ones. Furthermore, though we say, “summoning him is easy but sending him off is hard, having been called, he turns his head. What is the use” of his turning his head? Make “this fellow” turn his head. When the food waits for the person to eat it, and the clothes wait for the person to wear them, though we seem to be “groping for it without touching it,” how sad that I have already given you the thirty blows.

All the worlds in the ten directions are within the radiance of the self.

The eyelid is “the radiance of the self.” Suddenly to open it is “are within.” The dependence of seeing on what is in the eye is “all the worlds in the ten directions.” Nevertheless, though this is the case, “when you sleep on the same bench, you know the holes in the quilt.”

In all the worlds in the ten directions there is no one not the self.

Therefore, of every “maestro,” every “fist,” there is no one of the ten directions that is not the self. Because they are the self, each and every self is the ten directions; the ten directions of each and every self themselves obstruct the ten directions. Because the vital artery of each and every self is in the hand of the self, it is [a case of] “return his original lot of feed.” Why would Bodhidharma’s eye and Gautama’s nose now be freshly in the womb of the exposed pillar? Going in and out is left entirely to the ten directions, the ten sides.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Great Master Zongyi of Xuansha Cloister said, “All the worlds in the ten directions are one bright pearl.”

Clearly, we know that “one bright pearl” is all the worlds in the ten directions. Spirits and demons take it as their cave; the progeny of the buddhas and ancestors take it as the eye; the men and women of families take it as a head or a fist; beginners and latecomers take it as wearing robes and eating rice. My former master took it as a ball of mud and hit his disciples with it. Moreover, though we may say this is “one move directly presented,” he has gouged out the eye of the ancestors. When he gouges, the ancestors “each put out a hand.” And from their eyes just shines a light.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Venerable Qianfeng was once asked by a monk, “The *bhagavats* in the ten directions are on one road to the gate of nirvana. I don’t understand, where are they on that road?”

Qianfeng drew a mark with his staff and said, “They are here.”

This “they are here” is “the ten directions”; “the *bhagavats*” are the “staff”; the “staff” is “they are here”; the “one road” is “the ten directions.” Nevertheless, do not hide the staff in the nose of Gautama; do not ram the staff in the nose of the staff. Nevertheless, though this is the case, do not think that old man Qianfeng has managed “the *bhagavats* in the ten directions” or “the road to the gate of nirvana”: he just says, “They are here.” It is not that “they are here” is not the case, and it is fine so long as

old man Qianfeng is not from the start deceived by his staff. Overall, we just study the living nose as the ten directions.

Treasury of the Eye of the True Dharma  
The Ten Directions  
Number 55

Presented to the assembly on the twenty-third day of the eleventh month of the first year of Kangen (*mizunoto-ū*) at Kippō shōja, Etchū, Land of Japan

Copied the twenty-fourth day of the terminus of winter, third year of Kangen (*kinoto-mi*) at the Attendant’s Office, Daibutsuji, Etchū  
Ejō

#### Notes

1. This and the following words of the Buddha are from the *Lotus Sutra*.
2. Eight tael equal a half catty; hence, the implication that Shakyamuni’s land equals the buddha lands of the ten directions. The expression “seven or eight feet” can suggest what is circumscribed yet measureless.
3. The text plays on the term translated as “mark,” used to refer both to the “characteristics” of things and to the “figure” of the circle often drawn by the Zen master.
4. Here and below, Dogen continues his quotation of the Chan Master Changsha Jingcen.
5. Allusion to a classic simile of the multivalent referents in the teachings of the Buddha.
6. Allusion to the legend that, upon his birth, the Buddha pointed to heaven and earth and uttered the words quoted here.

SOTO ZEN BUDDHISM INTERNATIONAL CENTER  
1691 LAGUNA STREET, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94115, USA  
TELEPHONE 415-567-7686 FACSIMILE 415-567-0200

**Address Service Requested**

NONPROFIT ORG  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA  
PERMIT NO.19

---

## International Events

### **North American Soto Zen Conference and Workshop**

Place: Zenshuji, Los Angeles, California

Date: March 8 and 9



---

SOTO ZEN JOURNAL is published semiannually by  
the Soto Zen Buddhism International Center  
Shohaku Okumura, Editor

Please address all inquiries or comments to: **Soto Zen Buddhism International Center**  
1691 Laguna Street, San Francisco, CA 94115  
Phone: 415-567-7686 Fax: 415-567-0200