



SOTO ZEN JOURNAL

DHARMA EYE

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Towards on the 100th Anniversary of Soto Zen Buddhism in North America

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A pair of tall, sturdy catalpa trees are flowering in the rear garden. As autumn appears, long pods will mature, and through winter seeds will scatter. Without knowing the fate of their potential offspring, these old friends live out the noble life of trees.

From ancient times bows were fashioned from the wood of this species. I know this because my wife's name, Azusa, is the Japanese for catalpa. Her grandfather named her, explaining the name by saying he wanted her to be flexible yet strong. Could he have imagined, after years of war, his favorite grandchild raising children that are both Japanese and American? As Azusa cared for him through his final years, talking with him gently as she fed him or tucked him in for a nap, a sweet child with roots in both sides of the Pacific Ocean played at his feet.

Soto Zen in North America is quickly approaching our 100th anniversary. Just a generation or two ago, it would have been difficult to imagine the flowering of Zen on these shores. Maturing and living out the noble life of our lineage, seed-pods are firming on the branches and with the winds of these mountains and valleys they have been spreading. Countless people have been caring for and cultivating our tradition, with no idea of how it may fare. We do this because we have faith in this path, and in the dharma wheel

that began to turn as the Buddha Shakyamuni stood up from beneath the Bodhi Tree.

As the Soto Zen Buddhism North America office and the International Center began planning several years ago for the commemoration of the 100th anniversary, we reflected on how important it is for so called "Western" Buddhists and "Japanese" Buddhists to work together.

For some years there has been a distance between temples established by and for the Japanese immigrant community and Zen Centers. We have continual discussions concerning how North American Soto Zen Buddhists will continue to relate with the Japanese Soto Zen. In these discussions we often come up against the cultural differences that seem to create distance. There is much we can learn from each other as we appreciate various approaches to living and develop deepening trust, but it is the noble life of the ancestors that animates us. Longing to live out the compassion and wisdom of the ancient way goes beyond discussion of culture. There is no Japanese path or American path, nor something in between. We can not even say there is a Zen path, only the Wondrous Mind of Nirvana. Having received it, every one of us is simply doing our best to live it out. When we take responsibility for living out this mind, every choice begins to matter. Speaking of cultural differences and approaches misses the point.

When we offer a meal to our family or community, we want it to nourish them physically but also emotionally and spiritually. Suddenly how we cut the tomato really matters. The edge of the knife is our intention.

We want to know the best way to make the offering only we can make. Maybe people in Japan have tended to cut the rich fruit one way and people in North America another, but we are each trying to do our best. “Western” and “Japanese” are not at odds with each other.

In fact, a simplistic story of East meets West obscures the richness of our tradition and the continual struggle to discover what it is to be Buddhist, to walk the Buddha Way, with our own feet. The challenge is much deeper than an emerging western expression of Buddhism. It is the deep challenge of enlightenment itself that every generation has had to face.

Professor Duncan Williams of University of Southern California offered a talk to the Soto Zen Buddhist Association several years ago about the Japanese American Buddhist struggle to be both American and Buddhist. In his talk, Professor Williams told the story of a monument constructed to honor those who had died in the first year of imprisonment in what was euphemistically referred to as the Manzanar War Relocation Center. The winter of 1942 had been hard. The climate was severe and the facilities poor. Many elderly people and children lost their lives. The first Obon after passing is incredibly important and so the Rev. Shinjo Nagatomi collected small portions of money from the families in the camp. These Japanese families had almost nothing, but they contributed to the fund for purchasing concrete to build a monument. Rev. Nagatomi practiced the calligraphy to be inscribed on the monument for months. During Obon, a memorial service was held and over 4,000 people joined in the ancient rights of Obon, dancing and honoring those they had lost. Under these

horrible and unjust conditions the wheel turned. With the sutras deep in their bones, they turned the wheel for each other and that turns it for us.

The Buddha Dharma did not spontaneously appear on North American shores, and it isn't a thing that was carried here by people of another culture. The lives of our forbearers are the vehicle of the dharma. Receiving through them we are able to rise to the occasion, take responsibility and strive to do our best. The vehicle is great, 大乘, not limited to east or west, yet transmitted through individual lives moving about and making their best effort. There is no “American Zen” without “Japanese Zen.” To pump the blood of the ancestors with our own hearts is the only way Zen survives, both in the east and west.

In the Teachers of the Dharma chapter of the Lotus Sutra the Buddha Shakyamuni teaches:

If people are to teach this sutra,
Let them enter the Tathagata's room,
Put on the Tathagata's robe,
And sit on the Tathagata's seat.

Facing the multitude without fear,
Let them teach it clearly everywhere.

With great compassion as their room,
Gentleness and patience as their robe,
And the emptiness of all things as their seat.
Doing this, they should teach the Dharma.

As we continue to plan for our entry into the second century of Soto Zen in North America, it is my sincere wish that we continue to cherish the room, robe and seat of the Buddha. Entering

the room we meet our brothers and sisters. Putting on the robe we listen deeply to the sounds of this world. Sitting on the seat we reconcile the impossible divide.

An unknowable child plays at our feet.



Report for making of the movie of Soto Zen in South America

Yoko Okumura

Buddhism has always been around me. I was born in Kyoto and spent my earliest years living in a Shorinji in Sonobe, Kyoto where my father Rev. Shohaku Okumura was the caretaker.

We then moved to Minnesota so my Dad could be the head teacher there. I attended many community potlucks, played in the basement while the adults had ceremonies and spent several summers at Hokyoji in Eitzen, Minnesota. In these ways Soto Zen Buddhism was always around me as a child and I was very familiar with this midwestern North American manifestation of it. But it wasn't until I directed/edited the Soto Zen in South America documentary that I came to see the deep diversity of Soto Zen around the world. Living in Los Angeles I am in touch with Mexican American culture but before this project I had never traveled any further south beyond Mexico. This was an incredible opportunity to see a new culture through the very specific eyes of Soto Zen and Japanese immigrants in South America.

The first film I ever made about Buddhism was a short documentary about my father and brother called "SIT". Hoko Karnegis suggested the film to screen at the Association of Soto Zen Buddhists Annual meeting where Rev. Shundo Kushida organized the screening. Through that film we made a connection and he asked me to edit the north American documentaries. This led to me eventually directing the South American documentary the year after.

Before departing for Brazil I made sure to be creatively prepared. In filmmaking we call this the "pre-production" phase where all creative and technical development is done with the production team. This consisted of me developing the cinematic aesthetic of the film with my cinematographer Bennett Cerf. Because we had already worked together on "SIT" we already had a good visual strategy to start with. We knew like "SIT" we wanted the film to be very beautiful and cinematic. To achieve this we knew we needed to bring long lenses which would allow for shallow depth of field and a "RONIN" stabilizer so we could achieve smooth, serene camera movements. Making a documentary is always about being so prepared with the right tools so you can work on your toes and improvise as life happens around you during the shoot.

When we arrived in Sao Paulo we were greeted by Rev. Ryoju Tahara. He is very energetic, enthusiastic, friendly and incredibly hard working which makes for a great film producer. He had made all logistical arrangements for us which included lodging, scheduling of all the interviews and travel to five different temples across Brazil.

Our first shoot was at Zenkoji in Ibirapu, Espirito Santo. It was a serene and beautiful place secluded in the mountains. There we shot footage of a class of teenage students who drove hours on the bus to experience what Zen could teach everyone. We quietly followed them with the camera as they walked through nature, learned the basics of sitting *zazen*, tried their hand at the art of *ikebana*, and cleaned their dishes. It was clear at times their usually rambunctious teenage selves would emerge with laughter and play but when they entered the *zendo* the peaceful energy brought everyone to a place of quiet reflection.



After descending from the mountains of Zenkoji we went to Zenguenji in Mogi das Cruzes where we filmed the community members light *chochin* and honor their ancestors for *OBON*. The women's group cooked a great feast of Japanese and Brazilian food. Through making this film I learned Soto Zen first came to Latin America because the early Japanese immigrants craved the religious and community activities and invited Soto Zen to their adoptive country. It was evident in Zenguenji that these elements they longed for are certainly still very active today.



We then returned to Sao Paulo to shoot the daily activities of Busshinji, a temple located in a very lively part of the city where many Japanese Brazilian immigrants reside. We interviewed a Japanese Brazilian *ikebana* teacher who talked about her history with the temple and the community she's developed there. We shot a family ceremony as well as an evening *zazen* session. It was great to capture such a great contrast between the rural Zen practice of Zenkoji and this very urban *zazen* session of Busshinji as it demonstrated Soto Zen can be present in many different types of places.

One of the most exciting parts of the shoot was when last minute creative ideas were able to come to fruition. Rev. Tahara exemplified his producing skills by getting us access to not only one, but two wonderful last-minute shooting locations.

First as we drove through Sao Paulo from one place to another I briefly saw a street sign for the Japanese Brazilian Museum. I thought shooting there would be a great opportunity to capture the past without cameras since only using digital historical images can become redundant in a film if exclusively used. Because stories of early

Japanese immigration by boat was a big part of the films it was a wonderful surprise to see the museum had a beautiful array of miniature boats recreating the vessels in which Japanese people first landed in Brazil. It was wonderful the museum allowed us access.

One of the most beautiful and striking images we were able to capture during the entire shoot was at the second last minute location Rev. Tahara was able to get us access too. My cinematographer Bennett had brought a small drone with him and we were getting incredible drone footage in the wilderness but wanted very much to capture the vastness of the city as well. Rev. Tahara was able to get us access to the top of a helicopter pad in the middle of Sao Paulo on a high-rise building. There we asked Rev. Tahara to sit in zazen while we recorded the drone flying away from him. It was a beautiful shot and a wonderful experience to see Sao Paulo from up so high. The juxtaposition of a monk sitting in meditation amongst the backdrop of the concrete jungle of Sao Paulo told the perfect metaphor of the contemporary evolution of Soto Zen in South America.



Our next stop was Vila Zen in Viamão, Rio Grande do Sol. This was perhaps the most rural of all temples we experienced. Here we inter-

viewed several people, two of which were *tenzo*. The *tenzo*'s work in wood-built kitchen and the morning light made a beautiful moment. This place of practice overseen by a giant Buddha statue was a magnificent example of how people and nature become one through zen. We also interviewed Rev. Coen Souza who spoke of the escape Vila Zen offers those urban citizens mired in the chaotic lifestyle of the city.

It was important for Soto Zen to include not only Brazil but other countries in this film since Soto Zen within South America is so diverse. Other cinematographers were hired to shoot in Peru and Columbia and that footage was later edited into the film.



Creating this South America Soto Zen documentary was a great adventure where my cinematographer and I were privileged to experience the many faces of Zen in Brazil. Working with Sotoshu was a wonderful life experience and I hope to be able to create for Soto Zen again. Thank you to everyone who was involved in making these projects a reality and thank you for choosing us to be a part of it. Obrigado.

Movie 1 『The path of Soto Zen Buddhism in South America』
https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/photos_videos/south_america2/index.html

Movie 2 『Zen within Us Soto Zen Buddhism in South America』
https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/photos_videos/south_america/index.html



The Sotoshu Understanding of Zazen: Learning About the *Fukan zazengi* (2)

Rev. Kenshu Sugawara

The basis of Sotoshu zazen is “learning to take the backward step.” As the authoritative source for this statement, I would like to study the passage below from the *Fukan zazengi* (“Universally Recommended Instructions for Zazen”).

*Therefore, put aside the intellectual practice of understanding words and chasing phrases
And learn to take the backward step that turns the light and shines it inward.*

*Body and mind of themselves will drop away
And your original mind will manifest.*

If you want to realize such,

Get to work on such right now.

Regarding the way of Soto zazen, I have already pointed this out in my explanation in the previous essay of “untainted (no discrimination) practice-realization.” This is the fundamental line for reading and understanding *Fukan zazengi*. Besides this, how should we understand “untainted” or “undefiled”? It can be said that this is indicated in the second line above: “Learn to take the backward step that turns the light and shines it inward.” Regarding the first line above, “Therefore, put aside the intellectual practice of understanding words and chasing phrases,” this states that when studying the way of Buddha, we must stop grasping with conceptual understanding by chasing after words and phrases. If we

want to correctly understand “untainted,” then we must study the matter of “taking the backward step that turns the light and shines it inward.” Looking at the first line, there is the following advice.

*“In general, the sickness of studying the Way is brought about by speculation arising from ‘chasing words and phrases.’ This is, in other words, the source of all delusions. Often-times, a student is besieged by conceptual understanding, a conflict between opposing dualistic thoughts, dickering between the six senses and six fields of objects which is like producing more dust on the mirror. If all traces and dust are exhausted and brought to an end, then quiet illumination clearly stands alone, both mind and dharma are forgotten, and the nature of things is alone and true.”
Shigetsu Ei’in Zenji (From “Fukan zazengi – Words That Cannot Be Spoken”)*

The illness of studying the Way is to chase after words and phrases, together with the problem of speculation arising regarding one’s practice and awakening. Speculation or pondering over things only serves to produce confusion in our practice. It creates an unneeded sense of values, and so forth. This is truly “a conflict between opposing dualistic viewpoints.” And yet, we are, in every respect, “the way that is originally perfect and all-pervading.” We are this “Way” itself. This is what “alone and true” says. Furthermore, to reach this state, it is necessary to “take the backward step that turns the light and shines it inward.” This is what is called “the backward step of studying the Way.” To express this in a sensory manner, this is “Practice-

realization that confirms things by taking the self to them is delusion; for things to come forward and practice and confirm the self is enlightenment.” (*Genjo-koan*) The attitude of bringing the self forward to verify all things is impermissible. So, not like that, rather this means the condition where all things come forward and confirm the self. But here, there is no positive movement forward and therefore, it is the backward step of studying the Way. In the first place in this essay, the expression “untainted (no discrimination) practice-realization” is used and the explanation continues based on the premise that “practice and realization are one.” If that is the case, then care is also needed regarding “the backward step that turns the light and shines it inward.”

“The morning sun shines from the east to the west; the setting sun is the mind which illuminates the east. To use words, this is the same as saying buddha becoming buddha.”
Katsudo Honko Zenji (From “A Cup of Tea with Dogen Zenji’s Extensive Record)

In this commentary by Katsudo Zenji, he says that the morning sun shines from the east to the west. This is, of course, the way the rising sun is. But if that is the case, speaking of what happens to the “east,” he says that the setting sun shines from the west toward the east. It is precisely because that is the way the “east” is that “buddha becomes buddha.” This “east” refers to the sun as well as “buddha,” which is the source of light. But that light source is also illuminated. That is “the backward step that turns the light and shines it inward.”

Earlier, I mentioned the sense of “all things

coming forward.” This is to realize for yourself that it has originally always been this way. There is the expression “the backward step is to return” (Katsudo Zenji, *ibid.*) which in short is to say that the nature of “buddha” itself is to continue reconfirming itself. This is not to proceed by casting off body-mind by means of your own intervention, however. It is rather that casting off body-mind is precisely the place where such interventions have been lost.

Looking at the teaching in the second part, if we end up interpreting “casting off body-mind” as “the state of great enlightenment,” this is to personally deceive yourself by grasping hold of this [teaching]. It is true that casting off is “outgoing” but if we think we have grasped something, then that is pure delusion. Rather, “casting off” is the condition of letting go of everything. This letting go completely is “the backward step of studying the Way” which I mentioned earlier. This is not a matter of trying to grasp something by yourself, but rather of turning that desire inward, putting your hands together, and folding your legs. Sitting in zazen samadhi is exactly the backward step of studying the Way. By means of this, we must let go of the mind consciousness, the thoughts arising from the mind. No if we say “must” then this is also to fall into a state in which we think there is something that must be acquired. Just letting go, letting go, letting go....

In the practice of zazen, “letting go” is to entrust [everything] to the body-mind. This is, for example, just as Tenkei Densoku Zenji comments in *Eiso Ryakuroku Dasoku*, “It is perfect roundness. It is brilliant in all aspects. In the “Ancient Mirror” chapter of the *Shobogenzo*, it

says, ‘People today must pick up a tile and polish it, and they will certainly become a mirror.’” As a premise in the “Ancient Mirror” chapter from which I’ve just quoted, it says, “It is brilliant in all aspects.” This is to say that since our complete body-mind is already “the way is originally perfect and all-pervading,” it can be said that “while it is a tile, it is also a mirror.” Therefore, it is fine if this is simply transmitted or mediated through the practice of “polishing.” It is the same thing that our body-mind which is “the original Way” is a buddha simply through the agency of the practice of zazen. This has the same significance. This is “your original face will manifest.” If we end up thinking, though, that “the true original face will manifest” is something apart from or separate from our ordinary, usual way of being, then we will be very much mistaken. To repeat myself, we are in every respect “the way is originally perfect and all-pervading.” Therefore, “the original face will manifest” is not a state that must be acquired, but rather simply something mediated by practice through our body-mind. That agent is “casting off.”

In other words, this is not something difficult. It is just that it is fine to let this be mediated by practice through the body-mind and that this is called “casting off.” This matter is expressed as “If you realize such, get to work on such right now.” Regarding this word “such,” this is a pronoun which means “that” or “it.” It is, so to say, a way of indicating a certain event or thing and that’s all. “Such” itself does not have a particular meaning. Therefore, in the “Inmo” chapter of the *Shobogenzo*, variously translated into English as “It” or “Thusness” or “Suchness,” Dogen Zenji wrote, “The point of this is

that directing oneself straining for the supreme truth of awakening is described, for the present, as ‘it’ (or “thusness” or “suchness”).” This “matter of suchness” is all-encompassing and no-discriminatory. This is why it is used to indicate the enlightenment of Buddha. If you wish to obtain the Buddha’s enlightenment, then this says you must quickly get to work. And yet, Katsudo Zenji expresses this quite wonderfully as “Without slackness, in each or your actions and work, without overlooking anything, without doing something.” (Ibid.)

This is, so to say, to endeavor at zazen without letting up. It is do each task (a Japanese play on words that can also be read “thus, thus”) without missing anything, without doing something else. This is, after all, to work personally at what must be done. We are apt to say we don’t understand “suchness,” and thereby, we are negligent in sitting in zazen and end up doing other things. And yet, finally “the Way is always within ‘suchness’ or ‘thusness.’” And then, when we endeavor at zazen as thusness, it is easy to make the mistake of setting up a separate goal. There is this mental content. It is enough just to “let go,” but people cannot do this. This is the part that is difficult about the Soto Zen’s “*shikantaza*.” Moreover, if we misunderstand “the way to let go,” it only becomes “withered tree, dead ash” Zen.

Just away from both, we should stay in the middle way, it is obvious from below.

*For practicing Zen, a quiet room is suitable.
Eat and drink moderately.
Put aside all involvements and suspend all affairs.*

Do not think “good” or “bad.”
Do not judge true or false.
Give up the operations of mind, intellect, and consciousness;
Stop measuring with thoughts, ideas, and views.
Have no designs on becoming a buddha.
How could that be limited to sitting or lying down?

From this portion of the *Fukan zazengi* text, we gradually come to the part where Dogen Zenji gives “the rules for zazen.” In the original Japanese, the word “*sanzen*” can be understood to mean “*sanzen is zazen*”, a phrase that appears in the “*Zazengi*” (The Principle for Zazen) chapter of the *Shobogenzo*. “*Sanzen*” is also used to refer to asking a Zen master about a koan, but in the Soto Zen, we understand this word to mean “zazen.”

Then, continuing, we come to the environment when sitting in zazen and the attitude for when we begin to sit in zazen. Regarding the sitting environment, this is understood in very simple terms as “a quiet room is suitable” and “it is best to eat and drink moderately.” However, in Shigetsu Zenji’s “Words That Cannot Be Spoken,” he wrote regarding the sitting environment, “There must adequate space around all things” and regarding the second part, he advised that “it is best that the body is healthy and at ease.” In other words, zazen is to sit in an environment that is free and unrestricted, and that it’s best if a person is healthy and at ease. Moreover, the significance of this is noted in more detail in the “*Zazengi*” (The Principles for Zazen) chapter of the *Shobogenzo*.

It is best to sit zazen in a quiet place. Prepare a thick sitting mat. Do not let wind or smoke enter. Do not let rain or dew leak in. Protect and maintain the area that contains your body. There are traces of those in the past who sat on a diamond seat or sat on large, flat rocks. There were all seated on a thick carpet of grass. The sitting place should be bright. It should not be dark, day or night. To be warm in winter and cool in summer is the way.... Be moderate in eating and drinking. Be mindful of time passing.

So, when sitting in zazen, it is best to sit in a quiet place. With this, I think of the following passage:

Your body-mind, in other words, the meticulous practice of the Way; sitting upright and not lying down, being at peace doing nothing, is to be like a dead tree, with a head of stone. Just like host and guest. The exclusive use of measuring the Dharma is like exhaling and inhaling the breath. The depth of compassion is like Avalokiteshvara’s thousand hands. Dwell in high mountains and deep valleys. This is the way to spend the years of your life. Gasan Joseki Zenji (Mountains, Clouds, Ocean, Moon First volume)

This is a teaching of Gasan Joseki Zenji, second abbot of Daihonzan Sojiji. Gasan Zenji’s disciples started at Noto Sojiji (present day Sojiji Soin) and spread from there throughout Japan. The reason they did not hesitate to build temples in mountainous areas was based on this text. The teaching to “dwell in high mountains and high valleys; this is the way to spend the years of your

life” is based in other words on “for practicing Zen, a quiet place is suitable.” His disciples built temples in the mountains, practicing zazen and guiding people.

Continuing with *Fukan zazengi*, we come to the part “Put aside all involvements and suspend all affairs.” A literal translation of “all involvements” and “all affairs” can be understood as “worldly affairs” and “mundane matters.” We can understand this teaching to mean that we should stop these involvements and practice zazen. However, in his book “*Tenchayu*,” Katsudo Zenji comments, “‘Putting aside’ is the complete immovability of ‘all involvements.’ The time of ‘complete suspension’ is ‘all affairs.’ Here we can see the intention of understanding “all involvements” and “all affairs” in accordance with “untainted (no discrimination) practice-realization.” This is to say, in other words, that the true form of “putting aside” is when all involvements are all involvements without discrimination. Or, all affairs are when everything is completely “suspended.” Here, “complete” and “all” is when there is no discrimination. This is the true meaning of “all involvements” and “all affairs.”

Consequently, the contents of this state are “Do not think ‘good’ or ‘bad’. Do not judge true or false.” This is the negation, the end, of discrimination. This is what Katsudo Zenji refers to as “This zazen is all functions.” (Ibid.) It is “all.” When Dogen Zenji used the expression “all functions” or “all-inclusive Way,” this was certainly no discrimination. However, within no discrimination, there is activity, there is function. No. Rather, “all functions of zazen” is that

perfection; the completeness of function is received as it is.

The part in the *Fukan zazengi* text we come to next is rather difficult. Even the translation of the preceding lines, as well as the next part, has traditionally been translated rather vaguely. However, this time, I would like to think about this deeply.

First, there is “Give up the operations of mind, intellect, and consciousness.” Regarding, “mind, intellect, and consciousness,” Menzan Zenji, in his book “*Monkai*” used a reference to “*Shikan Bugyo Dengu Ketsu*,” “The recognition of objects and that (which knows) the difference between trees and rock is called ‘mind.’ Next, the ‘intellect’ is what assesses and measures the mind. And ‘consciousness’ is clear recognition.” This understanding is expressed in Keizan Zenji’s *Denkoroku* in the following manner:

When we can see this meticulously, there is a distinction into three categories: that which is called “mind,” that which is called “mentation,” and that which is called “consciousness.” So-called “consciousness” refers to the present mind of hatred and love, affirmation and negation. So-called “mentation” is our present knowing of hot and cold, or the sensation of pain and itching. So-called “mind” does not distinguish between “is” and “is not,” and it does not sense pain or itching. It is like “fences and walls,” like “wood and stone.” We can well think of it as truly serene. This mind is like something that has no ears or eyes.

(From Chapter 51)

Regardless of whether it is Menzan Zenji's or Keizan Zenji's *teisho*, the problem is that these are only an analysis of "mind, intellect, and consciousness." They are not teaching about the nature of zazen, which is the question here. The condition of zazen is reiterated in Keizan Zenji's *teisho*:

It is said that studying the way should be "separate from mind, mentation, and consciousness." It is not that you should think, "This is the body-mind." Beyond them is a singular numinous light, always steady across the kalpas. Thoroughly contemplate this, meticulously, and you are certain to reach it. If you can clarify this mind, then there is no grasping of body or mind, and no things or self whatsoever to bear. Therefore, it is said, "body-mind cast off." (Ibid.)

Studying the Way isn't a matter of being separate from mind, intellect, and consciousness. It is rather that beyond them there is only the function of a "singular numinous light." At that moment, body-mind is cast off. This is the complete function of zazen. Katsudo Zenji also teaches this in a way that is easy to understand. "The sitting of sitting through casting off body-mind stops of itself." (From "A Cup of Tea with Dogen Zenji's *Extensive Record*, op.cit.) When all is said and done, stopping the dependence we have on the function of discrimination is nothing more or less than abandoning the body-mind to zazen. This called "stopping."

Furthermore, in the *Fukan zazengi* text, we next have "Stop measuring with thoughts, ideas,

and views." Regarding "thought, ideas, and views", in the usual form of zazen concentration, the spiritual agency that takes place within this practice is to concentrate correctly, think, and then see clearly. In short, this phrase is saying that as for the mind within samadhi, it is necessary to practice correctly this matter of "thoughts, ideas, and views." It can be said that in Soto Zen's zazen, it is necessary to practice "Stop measuring with thought, ideas, and views." Katsudo Zenji says that in sitting where body-mind is cast off, "measuring" is stopped. So, within zazen, it is necessary to think of events and see the condition of correct mental concentration as it is.

The next part of the text is not such a difficult passage. First, regarding "Have no designs on becoming a buddha," for a more detailed presentation, I would like you to look at the "*Zazen-shin*" chapter of the *Shobogenzo* where Dogen Zenji writes, "Nangaku says, 'How can sitting in zazen make you into a buddha?'" Regarding these words, Dogen Zenji continues, "Be clear that zazen is not working toward becoming a buddha. It is evident that the teaching becoming a buddha has nothing to do with zazen." Therefore, zazen isn't a matter of "waiting" to become a buddha. Here, it is necessary to understand this commentary with the teaching "practice-realization is one" or "the untainted (no discrimination) of practice-enlightenment." As I've already mentioned in this essay, the zazen of the Soto Zen is practice-realization is one. At that time, becoming buddha is clearly becoming buddha, and since zazen takes place within becoming buddha, it is not necessary to "intend to become a buddha." Turning this around, it can be said that the fact of sitting in zazen is becom-

ing a buddha. Regarding this state, Katsudo Zenji carefully instructs us saying, “There must only be zazen. Becoming buddha must be becoming a buddha. It isn’t that a buddha practices to become a buddha. You must simply investigate that sitting becomes sitting.” (Ibid.)

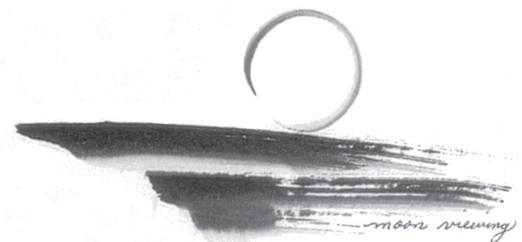
Finally, in the *Fukan zazengi* text we come to “How could zazen be limited to sitting or lying down?” Regarding “sitting and lying down,” the doubt arises that even though we are sitting in zazen, why insist on “sitting or lying down?” Put simply, I think a question can arise about the “sitting” of zazen and the sitting of “sitting or lying down.” Are they the same or different? Once again, I would have you look at the “*Zazenshin*” chapter of the *Shobogenzo* where it says, “Describing zazen, he says, ‘If you practice sitting Zen, you will know that Zen is not about sitting or lying down.’” Regarding these words, Dogen Zenji states, “What (*Nangaku*) is saying now is that ‘zazen is zazen’ and that it is not limited to sitting or lying down. After we have received the one-to-one transmission of the teaching that zazen is beyond sitting or lying down, then unlimited instances of sitting and lying are the self.” Zazen is zazen. It isn’t sitting or lying down. However, when we verify that zazen isn’t sitting or lying down, that is the “self” itself. For a person of zazen, the four postures of walking, standing, sitting and lying down are, of course, these four postures. But zazen is zazen and when zazen is zazen, the self is unlimited sitting and lying down.

In other words, the “sitting” of zazen and the “sitting” of the four postures are as far apart as heaven and earth. Rather, it is that the first one

includes the second. Regarding this matter, Katsudo Zenji says, “The facade of zazen is not sitting or lying down. In immobile sitting, there is neither before nor after. When zazen is zazen, all other sitting and lying is included within.” (Ibid.) It can be said that this as well is a careful and courteous teaching. However, this courtesy extends only to this one phrase. Continuing, he writes, “If you skip over this passage and say that ‘Sitting in zazen falls short’ and so on, then it must be said [you] are a demon.” (Ibid.) It appears from this statement that there were people of his time who understood “zazen isn’t limited to sitting or lying down” to mean that this was a “negation of zazen.” There are people in the present day who also misunderstand this.

To repeat myself, we must see that the premise being taught in this text is “the practice of zazen.” One could argue that we must not accept the view of “interpreting and using a passage without regard to its content,” especially one that negates the practice of zazen.

(To be continued in the next issue)





正法眼蔵第七 一顆明珠
**The 7th Chapter of Shobogenzo
 Ikaka-myōju (One Bright Jewel)
 Lecture (8)**

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 (Edited by Rev. Shoryu Bradley)

Fixed-dharma and Not-fixed-dharma

[Text]

(14)

玄沙来日問其僧、尽十方世界是一顆明珠、汝作麼生会」。

The next day, Xuansha asked the monk, “The entire ten-direction world is one bright jewel. How do you understand it?”

(15)

これは道取す、昨日説定法なる、今日二枚をかりて出氣す。

This means that he spoke of the fixed dharma yesterday; he speaks with his second tongue today.

今日説不定法なり、推倒昨日點頭笑なり。

Today he speaks of the not-fixed-dharma. Having pushed yesterday aside, he is nodding and laughing.

This time Xuansha asks the same question the monk asked the previous day: “How do you understand it?” Again, this is not simply an inquiry. This rhetorical question means the monk should understand, but how can he understand when the day before Xuansha cautioned him not to try to understand because understanding doesn’t work? But today Xuansha intentionally asks the monk for his understanding.

This means that he spoke of the fixed dharma

yesterday; he speaks with his second tongue today. Today he speaks of the not fixed dharma. Having pushed yesterday aside, he is nodding and laughing.

The day before Xuansha said any type of understanding is no good, that intellectual understanding doesn’t reach the reality of “the entire ten-direction world is one bright jewel.” But this day he asks, “How do you understand?”

Here Xuansha points to another side: “You need to understand, so what is your understanding?” Dogen says Xuansha is using two tongues in this dialogue. This Japanese expression is the same as “speaking with a double tongue” in English. It means to tell a lie or to change one’s story from one day to the next. Here we must consider which of his statements is true and which is a lie. There is also the possibility that both are true and both are lies. As for Xuansha, he behaves as if he doesn’t see the contradiction between yesterday’s statement and today’s. It’s as if he has put aside yesterday’s saying and just nods and laughs.

The Tenzo’s Work As An Example

Xuansha tried to show us that we need understanding as well as “going beyond understanding,” and yet we must be free from both. This is a strange teaching, but it is Dogen’s message to us. We need to have certain ways of viewing and thinking about things, and at the same time we need to be free from these views and thoughts. Sometimes we must accept certain conditions without discriminating or voicing our preferences. In such situations we must simply consider how we can work with the conditions we encounter.

According to Dogen's teaching in *Tenzo Kyokun*, for example, the *Tenzo's* daily work must begin with collecting ingredients from the food storage area. Only then is the menu created. The *tenzo* cannot choose preferred ingredients but must use whatever is available on that particular day, considering how to make the best dish possible for the assembly. Dogen writes in the text:

Do not comment on the quantity or make judgements about the quality of the ingredients you obtained from the director, just sincerely prepare them. Definitely avoid emotional disputes about the quantity of the ingredients. All day and all night, things come to mind and the mind attends to them; at one with them all, diligently carry on the Way.

Dogen says the *tenzo* shouldn't be happy if he receives exceptional ingredients, and he shouldn't be despondent if the ingredients are plain. The *tenzo* has no choice in ingredients because they are either donated, come from the monastery garden or field, or are simply nature's gifts.

This is different from our present situation, especially if we live in a wealthy country. At supermarkets, we can buy virtually unlimited amounts of food from almost any part of the world in any season. When we cook, we create a menu, make a list of ingredients, and then go to the supermarket and collect what we need. But for a *tenzo* living in ancient times, the process was the just opposite: first the cook received the ingredients and then considered how to prepare them. When the *tenzo* received the ingredients,

he/she needed to put aside likes and dislikes and received them without discrimination. The cook had no choice but to work with the ingredients that were available. And yet once the *tenzo* received the ingredients, he/she had to consider the best way to prepare them in a way the assembly would enjoy. This then was simultaneously a practice of both discrimination and non-discrimination.

Our life is the same as the *tenzo's* cooking. I cannot choose, for example, where and when I was born or who my parents were. Without any choice in the matter, I somehow was born the child of certain parents, and these particular five skandhas, or this DNA, had already been given to me before I even came to identify with them as "me." First we have to accept these ingredients of our life whether we like them or not. But when we do become aware of this particular body and mind, born in a particular place and time, as "me," we have to consider how to use these five skandhas to live in the most healthy and joyful way of life. We must ask ourselves how we can make our life the most meaningful and enjoyable within the situation we have been given. There's no discrimination or choice concerning the basic reality of our life and the inevitability of our death, but while we are alive, we have to consider the best, most healthy, and meaningful way to live. In our lives there are always two sides: no discrimination or just accepting, and also thinking how best to use what we have been given once we have accepted it.

But when a person presents "this side" (thinking, understanding, making choices) and at the same time "that side" (not-thinking, beyond-

understanding, non-discrimination)” it sounds contradictory. We think, “This person is lying, today he says this and yet yesterday he said that. Which is the true teaching of this person? Or is he just changing his opinion every day?” This is what Dogen refers to here. Xuansha is using a double tongue: one says “we should understand,” and the other says “understanding is useless.”

Xuansha is double-tongued, and he’s laughing – that means he’s enjoying it. But usually we are serious. We want to choose between this side or that side. Then when we have a problem with the side we have chosen, we become very serious and say, “I don’t like this, I want to get that other thing,” or “I want to go to that other side.” And when we are on that other side we say, “I want to return to the side where I was.” When we sit, for example, we often think that working in the kitchen might be better, and when we work in the kitchen we think “I want to sit.” We think what we are doing is the worst thing to do, that everyone else is doing something better. That is delusion.

Yet Xuansha is laughing. To embrace both sides we need a sense of humor. This is important. Most Zen masters have a very good sense of humor and enjoy contradictions, and there are so many jokes in Zen literature. Sometimes we can do nothing but laugh or joke, accept our condition, and live through it. That is one kind of wisdom found in Zen.

Riding the Bandit’s Horse, Chasing After the Bandit

[Text]

(16)

僧曰、「尽十方世界は一顆明珠、用会作麼」。

The monk said, “The entire ten-direction world is one bright jewel. What is the use of understanding?”

(17)

いふべし、騎賊馬逐賊《賊馬に騎て賊を逐う》なり。

This is, so to speak, “riding the bandit’s horse, chasing after the bandit.”

古仏為汝説するには、異類中行なり。

An ancient buddha expounding dharma for you is like walking within difference and unity.

しばらく回光返照すべし、幾箇枚の用会作麼かある。

For a while we should turn the light inward and illuminate the self; how many pieces of “what is the use of understanding” are there?

試道するには、乳餅七枚、菜餅五枚なりといへども、湘之南、潭之北の教行なり。

Tentatively we should say seven milk cakes and five vegetable cakes. Still this is the teaching of practice “south of Xaing” and “north of Tan.”

Here the monk is saying the same thing Xuansha said the day before. Usually this saying is interpreted as a simple repetition, without an actual understanding of Xuansha’s words. It says the monk had an intellectual understanding only, and that understanding is of no use. But Dogen’s creative reading of the saying is different. I think Dogen’s comment shows his sense of humor.

This is, so to speak, “riding the bandit’s horse, chasing after the bandit.

This is an expression used in Zen texts such as *The Blue Cliff Record*. Originally, it came from the story of a Chinese military officer of the Han Dynasty. The officer was injured during a battle and took an enemy’s horse, chasing the

enemy and killing him. Dogen is saying the monk took Xuansha's "horse," the saying "what is the use of understanding," and chased him. He attacked Xuansha using Xuansha's own saying.

On the previous day, the monk had spoken from the side of, "we need to understand," and Xuansha spoken from the other side, "understanding is of no use." On the day when Xuansha says "understanding is necessary," the monk speaks from the opposite side, "understanding is of no use." Thus Xuansha and the monk together show both sides, supporting each other.

This is one of the ways we find the middle way between ultimate truth and conventional truth. It is the same as saying "form is emptiness and emptiness is form."

An ancient Buddha expounding dharma for you is like walking within difference and unity.

This expression, "walking within difference and unity" is another important Zen expression. It is a translation of *Irui chugyo* (畏類中行); *i* is difference, and *rui* is similar to a "group," or "category," referring to things in the same class – this is why the translation here is "unity." And *chu* is "in" or "center" or "middle;" *gyo* is "to go," and it can also mean "practice." *Irui chugyo* was first used by Nanquan Puyuan (Nansen Fugan). Nanquan, a very important and well-known Zen master in China, was a disciple of Mazu and the teacher of Zhauzhou (Joshu). He said that after his death he would be reborn as a water buffalo, and that statement is the origin of this usage of *irui chugyo*. In this case, *irui* means different sorts of beings, indicating

that although Nanquan was at the time in the human realm, he was willing to go to the animal realm as part of his bodhisattva practice. That meant bodhisattvas vow to free all beings from samsara, so we should not cling to the human realms. As a part of our vow, we need to go to the other realms of samsara as well. To be born as an animal such as a water buffalo was a means for him to continue this bodhisattva practice. We must go to different groups of beings and walk together with them. That is what this expression originally means.

This saying can also be interpreted another way. In the first interpretation *i*, or "different" modifies *rui*, so *irui* is "different group" or "different kind." But in the second interpretation *i* doesn't modify *rui* and the terms are separate; *i* then is "difference," and *rui* is "unity" or "sameness." Thus *chugyo* means "going in the middle of difference and unity." The meaning is transformed, with difference and unity taking on the same meaning of *san* and *do* in *Sandokai*. The *kai* of *Sandokai* means "merging," giving the meaning "merging of difference and unity." "Merging" here means we embrace both sides.

So Dogen means that we must embrace these two sides, discrimination (understanding, difference) and non-discrimination (beyond-understanding, unity). We must go between them, in their middle, or embrace them both. This is the meaning of the expression in this particular sentence. It is a comment on the monk's statement, but at the same time it says this ancient Buddha, Xuansha, is telling us we must embrace both difference and unity, we must embrace both "how can I understand?" and "understanding is no use."

Turning the Light inward and Illuminating the Self

Dogen tells us that to walk within the middle way of difference and unity, we should turn the light inward and illuminate the self. This is the same expression he uses in *Fukanzazengi*, *eko hensho* (回光返照). *E* is “to turn,” *ko* is “light,” *hen* is “return,” and *sho* is “illumination.”

This expression was originally a description of the scenery in the afterglow of a sunset. Although the sun has already sunk below the western mountains or horizon at this time, the sun illuminates the entire sky very brightly. The sun is already gone, and yet at this time between day and night, or brightness and darkness, there arises a short period of intense brightness and beauty. This expression has been used with a few different connotations in connection with this meaning.

When I translated *Fukanzazengi* many years ago, I didn't quite understand the meaning of this expression. At that time I was living at Pioneer Valley Zendo, and when a Chinese person visited there I asked her about the meaning of *eko hensho*. She said it refers to the phenomenon that can happen to a dying person just before they pass away; somehow a liveliness, mental clarity, or memory returns. The person's life is almost gone, but just before they pass a liveliness comes to them. In English, this phenomenon is called “terminal lucidity.”

According to a Chinese dictionary, this expression also has the same meaning as the

English expression “second wind.” It refers to the experience of somehow finding the strength to continue after being very tired and depleted of energy after exercise or some other activity. That means the energy of our personal will power was exhausted, but somehow our body or life found more energy, without our control. That is what “second wind” and *eko hensho* mean. During *sesshin*, we often have this kind of experience and feel it is not “me” that is sitting but something larger enabling us to continue.

In speaking of our *zazen* Dogen says that we are always chasing after something outside us saying, “I like this, I hate that.” This is what we do in the daytime; we discriminate and think, “this is thing better than that thing” or “I like this thing better than that thing, so I will do this.” That is what we always do during the daytime when we work. But in the darkness of the night while we sleep, we are free from that kind of discriminating and choosing. We just rest and sleep. *Eko hensho* happens between daytime and nighttime, between the time of work and rest. Brightness and darkness signify discrimination and non-discrimination, and *eko hensho* happens between these two; it's the end of daytime and the beginning of night. At this border, the entire sky becomes really bright and beautiful. That is what happens in our *zazen*. Our *zazen* is not sleeping, and yet our *zazen* is not thinking and working based on discrimination. It's like a twilight time with an afterglow; our work is done, but we are not sleeping. During *zazen* we sit exactly in this time of day when the sun has just set and the world is really bright and beautiful.

When we work in the daytime, we pick one

thing and throw away another; we discriminate and choose --our light illuminates things outside of us. But in our zazen we don't do such things. Instead we turn this light inward and illuminate the self. This is how the expression *eko hensho* is used in *Fukanzazengi*. Dogen uses exactly the same expression here in discussing the relationship between discrimination and non-discrimination, or using-understanding (会) and no-understanding (不会). Both sides are there, and somehow this is really bright and beautiful.

This is the meaning of “what is the use of understanding?” But even here understanding is not completely eliminated. When Xuansha says, “What is the use of understanding?,” he's still thinking and gives the monk good advise. When we say, “Zazen is good for nothing” or “understanding is of no use,” still we are thinking, we are still not in complete darkness. This is the same as the time when the sun is setting. We are still awake, and although we think understanding is useless, this itself is still a type of understanding. Understanding is not completely negated: it's still there, but in this understanding Xuansha is saying understanding is of no use. This is not such a simple thing. “Understanding is of no use” is still a kind of understanding. This is neither complete darkness nor the complete negation of understanding. Rather, this is understanding about not-understanding. Or we could say that not-understanding manifests or expresses itself within understanding. This is a very important, subtle teaching.

How many pieces of “what is the use of understanding” are there?

Here Dogen says that there is not just one but many pieces of “understanding is of no use” and “what's the use of understanding?” For example, when in terrible pain or facing the matter of life and death, what's the use of understanding? Whether we understand it or not, pain is pain – we will either cry out or silently endure. And it is not only in such extreme situations we face the reality that understanding doesn't work; we must do so all of the time.

We cannot avoid understanding because we are human beings, and the human brain produces thoughts. This is not our preference, it is our reality. We simply find ourselves living in this world with a thinking brain. Thinking is not a personal choice. It's as if we are forced or designed to think. And even before I seem to choose a way of thinking, the way I think in general is previously established by my home and educational environment, so the way I think is not really my choice. To think or not to think is therefore not a choice we can make. Even thinking or discriminating is not a product of my discrimination. This ability to discriminate also comes from our life force beyond discrimination; I don't have the option to not discriminate.

But if we are dominated by discrimination, if we think the world created by our discrimination is reality and throw our lives into that world of discrimination, we are in trouble. Yet the ability to discriminate is part of this life beyond discrimination.

In reality, for everything we encounter, for all situations and conditions we meet at this moment, “understanding is of no use.” And again,

to say this is still an understanding. So our life consists of an infinite number of encounters with “what’s the use of understanding?”

South of Xiang and North of Tan

Tentatively we should say seven milk cakes and five vegetable cakes. Still this is the teaching of practice “south of Xiang” and “north of Tan.”

The terms “milk cakes” and “vegetable cakes” come from the sayings of Tiantong Rujing (Tendo Nyojo), Dogen’s teacher. But here the terms don’t have any particular meaning. He just uses seven milk cakes and five vegetable cakes to signify indefinite numbers; he could have used any number. This means there is an infinite number of encounters with “understanding is of no use,” or “what’s the use of understanding?” This is Dogen’s answers to his own question, “how many pieces of ‘what is the use of understanding’ are there?”

Still this is the teaching of practice “south of Xiang” and “north of Tan.”

The expression “South of Xiang” and “north of Tan” comes from a verse by a Zen Master who was the disciple of Nanyan Huichuang (Nanyo Echu). It is about the “seamless stupa,” appearing in case 18 of *The Blue Cliff Record (Hekiganroku)*. Nanyan was a disciple of the Sixth Ancestor, Huineng. Dogen Zenji respects Nanyan very much and often quotes him. He especially references to him in *Bendowa* and in his discussion of shin or mind in *Shobogenzo Sokushin Zebutsu (Mind Is Itself Buddha)*. In that fascicle Dogen says some people misunderstand

shin or mind to be like *atman*, a permanent, hidden owner and operator of the body and mind. Nanyan similarly criticized the Southern Zen teachings of his day for this same misunderstanding.

Nanyan was respected by the emperors of his day and was called “the teacher of three emperors.” The following story took place when he was dying. The Emperor was his student, and because his teacher was dying the emperor asked him a question.

Emperor Su Tsung asked Nanyan, “After you die, what will you need?”

Nanyan said, “Build a seamless stupa for me.”

“Seamless stupa” is a translation of *muhoto* (無縫塔), literally “stupa without a seam.” Stupas usually have five layers symbolizing the five great elements: *chi, sui, ka, fu, ku* – earth, water, fire, wind and emptiness. Usually they’re made of pieces of stone with different shapes, but there are some monuments or graves that are made of just one piece. Usually in Japan the graves for lay people are square. But many monks’ graves are shaped like an egg and known as *ranto* or “egg-shaped stupa.” These are also called “seamless stupas,” because they have only one piece, with no seam or sign of separation. Nanyan asked the Emperor to build a seamless stupa for his monument. “Seamless” is an important word here.

The Emperor said, “Please tell me, Master, what the monument would look like.”

Nanyan didn't describe the shape of the stupa, he just remained silent for a while and then asked if the Emperor understood. He was dying, but he was still teaching.

The Emperor said, "I don't understand."

Nanyan said, "I have a disciple, Danyuan, to whom I have transmitted the teaching and who is well versed in this matter. Please summon him and ask him about it."

This disciple was Danyuan Yingzhen (Tangen Oshin). After Nanyan's death, the Emperor summoned Danyuan and asked him what his teacher meant. Danyuan answered by composing a verse:

South of Hsiang, North of Tan;
In between there's gold sufficient to a nation.
Beneath the shadowless tree, the community
ferryboat;
Within the crystal palace, there's no one who
knows.¹

I think it will be helpful here to examine this verse line by line.

South of Hsiang, North of Tan
In between there's gold sufficient to a nation.

Referring to commentaries and dictionaries, I found several pieces of information regarding these two places Xiang (Hsiang) and Tan. These were the names of two rivers. Xiang is in the south, and Tan is in the north. Between these two rivers there was only a watery piece of land like a swamp, and in ancient times, this was in the middle of nowhere. This is the point.

Today the area is known as Xiangtan and is quite a large industrialized city known for being the birth place of Mao Zedong, but according to another source of information, during certain eras this area was called Xiang and at other times it was called Tan. The place had two names. The Zen master who originated the expression had a good sense of humor. Because Xiang is south and Tan is north, "South of Xiang, and North of Tan" refers to the entire world. Hsiang and Tan are two names for the same place, so north of this place and south of this place refers to everything everywhere and nowhere in particular. Danyuan said at this everywhere and nowhere place there is a huge amount of gold. But there is no way to measure the amount of gold because of course no such place actually exists. That is the meaning of this expression, "South of Xiang and north of Tan." It means everywhere and nowhere.

Beneath the shadowless tree, the community
ferryboat."

The shadowless tree is a symbol of emptiness because there is no such thing as a tree without a shadow. And underneath this nonexistent tree there is a "community ferryboat." This refers to a collection of some elements, here symbolizing the five skandhas, the body and mind which also are empty.

Within the crystal palace, there's no one who
knows.

I don't know where this crystal palace is, perhaps it is "south of Hsiang and north of Tan." "No one who knows," is a translation of *chishiki* (知識). *Chishiki* is used as a translation

of the Sanskrit word *mitra*, meaning a friend or a teacher. The poem says within the "palace," the five skandhas that are empty, there are no friends.

This entire verse describes emptiness as being nowhere, everywhere, and no one. It is something ever-changing, moving and lacking any particular fixed entity. This reality of emptiness is what this "seamless stupa" symbolizes. Nanyan told the Emperor he didn't need any memorial except the awakening to the reality of emptiness and interconnectedness.

"Teaching of practice" in Dogen's comment refers to practice as one bright jewel, practice which is empty, being everywhere and nowhere. This is the meaning of the expression, "what is the use of understanding?" Understanding is really of no use, and yet to know that it is of no use is the best use of understanding.

The Demon's Cave in the Black Mountain

[Text]

(18)

玄沙曰、「知、汝向黒山鬼窟裏作活計」。
Xuansha said, "I know that you are making your livelihood inside the demon's cave in the black mountain."

This is the final part of the conversation between Xuansha and the monk. The common understanding of this saying "making your livelihood inside the demon's cave in the black mountain" is, as I discussed previously, that this monk is still living within the delusive realm of thinking and understanding based on ignorance or karmic consciousness. Xuansha is scolding

him saying, "you don't understand my instruction at all." Again, Dogen's interpretation is completely different.

(19)

しるべし、日面月面は往古よりいまだ不換なり。
You should know that since ancient times, the sun face and the moon face have never changed. 日面は日面とともに共出す、月面は月面とともに共出するゆゑに、若六月道正是時、不可道我姓熱也《若し六月に正に是れ時と道はば、我が姓は熱と道ふべからず》なり。

The sun face comes out together with the sun face; the moon face comes out together with the moon face. Therefore [Yaoshan said] "Even if I say that it is right in the sixth month, my family name is not Heat."

Dogen's comment here was total nonsense to me until I carefully examined each expression he uses in relation to the original scripture or Zen text. "The sun face and the moon face," for example, appears in a koan story, case 3 of Blue Cliff Record, "Master Ma Is Unwell." This is about the Zen master Mazu Daoyi as he lay in his death bed, as Nanyan did in the story I mentioned above.

When Mazu was sick the director asked him, "How are you these days?"

Mazu said, "Sun Face Buddha, Moon Face Buddha."

The two buddhas Mazu mentioned appear in *the Sutra of the Buddhas' Names (Butsumyokyo, 仏名経)*. In the Sutra, it is said the longevity of Sun Face Buddha is one thousand and eight-hundred years, and Moon Face Buddha lives

only for one day and one night. “Sun Face Buddha and Moon Face Buddha” refers to buddhas of long life spans and ones of short life spans.

In the *koan*, Mazu is dying. He speaks of Sun Face Buddha who lives for almost two thousand years and Moon Face Buddha who lives for only one day and night. Whether their life spans are long or short, the *rupa* bodies of the buddhas are impermanent. They are born at a certain time, live for a certain period of time, and they die at a certain time. We also cannot expect to live longer than our allotted life span. Mazu is saying his students should not worry and cry; the time to pass away will definitely come to all of us sooner or later. However, the dharma bodies of those buddhas and Mazu are beyond arising and perishing, as Shakyamuni said in *the Sutra on the Buddha’s Bequeathed Teaching (Butsu-yuikyogyo)*:

If I were to live longer it would be of no further benefit. All of those who could be crossed over, whether in the heavens above or among humans, have already crossed over, and all of those who have not yet crossed over have already created the causes and conditions for crossing over. From now on all of my disciples must continuously practice. Then the Thus Come One’s Dharma body will always be present and indestructible. You should know therefore, that everything in the world is impermanent. Meetings necessarily have separations, so do not harbor grief.²

I think this is what Mazu meant. In other

words, “Don’t worry I’m okay. I’m dying but my dharma body is always present in your practice.”

Buddha’s eternal life is at one with this seamless stupa that includes the entirety of time and space. We also appear at a certain point, stay for a while, and disappear sooner or later within this entirety of time and space. When we look at this from the perspective of flowing time, we are without a doubt impermanent. We come into being, stay for a period, our appearance changes and we eventually die and disappear. And yet, precisely because our life is impermanent, having no fixed entity we can call “me,” our life as an individual self is zero both in terms of time and personhood – there’s no “me” that appears or disappears. Therefore we are really one with seamless time and space. All of us have two sides: impermanence and also eternity. We are living the eternal life of Buddha, and also the impermanent life of a collection of five skandhas. Buddha’s life is Buddha’s life and karmic life is karmic life, they never meet each other, because they are exactly the same thing

Dogen says, “*The sun face comes out together with the sun face; the moon face comes out together with the moon face.*” This means that sun face is just sun face and moon face is just moon face. Each one of us has a different life span, a different appearance and other characteristics, but we don’t have to compare them.

Truly This Moment

Therefore [Yaoshan said] “Even if I say that it is right in the sixth month, my family name is not Heat.”

This saying comes from another story about Yaoshan Weiyan (Yakusan Igen). Yaoshan had a lay student named Li'ao who was the governor of the region where Yaoshan lived. They had a famous conversation at their first meeting.

Li'ao asked, "What is the Way?"

Yaoshan pointed up and down with his fingers like the baby Buddha did and said, "Do you understand?"

Just as Nanyan did when dying, Yaoshan remained silent and asked the governor, "Do you understand?" This is a kind of a Zen method for teaching without teaching.

Li'ao said, 'No I don't understand.'

Then the master said, "Clouds are in the sky, and water is in the water jar."

Then Li'ao was delighted with the answer, made a prostration, and offered a verse:

His well disciplined body is like a crane
Under the thousands of pine trees
There are two boxes of the sutras.
Though I visited and inquired [about] the
Way, he said nothing but clouds are in the
blue sky and water is in the water jar.

A crane is a thin yet beautiful bird. Yaoshan was already an old person and very thin, but he was well disciplined so he appeared dignified. Underneath the pine trees there are two boxes of sutras. These two boxes of sutras refer to the ultimate truth and the conventional truth. They are the same as the two sides Dogen points out in this section of One Bright Jewel: we need to understand, using words, letters, concepts and

the logical mind, and at the same time truth is beyond all understanding.

Clouds in the blue sky and water in a jar are both forms of H₂O. These are exactly the same thing, and yet they are different. The clouds are in the sky and the water is right at hand within a jar.

The water in this case is contained in a particular jar, here and now for the abbot's use at a certain Zen monastery. The water has a certain purpose in the human world. It has some use and value – it can be used, for example, to prevent the teacher from getting thirsty. This symbolizes conventional reality dealing with particularity.

But the clouds in the sky have no such particular purpose. Clouds are just there, having no value or being beyond evaluation. Clouds do not exist for the benefit of one particular person. They just freely come and go, appearing and disappearing in the vastness of nature. These clouds in the sky symbolize absolute truth.

Yaoshan said the Way can be revealed through these two truths.

After this conversation, Li'ao visited Yaoshan occasionally. Once in the winter the governor visited Yaoshan and asked, "What is your family name (姓, xing)?"

In response Yaoshan said, "It is truly this moment (正是時)."

This phrase in Japanese is *masa ni kore toki nari*. *Masani* means "truly" or "really," *kore* is "this," and *toki* means "time," or "moment." "Truly this moment" is all Yaoshan said. Li'ao didn't understand why he said such a thing when

asked his family name.

Because he didn't understand, after leaving Yaoshan's room Li'ao said to one of the temple officers, "When I asked the abbot's family name he said that it is truly this moment. What does this mean?" The officer said, "This is winter time. He probably said his family name was *Kan* (寒,韓, *Han*)."

Kan is Japanese. The Chinese pronunciation is *han*, which along with 韓 can mean "cold" (寒), and *Han* is also Yaoshan's family name. The temple officer thought Yaoshan said "truly this time" because it was in the cold of winter and *Han* (韓), his family name, sounds the same with *han* (寒) meaning "cold." This of course is just word play containing no important truth whatsoever; the officer thought Yaoshan was just joking.

The governor then returned to the abbot and asked, "Is this what you meant?" But Yaoshan said, "No, I'm not joking," and then said, "If you ask me the same question in the sixth month, is my name "Heat" (熱)?

The sixth month is the hottest time of the year. Yaoshan would give the same answer, "It is truly this moment," even if he was asked in the hot summer. He doesn't reply with either "cold" (*han* or *kan*) or "heat." Yaoshan's answer was about his true nature (本性). The true nature of his life was changing moment by moment.

The pronunciation of both 姓(family name) and 性(nature) in Chinese is *xing*. Yaoshan is saying, "My nature is always this time, this

present moment." This means it is impermanent, changing moment by moment, but also one with the eternal life of Buddha. This is the same as Dogen's statement about the firewood in Genjokoan, "abiding peacefully in the dharma position of this moment. Before and after are cut off."

In a story of the Fourth Ancestor and the future Fifth Ancestor quoted by Dogen in *Shobogenzo Bussho* (Buddha Nature), a similar kind of word play appears with the words *sei* (Chinese: 姓 *xing*; family name) and *sho*, (性 *xing*, nature). In the story the Fifth Ancestor was still a boy, and the Fourth ancestor met him and asked, "What is your family name (*xing*)?" The boy replied, "My name is *bussho* (Chinese: Fa-xing, Buddha nature)," because the pronunciation of "family name" (*sho*) and "nature" (*sho*) in "*bussho*" are the same.

This is the explanation of Dogen's strange expression, "If you ask me the same question in the sixth month is my name "Heat," but what does this have to do with the demon's cave in the black mountain in the context of One Bright Jewel? Basically what Dogen says in this paragraph is "at this moment." And within this moment both eternity (ultimate reality beyond understanding) and impermanence (conventional reality requiring understanding) are here. That is Dogen's understanding of the "demon's cave in the black mountain." This darkness signifies eternity or non-discrimination.

But within this complete darkness, the monk was making a livelihood. Making a livelihood means doing various activities, moment by

moment. Within the reality of beyond-thinking and non-discrimination, to make our livelihood we must discriminate and choose, moment by moment. Both impermanence and eternity are there; conventional truth and ultimate truth are there. The monk is working to make a livelihood by discriminating within non-discrimination. This is what this paragraph means to me.

This is Dogen's commentary on the monk making a livelihood in the demon's cave in the black mountain. It's completely different from the meaning in the original conversation between Xuansha and the monk. To me this is really amazing. Dogen is completely free from the original meaning of the words and the context of the conversation. He reads completely different meanings within the same writing. I think he was able to deconstruct the meaning of the teachings because he was so free from the grammar and context of the texts. After deconstructing each and every sentence and each and every word, he reconstructed them into something completely different. If someone else did this we would think them foolish. But somehow when Dogen did it he was able to reveal a much deeper meaning of the writing. This surprises us and we are compelled to give up any judgment of him and simply appreciate his creative reading. Dogen destroys the meaning of the writings he uses and reconstructs them into something very new and profound. This is why his writing is very difficult but attractive to us. Our minds cannot work as freely as Dogen's and we cling to the original context and the original conversation of Xuansha and his monk. Dogen's way is very different. And through reading his writings, we can open the hand of our habitual way of thinking.

1. Translation by Thomas Clearly, *The Blue Cliff Record* (Shambhala, 1992), p.119

2. Translated from Chinese by The Buddhist Text Translation Society
Dharma Realm Buddhist University
Talmage, California, USA

Treasury of the True Dharma Eye
Book 64
The *Udumbara* Flower
Udonge

Translated by
the Soto Zen Text Project

Introduction

This short text was composed in the early spring of 1244, at Kippōji, in Echizen Province. Book 64 in the 75-fascicle *Shōbōgenzō*, it occurs as number 54 in the 60-fascicle redaction and number 68 in the modern vulgate edition.

The title theme is the rare *udumbara* flower said (in Dōgen's version of the story) to have been held up by the Buddha Śākyamuni on Vulture Peak at the time he transmitted his treasury of the true dharma eye to his disciple Mahākāśyapa, the First Ancestor of the Zen lineage. Dōgen opens with the famous legend, and then proceeds to comment on the meaning of "holding up the flower" and other elements of the tale. In closing, he introduces two poems by his own teacher, Tiantong Rujing, on plum and peach blossoms.

Because this text is quite brief, we have been

able to include here the full annotation (*sans kanji*) provided in the Soto Zen Text Project's forthcoming complete translation of the *Shōbōgenzō*, now in preparation. Passages in italics in this translation indicate that the original text is in Chinese, rather than Japanese.

The *Udumbara* Flower

*On Sacred Vulture Peak, before an assembly of a million, the World-Honored One held up an udumbara flower and blinked. At that time, Mahākāśyapa broke into a smile. The World-Honored One said, "I have the treasury of the true dharma eye, the wondrous mind of nirvāna; I now bequeath it to Mahākāśyapa."*¹

The seven buddhas, all the buddhas, have similarly been "holding up a flower." They have practiced and verified it and realized it as a higher "holding up a flower"; they have broken it open and revealed it as an immediate "holding up a flower."²

Thus, within "holding up a flower," toward higher and lower, toward self and other, toward surface and interior, and so on, are all the holding up of the entire flower. It is the measure of the flower, the measure of the buddha, the measure of the mind, the measure of the body. However many [instances of] "holding up a flower" there may be, they are successor after successor, one after another; they are the continued existence of the bequest. The World-Honored One has been "holding up a flower"; he has never let it go. When the World-Honored One comes "holding up a flower," that is succeeding the World-Honored One. Because the time of "holding up a flower" is all time, it is studying together with the World-Honored One; it is holding up the

flower together.³

"Holding up a flower" means a flower holding up a flower; it means plum flowers, spring flowers, snow flowers, lotus flowers, and so on. What we speak of as the five petals of the plum blossom are the three hundred sixty-four plus assemblies; they are the five thousand forty-eight scrolls; they are the three vehicles and twelvefold teachings; they are the three worthy and ten holy. Accordingly, the three worthy and ten holy do not reach them.⁴

There is the great treasury; there is "the extraordinary" — these are called "a flower opens and the world arises." "A single flower opens five petals; the fruit forms of itself" means "the whole body is the self hanging on the whole body." Seeing the peach blossoms and losing the eyes; making the ears disappear upon hearing the jade bamboo — these are the present of "holding up a flower."⁵ Standing hip-deep in snow and cutting off an arm; making obeisance and getting the marrow — these are a flower opening of itself. A stone pestle and whitened rice, transmitting the robe in the dead of night — these are the flower already held up. They are the root of life in the hand of the World-Honored One.⁶

In general, "holding up a flower" is before the World-Honored One attained the way, is at the same time that the World-Honored One attained the way, is after the World-Honored One attained the way. Consequently, it is the flower attaining the way. "Holding up the flower" has far transcended these times. The aspiration, undertaking, practice and verification, and maintenance of the buddhas and ancestors are all the flowers they hold dancing like butterflies in the spring wind. Thus, since now Gautama, the World-Honored One, has put himself inside the flower, has

hidden himself in the sky, that we should get hold of his nose, that we have got hold of space, is called “holding up a flower.” “Holding up a flower” is holding it up with the eye, holding it up with the consciousness, holding it up with the nose, holding it up with holding up the flower.⁷

In general, the holding up at every turn of this assortment of mountains, rivers, and the whole earth, sun, moon, wind, and rain, humans, beasts, grass, and trees — this is precisely “holding up the *udumbara* flower.” Birth and death, coming and going are an assortment of flowers, are the radiance of the flower. Our study like this here has been “holding up a flower.”

*The Buddha said, “It is like the udumbara, in which everyone delights.”*⁸

“Everyone” refers to the buddhas and ancestors who show themselves and hide themselves, to the radiance naturally possessed by the grass, trees, and insects. “Everyone delights” means the “skin, flesh, bones, and marrow” of each one is brisk and lively right now.⁹

Thus, “everyone” is the *udumbara* flower; precisely for this reason it is said to be rare. “Blinked” refers to the time that, sitting under the tree, he changed his eye to the bright star. At this time, “Mahākāśyapa broke into a smile.” His face was broken and changed to the face holding up the flower. When the Tathāgata blinked, our eyes were lost from the start. The Tathāgata’s blinking is itself his holding up the flower. The heart of the *udumbara* flower opens of itself.¹⁰

At the very moment that he holds up the flower, all Gautamas, all Kāśyapas, all living beings, all of us together extend a hand and similarly hold up a flower, without interruption even to the present. And further, because they have the *samādhi* of concealing oneself in the hand, they

are called “the four elements and five aggregates.”¹¹

“I have” is to “bequeath it”; to “bequeath it” is “I have.” To “bequeath it” is invariably impeded by “I have.” “I have” is the crown of the head; in studying it, we study with the measure of the crown of the head as our nose grip. When we take up “I have” and change it to “bequeath it,” we maintain the treasury of the true dharma eye. “The ancestral master’s coming from the west” — this is to come holding up the flower.¹²

“Holding up the flower” is called “playing with the spirit.” “Playing with the spirit” means “just sitting, sloughing off body and mind.” Becoming a buddha, becoming an ancestor, is called “playing with the spirit”; putting on robes and eating rice is called “playing with the spirit.” In general, the matter of the ultimate standard of the buddhas and ancestors is invariably “playing with the spirit.” In being met by the buddha hall, in meeting with the sangha hall, their flowers are endowed with ever more colors, their colors accumulate more and more brilliance. Further, now the sangha hall “takes the board and strikes it amidst the clouds”; now the buddha hall “holds the panpipe and plays it at the bottom of the water.”¹³

When it comes to this, they have mistakenly started playing a plum blossom tune. That is, my former master, the old buddha, said,

*At the time that Gautama lost his eye,
It was just one branch of plum blossoms in
the snow.*

*Now, it’s a thicket wherever you go;
Yet we laugh as the spring wind swirls them
about.*¹⁴

Now, “the eye” of the Tathāgata has mistak-

enly become “plum blossoms”; now, the “plum blossoms” form “a thicket” spreading everywhere. The Tathāgata has hidden himself in the eye; the eye has hidden itself in the plum blossoms; the plum blossoms have hidden themselves in the thicket. And, now, instead, they blow “the spring wind.”

Nevertheless, while this may be so, he enjoys the music of the peach blossom. My former master, the old buddha of Tiantong said,

What Lingyun sees is the peach blossoms opening;

*What Tiantong sees is the peach blossoms falling.*¹⁵

We should understand that “the peach blossoms opening” is “what Lingyun sees;” it is “up till now, I’ve had no further doubts.” “The peach blossoms falling” is “what Tiantong sees.” The peach blossoms open at the urging of the spring wind; the peach blossoms fall hated by the spring wind. The spring wind may deeply hate the peach blossoms, but, as the peach blossoms fall, “body and mind are sloughed off.”¹⁶

Treasury of the True Dharma Eye
The *Udumbara* Flower
Number 64

Presented to the assembly at Yoshimine Monastery, in the domain of Etsu,
Twelfth day, second month of the senior wood year of the dragon, the second year of Kangen [22 March 1244]

Copied this on the sixth day, second month of the senior wood year of the tiger, the third year of Shōwa [20 February 1314]

Notes

1. **“The *Udumbara* Flower”** (*udonge*): A flower said to bloom only rarely (by some accounts, only once every three thousand years) and, hence, used in Buddhist literature to represent a rare and precious event. Often identified as the cluster fig (*figus glomerata*).

“Sacred Vulture Peak” (*Ryōzen*): I.e., Grdhrakūta-parvata (*Ryōju sen*), the mountain near Rājagṛha in Magadha said to be the site of the legendary first transmission of Zen, described here, from Śākyamuni to Mahākāśyapa. The legend occurs often in Chan literature, but Dōgen’s version here (variations of which occur elsewhere in his writings), while given in Chinese as if quoting a source, does not seem to have any extant Chinese precedent.

“The World-Honored One held up an *udumbara* flower and blinked” (*Seson nenge undonge shunmoku*): While mention of the flower (and occasionally of the “blink,” or “wink”) occurs in other accounts of the first transmission, the identification of the flower as an *udumbara* blossom seems to be Dōgen’s innovation.

2. **“A higher ‘holding up a flower’** (*kōjō no nenge*); **“an immediate ‘holding up a flower’** (*jikige no nenge*): Perhaps meaning something like, “an act that is at once beyond the historical buddhas and yet immediately present in history. The English “higher” and “immediate” mask the directional parallelism of *kōjō* (“toward up”) and *jikige* (“straight down”) with which Dōgen will open his next sentence.

3. **“The holding up of the entire flower”** (*kon ge nen*): Or “the entire holding up of the flower.”

“It is the measure of the flower, the measure of the buddha, the measure of the mind, the measure of the body” (*keryō butsuryō shinryō shinryō nari*): Presumably, meaning that the dimensions of the flower, buddha, mind, and body are all equivalent to “holding up a flower.”

“The World-Honored One has been ‘holding up a flower’ (*Seson nenge rai*); **“the World-Honored One comes ‘holding up a flower’** (*nenge Seson rai*): Dōgen plays here with the syntax of the Chinese phrase, in the process shifting the sense of the glyph *rai* from a present perfect progressive marker to the verb “to come.”

4. **“What we speak of as the five petals of the plum blossom”** (*iwaku no baika no goha*): Reading *goha* (“five petals”) for Kawamura’s *goke* (“five blossoms”). The plum blossom is in fact composed of five petals, though here Dōgen is no doubt alluding to a line in the transmission verse attributed to Bodhidharma, in which the “five petals” are generally taken as a prediction of the “flowering” of Chan into five houses (see *Jingde chuandeng lu*, T.2076,51:219c17-18):

I originally came to this land

To transmit the dharma and save deluded sentient beings.

A single flower opens five petals;

The fruit forms of itself.

“The three hundred sixty-four plus assemblies” (*sanbyaku rokjū yo e*): The number of gatherings at which the Buddha Śākyamuni is said to have preached during the course of his ministry (see, e.g., *Biyān lu*, T.2003,48:146c3).

“Five thousand forty-eight scrolls” (*gosen shijūhachi kan*): The number of fascicles in the imperially-sponsored catalog of Buddhist scrip-

tures, the *Kaiyuan shijiao lu*, compiled in 730 by Zhisheng.

“The three vehicles and twelvefold teachings” (*sanjō jūnibun kyō*): I.e., the vehicles of *śrāvaka*, *pratyekabuddha*, and bodhisattva; and the twelve divisions into which the Buddhist canon is sometimes divided (discussed by Dōgen in *Shōbōgenzō bukkyō*).

“The three worthy and ten holy” (*sanken jisshō*): A common reference to those on the bodhisattva path: the three levels of “worthies” (*ken*; *bhadra*), and the ten higher stages, or “grounds” (*ji*; *bhūmi*) of the holy (*sheng*; *ārya*).

“The three worthy and ten holy do not reach them” (*sanken jisshō oyobazaru nari*): Presumably meaning that the petals of the plum blossom include but go beyond the bodhisattva path. That the tradition of the buddhas and ancestors transcends even the most advanced stages of bodhisattva path is a common refrain in Dōgen’s writing.

5. **“There is the great treasury; there is ‘the extraordinary’** (*daizō ari kitoku ari*): Probably meaning that the petals of the plum blossom contain both the complete teachings of Buddhism (the “great treasury” of the Buddhist canon) and the practices of the Buddhist adepts (the “extraordinary matter” of Chan life). The expression “the extraordinary” (or “weird”; *kitoku*) here may recall the saying, quoted in *Shōbōgenzō kajō*, of Baizhang Huaihai (749-814) that the “extraordinary matter” (*kitoku ji*) was “sitting alone on Daxiong Peak.” (See, e.g. *Biyān lu*, T.2003,48:166c26-27).

“A flower opens and the world arises” (*ke kai sekai ki*): From a line in the transmission verse attributed to Bodhidharma’s master, Prajñātāra

(*Jingde chuandeng lu*, T.2076,51:216b15):

The seeds grow from the mind ground;
The principle arises from phenomena.
When the fruit ripens, bodhi is complete;
A flower opens, and the world arises.

“A single flower opens five petals; the fruit forms of itself” (*ikke kai goyō kekka jinen jō*): Two lines of the transmission verse attributed to Bodhidharma (*Jingde chuandeng lu*, T.2076,51:219c17-18):

I originally came to this land
To transmit the dharma and save deluded sentient beings.

A single flower opens five petals;
The fruit forms of itself.

“The whole body is the self hanging on the whole body” (*konshin ze ko ka konshin*): Variation on a line from a verse on the wind chime by Tiantong Rujing, quoted elsewhere in the *Shōbōgenzō* (from *Rujing heshang yulu*, T.2002 A,48:132b15-16):

The whole body, like a mouth, hanging in space,
Not asking if the winds are from east,
west, south or north.

Equally, for them, it talks of prajñā:

Diding dongliao didingdong.

“Seeing the peach blossoms and losing the eyes” (*tōka o mite ganzei o tashitsu shi*): These two clauses seem to combine allusions to two different passages in the Chan literature to which Dōgen will return below: the former, treated in sections 14 and 15, recalls the case of Lingyun Zhiqin (dates unknown), who is said to have attained an awakening from seeing peach trees in bloom; the latter, quoted in section 12, suggests lines of a verse by Tiantong Rujing.

“Making the ears disappear upon hearing the jade bamboo” (*suichiku o kiku ni nisho o fugen narashimuru*): Allusion to the famous story of Xiangyan Zhixian (died 898) (cited in *Shōbōgenzō sanbyaku soku*, DZZ.5:134, case 17, and discussed in *Shōbōgenzō keisei san-shoku*), who attains an understanding when he hears the sound of a tile shard striking a bamboo.

6. **“Standing hip-deep in snow and cutting off an arm; making obeisance and getting the marrow”** (*yōsetsu danpi raihai tokuzui*): Reference, in Chinese, to two famous incidents, appearing often in the *Shōbōgenzō*, in the hagiography of the Second Ancestor, Huike: the first recalls the legend that Huike stood all night in a snow storm waiting to be recognized by Bodhidharma and finally cut off one of his arms as an offering to the Indian master; the second evokes the transmission of the ancestral lineage to Huike when Bodhidharma acknowledged his silent bow with the words, “You’ve got my marrow.”

“A stone pestle and whitened rice, transmitting the robe in the dead of night” (*sekitai bei haku yahan dene*): Reference to the famous story, mentioned often in the *Shōbōgenzō*, of the transmission of the ancestral lineage to the Sixth Ancestor, Huineng (638-713); the layman Huineng is working pounding rice at the monastery of the Fifth Ancestor, Hongren, when his verse is recognized the ancestor, and he is invited into the master’s quarters and given the ancestral robe of Bodhidharma during the night.

7. **“Now, Gautama, the World-Honored One, has put himself inside the flower, has hidden himself in the sky”** (*ima Kudon Seson hana no naka ni mi o ire kū no naka ni mi o kakuseru*): Or,

perhaps, “has hidden himself in emptiness.” The translation assumes that Dōgen has in mind here the expression “sky flowers” (*kūge*; *khapuṣpa*), the optical illusion of spots appearing to the diseased eye, used as metaphor for what is mere appearance without objective reality.

“That we should get hold of his nose, that we have got hold of space” (*bikū o toru beshi kokū o toreri*): Likely reflecting a story discussed in the *Shōbōgenzō kokū*; here is the version recorded in Dōgen’s *Shōbōgenzō sanbyaku soku* (DZZ.5:256, case 248):

The Chan Master Huizang of Shigong in Fuzhou (descendent of Mazu) asked Xitang, “Can you grab hold of space?”

Xitang said, “I can.”

The master said, “How do you do it?”

Xitang pinched space with his hand. The master said, “You can’t grab hold of space.”

Xitang said, “How does my elder brother grab it?”

The master grabbed Xitang’s nose and pulled it. Xitang cried out in pain and said, “What a brute. You could have pulled my nose right off!”

The master said, “That’s the only way to grab hold of space.”

8. “**The Buddha**” (*butsu*): From a verse in the *Lotus Sūtra* (*Miaofa lianhua jing*, T.262.9:10a28); the antecedent of “it” here is the teaching of the sūtra.

9. “**The radiance naturally possessed by the grass, trees, and insects**” (*sōmoku konchū no ji u kōmyō zai*): Perhaps variation on words attributed to Yunmen Wenyan (864–949), recorded in the *Shōbōgenzō sanbyaku soku* (DZZ.5:166,

case 81), probably from the *Yuanwu yulu* (T.1997.47:803a25-26):

People all have a radiance,

But when they look for it, they can’t see it in the dark.

10. “**Sitting under the tree, he exchanged his eye for the bright star**” (*juge ni taza shite myōjō ni ganzei o kankyaku seshi*): Reference to the Buddha’s awakening experience; seated at the foot of the bodhi tree, he achieved buddhahood upon seeing Venus rising in the dawn sky.

11. “Together extend a hand” (*tomo ni isseki no shu wo nobete*): A fixed expression occurring elsewhere in the *Shōbōgenzō*; best known from a story recorded in Dōgen’s *Shōbōgenzō sanbyaku soku* (DZZ.5:175-176, case 97): A monk asked Luoshan Daoxian how much he should pay to have a stūpa built. Luoshan said,

If you offer the artisan three cash, the venerable preceptor will definitely not get a stūpa in this lifetime. If you offer the artisan two cash, the venerable preceptor and the artisan will each put out one hand. If you offer the artisan one cash, you’ll so perplex him that the artisan’s eyebrows and beard will fall off.

“**The four elements and five aggregates**” (*shidai goun*): Likely reflecting a saying by Zhaozhou Congshen (778-897), which Dōgen quotes in his *Shōbōgenzō sanbyaku soku* (DZZ.5:270, case 88) and elsewhere:

Once, a monk asked Zhaozhou, “Before the world existed, there was already this nature. When the world is destroyed, this nature won’t be destroyed. What is this nature that won’t be destroyed?”

The master said, “The four elements and

the five aggregates.”

The monk said, “These are still something destroyed. What is this nature that won’t be destroyed?”

The master said, “The four elements and the five aggregates.”

12. **“To ‘bequeath it’ is invariably impeded by ‘I have’”** (*fuzoku wa kanarazu ga u ni keige seraruru nari*): The use of *keige* (“to obstruct,” “to hinder”) here follows a familiar pattern in the Dōgen’s writings, in which the term is used to mean “to define,” “to identify.”

“We study with the measure of the crown of the head as our nose grip” (*sono sangaku wa chōnei o habi shite sangaku suru nari*): Perhaps meaning something like, “to understand the meaning of ‘I have’ we need to grasp the dimensions of the true person.” “Nose grip” renders *habi*, to have a “hold” or “handle” on something, from the nose rope or ring for leading livestock.

“The ancestral master’s coming from the west” (*soshi seirai*): I.e., Bodhidharma’s advent in China.

13. **“Playing with the spirit”** (*rō zeikon*): A fixed expression occurring often in Chan literature for a distracted, or “possessed,” state of mind; sometimes used in ironic reference to meditation.

“Just sitting, sloughing off body and mind” (*shikan taza datsuraku shinjin*): Variation on an expression Dōgen famously attributes in several places to his teacher Tiantong Rujing.

“In being met by the buddha hall, in meeting with the samgha hall” (*butsuden ni shōken serare sōdō o shōken suru*): Play likely inspired by the saying, cited elsewhere in the *Shōbōgenzō*, of Xuefeng Yicun (822-908), e.g., at *Shōbōgenzō*

sanbyaku soku (DZZ.5:272, case 290):

Xuefeng addressed the assembly, saying, I met everyone at Wangzhou Pavilion. I met everyone at Wushi Ridge. “I met everyone in front of the samgha hall. “

“Takes the board and strikes it amidst the clouds” (*han o torite unchū ni hakushi*); **“Holds the panpipe and plays it at the bottom of the water”** (*shō o fudumude suitei ni fuku*): Dōgen plays here in Japanese with a couplet found (in slightly variant forms) in a number of Chan texts (e.g., at *Rujing heshang yulu*, T.2002A.48:122c13):

The wooden man takes the board and strikes it amidst the clouds;

The stone woman holds the panpipe and plays it at the bottom of the water.

14. **“They have mistakenly started playing a plum blossom tune”** (*ayamarite baika in o suiki seru*): Ironic reference to the verse by Rujing 如淨 that Dōgen is about to quote.

“My former master, the old buddha” (*senshi kobutsu*): From the *Rujing heshang yulu*, T.2002A.48:122c29-123a1. Dōgen also quotes this verse in *Shōbōgenzō ganzei* and *Baika*.

15. **“He enjoys the music of the peach blossom”** (*tōka gaku o keikai su*): Presumably, a reference to Rujing’s composition of the verse that Dōgen is about to quote.

“What Lingyun sees” (*Reiun kensho*): Quoting a couplet from a verse by Rujing appearing at *Rujing heshang hoshang*, T.2002A.48:127b29. “What Lingyun sees” refers to the story of Lingyun’s awakening upon seeing peach trees in bloom; see below, note 16: “Up till now, I’ve had no further doubts.”

16. “Up till now, I’ve had no further doubts” (*jikishi nyokon kō fugi*): Final line of Lingyun’s verse expressing his awakening upon seeing peach blossoms. The work appears in a number of sources (see, e.g., Dahui’s, *Zhengfayanzang*, ZZ.118:36b14-17), including Dōgen’s own *Shōbōgenzō sanbyaku soku* (DZZ.5:206, case. 155).

Thirty years a passenger seeking the sword.

How many times have the leaves fallen
and the branches budded?

Ever since once seeing the peach blossoms,
Up till now, I’ve had no further doubts.



**My Footnotes on Zazen (15)
“The Self Breathing Simultaneously
With the Great Earth and
All Sentient Beings” (2)**

Rev. Issho Fujita

(Continued from Part 14)

Also, before Shakyamuni Buddha began to sit in zazen, he purified his body, which had become filthy from his many years of ascetic practice, by bathing in the Nairanjanadi River. In ascetic practice, enduring physical discomfort and pain is regarded as something important, so bathing is considered to be a corruption or a failure. However, in the “*Senmen*” (“Washing the Face”) chapter of the *Shobogenzo*, Dogen Zenji wrote, “To bathe the body-mind and to apply fragrant oil after removing dust and dirt is a high priority in the Buddhadharma” and “A bodhisattva of the ultimate body [indicating Shakyamuni Buddha just prior to the realization of the Way] washes the kasaya and cleanses the body-mind before sitting in the place of enlightenment and attaining the Way. This is the dignified behavior of buddhas of the past, present, and future throughout the ten directions.” [Ibid.] Citing this example of Shakyamuni Buddha bathing before he began to sit under the bodhi tree and moreover saying that this is the correct way of doing things for all buddhas, Dogen Zenji found great significance in this matter of bathing. In Zen, there is the tradition of chanting the following verse before bathing, “Bathing the body, may all living beings, be clean in body and mind, pure and shining within and without.” Here, as well, we can see definite proof that Bud-



dhism clearly made a clean break from the principles of ascetic practice.

Furthermore, it is said that when Shakyamuni Buddha was sitting under the bodhi tree, he sat in the full-lotus position on top of grass (*Reineckea carnea*) spread softly on the earth, grass which he had received from a man who was a grass cutter. From the perspective of ascetic practitioners who deliberately chose to sit on hard boulders or on top of the thorns of briar bushes, they surely despised him thinking things like “How half-hearted is that! You are pampering yourself!” But for Shakyamuni Buddha who had let go of ascetism, the meaning of sitting itself had completely changed and so, this criticism was irrelevant. In Buddhism, sitting in *zazen* is not an ascetic practice. As it says in *Fukanzazengi* (“Universally Recommended Instructions for *Zazen*”) “[*Zazen*] is simply the dharma gate of joyful ease,” and in the chapter “*Zazengi*” (“The Principles of *Zazen*”) of the *Shobogenzo*, “[*Zazen*] is the great peaceful and joyful gate of the Dharma.” And again, in *Fukanzazengi*, “At your sitting place, spread out a thick mat and put a cushion on it.” In Buddhism, this is the usual way and so once again in “*Zazengi*”, “When sitting in *zazen*, use a round cushion...there are traces of those in the past who sat on a diamond seat or on a bed of rock, they were all seated on a thick carpet of grass.” Also, Shakyamuni Buddha was protected from wind, rain, and strong sunlight. He sat peacefully in *zazen* in the cool shade of great trees. If this had been sitting for the purpose of ascetic practice, he would have been exposed to the wind and rain; he would have sitting on the open ground in the blazing sun with no roof over him. Surely, he had

practiced ascetism in the jungle where people dared to sit in places where they were bitten by poisonous insects and mosquitos, or where they didn't know what kind of things might attack them. But as a rule, in the Zen tradition, it is important to sit in a place where “wind or smoke is not let in, where rain or dew is not allowed to leak in. Protect and maintain the place that contains your body.” This is a good example of how even sitting practices are seemingly the same, but the framework characterizing those practices is so different that the conditions of those practices are this different. Seen in this light, we can well understand that the practices which we now take for granted like taking a bath or eating a meal, or the way in which we sit in *zazen*, have been directly passed down to us in a straight line from Shakyamuni Buddha, who cast aside the principles of ascetic practice. I think it would be good to consider this matter once again.

Well, it is time to return to what I was saying about Shakyamuni Buddha sitting under the bodhi tree. What I wanted to say was that the complete network of dynamic relationships between all things in this present world is the nature of sitting itself. To manifest this sort of sitting, it is necessary to overcome the denial of the present world and the withdrawal from the present society that is the foundation born from the various methods of stereotypical forms or meditation methods and ascetic practice. This is, in other words, the framework of teachings that aspire to save the world by encouraging people to cut off their connections with all things in this world.

The words attributed to Shakyamuni Buddha

when he attained the Way – “I, together with the great earth and all sentient beings, simultaneously attain the Way” – are a linguistic manifestation of having seen through the basic connection between all things that was manifested through sitting in zazen. Making a pun with this expression, “I, together with the great earth and all sentient beings, simultaneously attain the Way”, and expressing what Charlotte Selver said about the breath, the breath of Shakyamuni Buddha’s zazen becomes “I breathe together with the great earth and all sentient beings.” Here, this breath is no longer the exclusive possession of “me.” This is not the active expression of “I • am • breathing.” Rather it is the passive voice in statements such as “The breath arises in the place that is me” or “I am being breathed” which express in words a better match for the way things are. And the distinction between “breath” and “that which isn’t breath” no longer has meaning. This is because this is breath that includes all things, where all things are breathing. Couldn’t it be said that the meaning of “breathing softly” of “breathing softly through the nose” which I discussed in an earlier installment of this series can be extended this far? This sort of breathing where all things breathe together and the breath within the framework of “breathing methods” is totally different in terms of the scale as well as the richness of the contents.

There may be some people who aspire to learn “correct breathing techniques” thinking “I must breathe correctly.” However, from the standpoint of zazen, it must be said that it is best to give up this approach. This is because it can be said in advance that there is no “correct breath” that is a one-size-fits-all. The breath must be as it

happens each moment. In other words, the breath must always be spontaneous and not something that is habitual. In terms of actually practicing zazen, it is important to know well the difference between habitual breathing and spontaneous breathing. We assume that our usual, everyday breathing is spontaneous breathing. But in fact, our habitual breath is often something that deviates from our essential or original breathing (even if say this, there is no one fixed form of such breathing). Through habit, people must “fabricate” the breath. The breath of each moment, each moment, is tied to “all things that arise both inside and outside of you.” Each breath spontaneously bounces back fresh. And so, it isn’t the case that each time we breathe it is the same breath being repeated over and over again. Each breath is perfectly suitable for each moment, each moment. Each breath is one time only and absolute. It is generated and then disappears. Moreover, each breath truly indicates our condition moment to moment. Each breath possesses its own unique quality as an individual breath that appears and then disappears. “Breath is the person.” A single breath is the most delicate index of truly showing what is arising within any certain individual.

For instance, there are times when we suddenly notice that the breath has stopped. When that happens, involuntarily, many people intentionally and forcibly try to resume breathing. In that case, “I” am breathing. It may be that a person would like for the breath to remain stopped. Respecting that and simply waiting, it won’t be long before the breath will resume on its own. If we don’t interfere, certainly the breath will very naturally expand into the next breath. This is

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This is what is called “spontaneous.”

Here, the important thing is perseverance and the need to trust and respect the breath. In the past, I have done several of Noguchi Hozo’s “Zazen fasts.” (Please refer to his book: “*Chokkanryoku o yashinau zazen danjiki*” published by *Nanatumori Shokankan* and others.) This is a method of when sitting in zazen, the breath gradually becomes slower and slower. Finally, it comes to the point that with the breath just finished now, I forgot if it was an inhalation or an exhalation. I no longer knew if the next breath should be an exhalation or an inhalation. At that moment, the thought arose for me, “Even if [I’m]

no longer conscious [of the breath], the body hasn’t forgotten and so, if I let go, what should happen will happen.” And then, I just waited without doing anything, and nothing began. Since it was not my intention to endure this condition where breathing had stopped and since it wasn’t painful, my usual consciousness gradually become impatient thinking, “Is it all right for the breath to be stopped for this long?!” Nevertheless, while waiting, finally, the inhalation of breath slowly began, without any intention on my part to do so. This was a valuable experience for me in which I learned something important about the breath. Even without forcibly trying to raise the breath, it arose on its own.

NEWS

May 22 – 23, 2018

Baika classes by Soto Zen Buddhism North America Office were held at two places in North America.

May 26 – 27, 2018

Europe Soto Zen Conference were held at Zendonien in Blois, France.

May 30 – Jun 1, 2018

North America Soto Zen Conference and workshop were held at Zenshuji in Los Angeles, U.S.A.

Jun 20 – 21, 2018

South America Soto Zen Conference was held at Busshinji in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

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