



SOTO ZEN JOURNAL

# DHARMA EYE

News of Soto Zen Buddhism: Teachings and Practice

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## A Greeting

**Rev. Kenshi Kimikobe**

Director of the Education and  
Dissemination Division  
Sotoshu Shumucho

To all the regular readers of *Dharma Eye*, I trust this finds you well and effective in your activities of spreading the teachings. I would also like to thank you once again for your everyday love of the Dharma.

My name is Kenshi Kimikobe. On October 21, 2018, I was appointed as the Director of the Education and Dissemination Division at Sotoshu Shumucho. For someone like me who has been from the outset lacking in learning and ability to take on the important duty or education and dissemination, which is the basis of Soto Zen Buddhism, is a thought that makes me feel tense. But I will do the best I can with my limited ability. I sincerely ask you for your kind instruction and love for the Dharma.

Now, first, concerning the Soto Zen Buddhism International Center, this past year has been a major point of change.

As you know, the Soto Zen Buddhism North America Education Center uttered its first cry as the Soto Zen Buddhism International Center in 1997 and since its inception has been set up in one room at two different Japanese American temples: first at Zenshuji in Los Angeles and later at Sokoji in San Francisco.

However, with the recent changing times, we realized that the time had arrived for the need to

change the existence of the Soto Zen Buddhism International Center.

To site as one example the location of the International Center within the jurisdiction of the Soto Zen Buddhism North America Office, there are four temples in this area which serve people of Japanese descent primarily with teaching activities in the form of various rituals that commemorate the family ancestors. However, the fact is that the number of Zen centers in North America, which are active in working with local people mainly regarding teaching activities that center on zazen, comes to ten times the number of Japanese American temples even if we only count the number of priests with Kyoshi status as the person in charge of such Zen centers. I am convinced that zazen is the central axis around which teaching activities outside of Japan are developing.

Within this current situation, the result of much careful consideration of the pros and cons of continuing to keep the location of the International Center at a Japanese American temple, as well as the role it should play in the future, it was decided, as a new experiment, to move the office. That move has already taken place as of February 1st, 2019.

The new location for the office is in the northern part of “Silicon Valley,” an area also known by the abbreviation “GAFAM.” This stands for Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon, and Microsoft. This is an area where the company headquarters for both America’s, as well as the world’s, Information Technology companies are located. Of all places in U.S.A., this is the area with the highest level of interest and knowledge of Zen.

Herewith, the International Center brings a new idea to birth. We have great expectations that many kinds of people, regardless of nationality, will have the opportunity to meet and interact at this place, and where it will be possible for various types of existences to co-exist together.

With the further acceptance, among the people at the center of information technology companies in Silicon Valley, of *shikantaza* – which is more an abundance of coming to a standstill than of being effective in movement – that this will be a place where revolutionary ideas come together. Consequently, our hope is that this will be a place where Zen is broadcast, so that from now on, the business development of this area will move forward in a positive manner. We expect that the International Center will be involved in many new activities.

Also, with the publication last year of the English translation of the *Denkoroku* “Record of the Transmission of Illumination,” the work of the Soto Text Project has been moving forward.

In Europe and U.S.A., there is a great desire for scholarship among priests and lay Zen practitioners. While Zen practice centers on the zazen of *shikantaza*, academic study and investigation of Soto texts and scriptures is also an indispensable element. For that reason, the work of the Soto Text Project continues with the publication of the *Shobogenzo*. The translation is already finished and the work of editing that translation is moving forward. We are working hard to see that this project will come to completion.

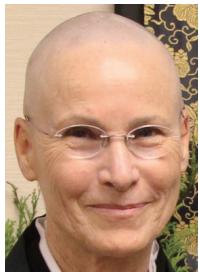
Furthermore, with the relocation of the International Center, in December 2018, I went to California so that I could see for myself the actual

state of affairs of which, until then, I had only learned about from material that came through various meetings and reports.

In May of this year, activities are planned at the first overseas special temple in Oceania, where the 20th anniversary of the founding of Tokozan Jikishoan will be celebrated in Melbourne in Australia. Furthermore, in November of this year, the 60th anniversary of the Bussinji in Sao Paulo, Brazil, as well as the 60th anniversary of the Soto Zen Buddhism South America Office, is planned.

I, of course, hope that these events will take place smoothly and safely. I would like to conclude this greeting with a prayer for further development of your international teaching activities as well as a request for your continued cooperation and love for the Dharma.





## A Greeting

**Konjin Godwin**

Director

Soto Zen Buddhism International Center

In October 2018 I was appointed as the new director of the Soto Zen Buddhism International Center. I am pleased to greet you from the pages of Dharma Eye, an important publication that has offered outstanding teachings and scholarly articles for many years.

From the days when it arrived as a magazine, eagerly anticipated at Tassajara Zen Mountain Center, the monastery I was then training in, to its current, Dharma Eye has provided a continuing source of information, as well as a strong source of connection, as a bridge between Soto Zen in Japan and the many temples that have been established outside Japan.

My hope is that from this new position I will be of use in maintaining the deep connection among all Soto Zen temples and centers outside of Japan, provide more opportunities for communication and mutual enrichment in dharma, and possibly enhance our practice opportunities together.

My home temple is in Houston, Texas with about 200 members and 3 resident priests. Many trees, a vegetable garden and so forth. The formal temple name is *Sho Un Ji*, Auspicious Cloud Temple. The *Sho* is the same as the character in Shogaku Shunryu's Dharma Name: Auspicious. *Un* is cloud, for the many magnificent clouds that float north over Houston from their birth in

the Gulf of Mexico. The main temple building is "only" 100 years old, a baby compared to most temples in Japan. In some ways it resembles a small training monastery, with an emphasis on daily zazen and on *sesshin*.

As most of us who live outside of Japan know, this form of Zen Center is something new, and we have a great deal to learn from each other, and to share with each other.

My question as the director of the International Center is: how can we learn from each other and from our shared traditions – and from Shakyamuni Buddha and the two founders – to enable us to respond to the situation of our time in the most helpful ways?

All of us who read Dharma Eye, I am fairly certain, are deeply committed to deepening our Zen understanding and to maintaining this ancient way of awakening. In addition, we are committed to firmly planting and nourishing Zen in the West, in the Western climate, which requires adaptation, creativity, and responsiveness. In order to do this we are building and maintaining bridges for everyone to cross over.

In this spirit, Dharma Eye has continuously reached out, providing information, responding to inquiries, exploring suggested topics, thus serving as a bridge itself. All readers are invited to let us know their comments, and to make suggestions to us.

We will also bring you more information about the preparations that are underway for the celebration of the 100th Anniversary of Soto Zen in the US. Zenshuji, established in Los Angeles, CA in 1922, is the first of its kind, and this anni-

versary will allow us to acknowledge and celebrate 100 years of history in Soto Zen in North America.

In this New Year, I look forward to working with all of you to make the teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha and the two founders available to every seeker, to strengthen the connections and mutual support among the Zen Centers in the outside of Japan, and to strengthen the deep bonds between Soto Zen in Japan.

All of us in the office of the International Center are eager to assist you in your important work.



## The Sotoshu Understanding of Zazen: Learning About the *Fukan zazengi* (3)

**Rev. Kenshu Sugawara**

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The contents of this part of Dogen Zenji's *Fukan zazengi* are the rules for zazen. The contents of this work are specialized in the sense that it only describes those occasions of practicing zazen. It is not concerned with the place of zazen within the whole of monastic practice. For the rules of zazen within monastic practice, it is best to study *Bendoho* ("The Model for Engaging the Way") which Dogen Zenji wrote at Eiheiji. What, then, are the rules for zazen? Let's look at the popular edition of *Fukan zazengi*.

*At your sitting place, spread out a thick mat and put a cushion on it. Sit either in the full-lotus or half-lotus position. In the full-lotus position, first place your right foot on your left thigh, then your left foot on your right thigh. In the half-lotus, simply place your left foot on your right thigh. Tie your robe loosely and arrange them neatly. Then place your right hand on your left leg and your left hand on right palm, thumbs-tips lightly touching. Straighten your body and sit upright, leaning neither left nor right, neither forward nor backward. Align your ears with your shoulders and your nose with your navel. Rest the tip of your tongue against the front of the roof of your mouth, with teeth together and lips shut. Always keep your eyes open and breathe softly through your nose. Once you have*

*adjusted your posture, take a breath and exhale fully, rock your body right and left, and settle into steady, immoveable sitting. Think of not thinking. Not thinking – what kind of thinking is that? Nonthinking. This is the essential art of zazen.*

Looking at the way zazen was practiced at the time of Dogen Zenji, we can see there are some differences with the way it is practiced in the present day. Nowadays, the *zafu* is placed directly on top of a *tatami* mat and a person then sits in zazen on top of the *zafu*. In this case, the bottom of the knees touches the *tatami*, but this is bad for the legs. Therefore, as Dogen Zenji writes, first we must place a *zabuton* cushion on the *tatami*. Then, we place a *zafu* on the *zabuton* and sit in zazen. Accordingly, the underside of the knees touches the *zabuton*. This reduces the extra friction on the knees and at the same time, it eases the burden on the legs. The problem is easing the burden on the legs. It is precisely because the burden on the legs can be lessened by means of the *zafu* and the *zabuton* that it is then possible for the first time to sit for long periods of time. If you sit in zazen without the benefit of a *zabuton*, then sitting in zazen only becomes an endurance test and not the practice of a buddha. If you wish to continue the practice of zazen over a longer period, then it is advisable to place a *zafu* on top of a *zabuton* and then sit in zazen on top of the *zafu*.

Another thing is that the way to fold the legs when practicing zazen is either in the full-lotus position or the half-lotus position. In the case of the full-lotus position, the right leg is placed on the left leg and the left leg is then placed on the

right leg so that both legs are folded up. In the case of the half-lotus position, this is the method of putting the left leg on top of the right leg so that only one foot is pulled up. There are also debates about the names and function of *Gomaza* (“conquering the devil” pose; the full-lotus position with the left leg on top of the right leg) and *Kichijo-za* (“auspicious” pose; the full-lotus position with the right leg on top of the left leg). However, in Master Menzan’s view expressed in “Listening to and Understanding the *Fukan zazengi*,” as well as in Dogen Zenji’s “Samadhi King Samadhi” chapter of the *Shobogenzo*, there is nothing lacking in the merit of either the *Gomaza* or the *Kichijo-za*. Since this is the zazen of the Zen school, there is no need to get caught up on words.

Furthermore, “chair zazen” is a method that has begun to be practiced recently. This is an approach to zazen which makes it feel more familiar to people in the present day.

Also, when sitting in zazen, the clothes should be tied loosely and furthermore, arranged neatly. In the *Fukan zazengi*, there is no specific instruction regarding the *kesa* (the monk’s outer robe) or, in the case of lay people, about the *rakusu*). This is because the way these robes are worn depends on the time of day. For details on this subject, it would be good to have a look at *Bendoho*. For your reference, the *kesa* is not worn at pre-dawn, early morning zazen, properly speaking including the temple’s resident priest and the abbot of a monastery. (Although nowadays, the abbot often does wear the *kesa* even at early morning zazen.)

Regarding the shape of the hands, this is gen-

erally called the “cosmic mudra” (*hokkai join*). However, Dogen Zenji did not use this term. In China, there was a dispute as to whether the right hand was placed on top of the left hand or the left hand should be placed on top of the right hand. In the Soto school, the left hand is placed on top of the right hand with the tips of both thumbs touching. For some reason, there are those people who say that the thumbs should be placed in such a way that they are separated and not touching. However, Dogen Zenji said “each thumb supports the other,” so both thumbs should be touching.

Furthermore, Dogen Zenji uses the term “straighten your body and sit upright.” This means that we must not lean to the left or to the right, neither forward nor backward. I think this is rather difficult to do on your own. For example, a person who commutes to work at a company or some other place might carry his or her bag over one shoulder. Consequently, the body leans away from the center toward that side. In this case, “straighten your body and sit upright” is surprisingly difficult. For this reason, it is best, when we first start sitting, to have someone correct our posture while we are sitting. If it is not possible for the bodily sensation to match with the corrected posture, it may be best to go to a chiropractor or osteopath to get some help.

Regarding the mouth, the eyes, and the nose, it is just as it is described in the text. We should pay attention to the breath. Fundamentally, breathing is done through the nose. Accordingly, if we are practicing zazen at that times when the air is very dry, it is best to make sure that there is enough humidity in the room. Furthermore, in

the text, it says, “Once you have adjusted your posture, take a breath and exhale fully, and rock your body right and left.” This is to say that we proceed from regulating the body to regulating the breath. If the body’s posture is harmonized, deep breathing will naturally occur. Moreover, in the *Fukan zazengi* text, it says to do this only one time. However, since this movement is really to remove unneeded tension and energy, one time may not be enough. As we can see in the *Bendoho* text, it says that it is best to do this sort of deep breathing in and out several times. And then, we are advised to rock back and forth from side to side. Some people say that this movement is to adjust the posture. However, if we read the *Fukan zazengi* in an accurate way, it says that after having once adjusted the posture, then taking a deep breath, and then rocking back and forth, we can see that it is best to understand this process as being one of harmonizing the mind.

Continuing, Dogen Zenji teaches about the mind. This leads us in the text to “settle into steady, immobile sitting. Think of not thinking. Not thinking – what kind of thinking is that? Nonthinking.” This thinking leads in a sequential process to “This is the essential art of zazen.”

“Settle into a steady, immobile position” is, after having rocked side to side, letting the movements gradually move from rougher to finer, and then, finally stopping. That condition of having stopped is “settle into a steady, immobile position.” (Please refer to Master Menzan’s “Learning From and Listening to the *Fukan zazengi*”) “Steady, immobile sitting” means to sit like a boulder without moving. However, this is pointing at a posture in which the upper half of the body is sitting straight and upright without

any unnecessary energy exerted and hence “a settled, steady” position. Moreover, in Ven. Nagarjuna’s “Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom, Volume 7,” we find, “Among the various ways to sit, the full-lotus position is the one that is most peaceful, comfortable, and least tiring. This is the way to sit for a person who sits in zazen. If the hands and legs are touching, then the mind will not be distracted.” This condition where the mind is not distracted is a way to express “Think of not thinking. Not thinking – what kind of thinking is that? Nonthinking.”

First, regarding “Think of not thinking,” this is not to say “cannot think.” We must also not interpret this phrase to mean “don’t think.” It is simply pointing to a function that leads us “outside” of our ordinary thinking. Then, how it is possible reach this “outside?” Even if we intentionally imagine “outside” or “another place,” this is immediately repossessed by “thinking.” This is only “thinking that is outside or beyond” or “thinking that is not thinking.” The essence is “Not thinking – what kind of thinking is that?” There is the following interpretation.

*“Not thinking is the true form of thinking. Thinking is the skin and flesh of not thinking. Don’t be doubtful of ‘Think of not thinking. Not thinking – what sort of thinking is this.’ It is not a matter of asking, ‘How is this done?’ To say ‘like this’ is not a matter of thinking by comparing this and that. It is thinking in which there is no distinction made between this side and that side. This is also called ‘not thinking.’ It is like ‘What has thus come?’ It is like ‘Try to explain one thing and already you have missed the mark.’ ‘Like this’ is ‘beyond thinking.’ Looking at this*

*paragraph and thinking that this is only an answer to the question about thinking is not the proper way to study. ‘Beyond thinking’ is the complete body of zazen. For this reason, it is not possible to escape from deliberately sitting [in zazen]. At that time, thinking transcends thinking. That is why at that time you must not think about the nature of what that condition is.”*

(From Master Katsudo Honko’s *Eihei Koroku Tenchato* “A Cup of Tea with Dogen Zenji’s Extensive Record”)

This is truly an excellent interpretation. Regarding “nonthinking,” I don’t think there is a more outstanding interpretation either before or after this one. I want to reject the need to add words to this explanation, but I dare to say that more must be said. First, when “not thinking” is the “true form of thinking,” the source of our thinking is not thinking and consists of the exchange between the two. Therefore, thinking is the incarnate condition of not-thinking which turns into “skin and flesh.” As for leading to “not-thinking,” before it is incarnate, here, “What kind of thinking is that?” is used. As Master Katsudo instructs, this is not restricted only to the question “What is it that thus comes?” Master Katsudo asks, “In what way?” Here, this is “thinking where there is no comparing this or that, where there is no distinction made between this side and that side.” This serves to shake or unsettle the knowledge and information we have been holding onto; it serves to break down the distinctions we make between this side and that side. It can also be said that this point of making “What is thinking?” into “Nonthinking” as a

proper expression of the nature of non-discriminatory thinking. Therefore, the answer to the question “What?” is not “Nonthinking.” Non-discriminatory thinking within zazen is what is called “Nonthinking.” And for those of us who are sitting firmly, this is “thinking is not thinking,” something which we cannot escape. Also, it only stands to reason that since it is the rule that zazen is the practice of a buddha, the skin, flesh, bones, and marrow of zazen, which is “nonthinking” must be “buddha thinking.” And yet, in that case, we must not get stuck thinking about this. This is “don’t think about thinking by means of thought.” Undefiled = no discrimination.

*The zazen I speak of is not meditation practice. It is simply the dharma gate of joyful ease, the practice-realization of totally culminated enlightenment. It is the koan realized; traps and snares can never reach it. If you grasp the point, you are like a dragon gaining in the water, like a tiger taking to the mountains. For you must know that the true dharma appears of itself, so that from the start dullness and distraction are struck aside.*

At this point, the topic of zazen and enlightenment or what is referred to as “a view of practice and verification” is discussed. First, there is the phrase, “The zazen I speak of is not meditation practice.” This part was especially said in the context of the various popular versions of *Fukan zazengi*. In the “Zazengi” chapter of the *Shobogenzo* as well, there is “Zazen is not learning Zen. It is the Dharma gate of great peace and bliss. It is undefiled practice-realization.” This is to say that we cannot define “learning Zen” or “meditation practice” as “the Dharma gate of

great peace and bliss,” nor is it “undefiled practice-realization.” Also, here, I think it is necessary to look at the teisho about Ven. Bodhidharma in the “Continuous Practice, Part Two” chapter of the *Shobogenzo*.

*“Bodhidharma stayed on Mt. Song for nine years. People called him a wall-gazing Brahmin. Later historians listed him as a practitioner of ‘learning Zen meditation’, but that is not so. It was this ancestral master alone who transmitted the treasury of the true Dharma eye from buddha to buddha, from rightful successor to rightful successor....”*

*“Bodhidharma passed along Mt. Song and stayed at the Shaolin Temple. Although he sat in stillness facing the wall, he was not engaged in learning meditation. Although he had not brought even a single sutra or text with him [from India], he was a genuine master who transmitted the true Dharma. However, historians without understanding classified him in the section on teachers of learning Zen meditation. This was extremely stupid and regrettable.”*

In short, we can understand Dogen Zenji’s strong criticism of those editors of Chinese history (we must particularly look at his criticism of *Zoku Kosoden*, “Biographies of Eminent Priests, Part Two,” in which Bodhidharma is labeled as a teacher of “learning meditation.”) Regarding the contents of these books, they do say with certainty that Bodhidharma came from India to China and practiced zazen (facing a wall for nine years) at Shaolin Temple on Mt. Song. However, his practice of zazen was judged to be one in which supernormal powers were used to

clarify the Buddhadharma. Consequently, he was added to the volume of those monks who did “learning Zen meditation.” Nevertheless, Dogen Zenji praises Bodhidharma saying, “It was this ancestral master alone who transmitted the treasury of the true Dharma eye from buddha to buddha, from rightful successor to rightful successor.... Although he had not brought even a single sutra or text with him, he was a genuine master who transmitted the true Dharma.” It wasn’t that he sat for so long in zazen for the purpose of verifying the Way of Buddha or to get supernormal powers, it was that he transmitted the treasury of the true Dharma eye to China. This was something that had been passed down from buddha to buddha, from rightful successor to rightful successor and for that reason he was a genuine master who transmitted the true Dharma. Therefore, the zazen of Bodhidharma, which here had been judged to be “learning Zen,” was in effect the practice of a person who had attained the Way of Buddha. Consequently, the state of his zazen as it was “the Dharma gate of peace and bliss”; it was the practice of “practice within realization.” It was “undefiled practice-realization.” In other words, it was non-discriminatory zazen. Therefore, it can be said that he sat for nine years in zazen, something that is usually difficult to conceive.

Zazen is not a matter of competing to see who can sit the longest. The value of zazen isn’t decided by the amount of sitting we do. The value of zazen must be decided already at the point we sit by “practice within realization.” If this value was determined by the amount of zazen a person sat, then at that point it would be “defiled.” That is not the zazen of the Soto school.

It is, of itself, zazen which is the natural activity of the Dharma.

And then, this is said to be the “practice and realization of totally culminated enlightenment.” This can be read as “the practice-realization of realizing enlightenment.” But if it is understood this way, then “practice-realization” has the aim of “realizing enlightenment.” But that is not the way it is. “Practice-realization” is already “completely realized enlightenment.” It is with this interpretation that for the first time it is “practice within realization.” It is important to be careful with this traditional way of reading this part because this meaning isn’t possible. Here, in fact, in Katsudo Honko’s *Eihei Tenchato*, the book I’ve been relying on for this series of articles, in fact, he leaves this text just as it is in the original Chinese grammar with which Dogen Zenji wrote. “The solid sitting of the buddha-ancestors ‘is simply the Dharma gate of joyful ease; the practice-realization of totally culminated enlightenment.’” It is simply the steady immovability of (the seed) ripening and falling. In other words, “it is simply” and “totally culminated” also include the meaning of immovable sitting as well as the meaning of practice within realization.

The rest of the material of the text is not so difficult to understand. First, regarding “the *koan* realized,” since a “*koan*” is to live in such a way that we follow the transmission itself of the buddha-ancestors, this means that zazen displays that transmission of the buddha-ancestors. It is truly just as Master Katsudo comments, “From now on, zazen is said [to be] a *koan*.” Also, regarding the phrase “traps and snares can never reach it, “since the “*koan*” of the buddha-

ancestors' transmission is already appearing, various afflictions, delusions, and discriminations ("traps and snares") cannot reach it.

Then, the text continues "If you grasp the point, you are like a dragon gaining water, like a tiger taking to the mountains." "This point" is not affirmed by thoughts based on comparative discrimination. When the undefiled is attained of "this point," "like a dragon, like a tiger" points to that time. It can be said that being in the place where you should be is in other words to be "practice within realization" and "the marvelous practice of original verification." If we rely on Master Katsudo's view, then "this interpretation focuses on 'like' in 'like a dragon' and 'like a tiger.'"

*"To say like a dragon or like a tiger" is not a simile, but rather meant as "dragon and tiger is the truth themselves."*

*Dragon and tiger represent all things. "Like" is for each individual and each thing to be right from head to tail.*

*(From Master Katsudo's Eihei Tenchato)*

In other words, "like" means "as it is." This "as it is" is "to be right from head to tail." In short, this is to be correct and proper within the Way of Buddha. "As it is" is the "truth." In fact, it is "thus come, thus gone." This "as it is," for example, is "There may be day and night even where there is no sun or moon; the sun and moon are not for day and night. The sun and the moon each are reality as it is, therefore the [moon] is not one moon or two moons and not a thousand or ten thousand moons." (From the "Moon" chapter of the *Shobogenzo*)

"Sun and moon" has an unrestricted, unlimited meaning. Therefore, "dragons and tigers as they are" is the right from head to tail of the myriad things, and the substance of those things is also all-encompassing. This can be rephrased as "Nonthinking."

And then, "For you must know that the true Dharma appears of itself, so that from the start dullness and distraction are struck aside." When there is the truth as it is of Nonthinking, this is "the true Dharma appears of itself," and here, at the same time, "dullness and distraction are struck aside." "The appearance of the true Dharma" is "dullness and distraction are struck aside." However, here, the subject is on the side of "true Dharma" and so this is not a matter of students and people who practice zazen attaining this. It appears of itself. In the *Fukan zazengi*, Dogen Zenji treats "appears" as "the original face" and "true Dharma." Both arise when people practicing zazen rely on zazen. Nevertheless, whether it is the "original face" or whether it is the "true Dharma," zazen makes them appear and it is not us individuals who do it. Therefore, the original face and the true Dharma appear of themselves.

(To be continued)





## The 7th Chapter of Shobogenzo Ikaka-myōju (One Bright Jewel) Lecture (9)

Rev. Shohaku Okumura  
Sanshinji, Indiana, U.S.A  
(Edited by Rev. Shoryu Bradley)

In paragraph (19), Dogen concluded his comments on the conversation between a monk and Xuansha. In the rest of this fascicle, he writes of his own insight of this one bright jewel.

### 【3】明珠の有如無始 (It is perfectly round and rolls freely)

[text]

(20)

しかあればすなはち、この明珠の有如無始は無端なり。

Therefore, this bright jewel is thusness without beginning and it does not have any boundary.

尽十方世界一顆明珠なり、両顆三顆といはず。

The entire ten-direction world is one bright jewel. Not two and not three.

全身これ一隻の正法眼なり、全身これ真実体なり、全身これ一句なり、全身これ光明なり、全身これ全身なり。

The entire body is one single true dharma eye. The entire body is the true real body. The entire body is one phrase. The entire body is the radiant light. The entire body is the entire body.

全身のとき、全身の罣礙なし。

When the entire body is [the entire body], the entire body does not hinder [the entire body].

円陀陀地なり、転轆轤なり。

It is perfectly round and rolls freely round and round.

明珠の功德かくのごとく見成なるゆゑに、いまの見

色聞声の觀音弥勒あり、現身說法の古仏新仏あり。 Because the virtue of the bright jewel manifests itself in this way, Avalokiteshvara and Maitreya are present in seeing colors and hearing sounds. There are ancient buddhas and new buddhas who expound dharma with the manifesting body.

*Therefore, this bright jewel is thusness without beginning and it does not have any boundary.*

The original expression in this text is *u-nyo* (有如) *mu-shi* (無始) *mu-tan* (無端). 如 (*nyo*) means *tathata* or “thusness”, 始 (*shi*) means “beginning” and 端 (*tan*) means “edge” or “boundary.” So the expression means this bright jewel as it truly is (thusness) has no beginning and no boundary. Having no boundary means it is always in this present moment. As Yaoshan (*Yakusan*) said in the *koan* quoted in the previous paragraph, this means it actually, truly, is this very moment, in every moment. This is the same as saying firewood stays at the dharma position of firewood as the jewel in this moment, and the next moment, if the firewood is burned, the jewel is right within the dharma position of ash. Our life is always this moment, this moment, and this moment... Each moment is absolutely independent. And yet, because this moment (1) has no length, it is zero (0), and each moment is one with all moments from the beginningless beginning to the endless end ( $\infty$ ).<sup>1</sup>

*The entire ten-direction world is one bright jewel. Not two and not three.*

“Not two and not three” has some association with a teaching of the Lotus Sutra. The sutra says there is just one buddha vehicle (一仏乗),

not two vehicles and not three. This means there is just one reality, exactly one jewel: there are not two pieces or three pieces of jewel, but only one. This one jewel is always in the dharma position of this moment (now), this place (here), and this self.

### ***The entire body is one single true dharma eye.***

This “true dharma eye” is *shobogen* (正法眼), as in *Shobogenzo*. It is the wisdom eye which sees the true dharma as it is. Dogen says this one bright jewel is the True Dharma Eye. The Dharma Eye is not a personal view or “fleshy eye,” and it is not some kind of wisdom we gain in the form of knowledge or an ability to see the truth. It’s not a product of the working of our brain. Rather this one bright jewel, the way things are as  $1=0=\infty$ , is true wisdom.

“The entire body,” refers to our body as a collection of five aggregates (*skandha*). The phrase “is the true real body” (*shin jitsu tai*, 真実体) comes from the expression, “the entire ten-direction world is the true human body (尽十方界真実人体).”

When Dogen uses this word “true body,” the body he refers to is not something hidden, but it is rather the entirety of the five skandhas. It is how these five skandhas, our body and mind, are existing and working as wisdom, truth, and the bright jewel. This bright jewel is not like something mentioned in the *Shurangama Sutra* or other sutras. It is not a hidden essence or noumenon like a hidden jewel covered with dust and rock that we must uncover and polish. That is a common understanding of the bright jewel or

Buddha nature in the Zen tradition, but Dogen’s teaching is different.<sup>2</sup>

Dogen says the bright jewel is not hidden in the five skandhas. “Nothing is hidden” is one of the key phrases of Dogen’s teaching. For him Buddha nature is not something hidden within rock and dirt, rather it is always revealing itself as a collection of the five skandhas.

This bright jewel is nothing special. It is already here, always present, and we can see it. As Dogen says in *Shobogenzo Bussho* (Buddha Nature), Buddha nature is impermanent, not something permanent and hidden. These impermanent five skandhas are Buddha nature. There’s no hidden treasure. Our practice is not treasure hunting. That’s why our practice is good for nothing.

This reality is revealed within our zazen practice. As Sawaki Roshi said, the entirety of these five skandhas, our body and mind, are Buddha-nature and at the same time “thief nature.” Buddha nature and thief nature, just like the young woman and old lady in the painting “My Wife And My Mother-In-Law,” are there at the same time. It is not a matter of each being a half of the reality, rather the entirety of the five skandhas is Buddha nature and the entirety of five skandhas is also thief-nature. And depending upon what we do, one or the other is expressed.

The important point is our action, our practice, what we do. It’s not a matter of Buddha-nature being something hidden that we must find and reveal. We reveal it moment by moment; when we practice in this moment following the

Buddha's teachings, this entire body and mind reveals Buddha nature, but when we do something based on our three poisonous minds, this entire body express thief nature and we are truly a thief. Even when we practice, if we want to steal something like wisdom or enlightenment and make it our own, our practice becomes an activity of stealing. If we practice with that attitude, our practice becomes a violation of the precept of not stealing.

### ***The entire body is one phrase.***

This “one phrase” is a decisive phrase expressing the dharma. “One” can mean not only one out of two, three or five, but it also can be an absolute “one.” “One bright jewel” is an absolute phrase, a phrase that expresses absolute truth.

### ***The entire body is the radiant light.***

“Radiant light” can refer to several things. For example at the very beginning of the Lotus Sutra, Buddha emits a radiant light that illuminates the entire world. The people with the Buddha thought this was a sign he was starting to expound the absolute dharma. This radiant light is symbolic of Buddha’s virtue, wisdom and compassion.

“The entire body” is analogous to “beyond thinking.” This is the undivided, seamless stupa appearing in Nanyan Huicheng’s conversation with the emperor I discussed in Lecture (8).

### ***The entire body is the entire body.***

This is typical rhetoric of Dogen. It means

when we read a magnificent phrase like, “this body is Buddha’s wisdom, something universal,” we tend to enter into a “metaphysical real.” To deter us from entering into an abstract, conceptual way of thinking, Dogen always finally just says something like “this is simply a body.” He erases any kind of fantastic images we may conjure up when we read of the “entire body” mentioned above. In this way he tells us we need to return to the concrete reality that is nothing special, nothing valuable, just these five skandhas.

### ***When the entire body is the entire body, the entire body does not hinder the entire body.***

This entire body is one hundred percent the body actualized as it is, and yet at the same time this entire body is liberated from being the entire body, as Dogen says in *Shobogenzo Zenki* (Total Function): “The great Way of all buddhas, when it is completely penetrated, is liberation and is manifestation. Liberation means that life liberates itself from life and also death liberates itself from death.”

### ***It is perfectly round and rolls freely round and round.***

It’s always moving and changing and can go throughout all time and space.

### ***Because the virtue of the bright jewel manifests itself in this way***

This “manifest” is *genjo*, the same word used in *genjokoan* and the above sentence from *Zenki*. This bright jewel manifests itself as transparent and round, always moving and changing. It can

go round and round, anywhere without hindrance.

### ***Avalokitesvara and Maitreya are present in seeing colors and hearing sounds.***

“Present” means in the here and now. As the Buddha said, when our sense organs and the objects of our sense organs come in contact with each other, we experience sensations, perceptions, formations, and consciousness, and the chain of suffering in samsara begins. In this way our lives become the burning house of samsara. This is the Buddha’s teaching of dependent origination.

But here Dogen says within any contact of the sense organs and their objects, not just seeing and hearing, Avalokitesvara and Mitreya, the great bodhisattvas, are present. That means contact between the six sense organs and the six sense objects doesn’t create a burning house of samsara but rather a place where bodhisattvas work as the realization of Buddha’s wisdom and compassion. Buddhas and bodhisattvas appearing within the interaction of sense organs and their objects is the opposite of encountering objects with the three poisonous minds. Here, in this encounter, is the transformation. As I said, Avalokitesvara and Maitreya might become poisonous snakes in the next moment, depending upon how we encounter things moment by moment. That’s why Uchiyama Roshi said, “Everything we encounter is our life.” And this life becomes either a burning house or Buddha’s stupa, depending upon our attitude.

When the five skandhas, our bodies and minds, function in a healthy way, Avalokites-

vara, the bodhisattva of compassion, appears with Maitreya, the future Buddha. These great beings seem to have a connection with hearing and seeing in the Buddhist tradition. Avalokitesvara (*Kan ze-on*) means “seeing the sound”, and although I’m not sure about Maitreya, his name is derived from *maitri*, which means “compassion” or “loving-kindness.”

The encounter that can cause suffering is also the place where Avalokitesvara or Maitreya can appear and carry out their compassionate work. The transformation from suffering to compassion depends on our attitude, on whether we are caught by the three poisonous minds or are liberated from them.

### ***There are ancient buddhas and new buddhas who expound dharma with the manifesting body.***

“Ancient buddhas” means “eternal body,” like the *dharmakaya* buddha or the eternal Shakyamuni Buddha in the Lotus Sutra. “New buddhas” refers to the buddha born within our moment-by-moment practice, *Gyobutsu*. *Gyo* is “practice” and *butsu* is “Buddha”. This is a part of the name of a fascicle of *Shobogenzo*, *Gyobutsu igi*. *Igi* is “dignified conduct.” *Gyobutsu igi* (行仏威儀) usually reads “Practicing Buddha’s dignified conduct (行仏威儀).” But again Dogen reads *gyobutsu* as a one word compound and *igi* as another compound, making the meaning, “dignified conduct of *Gyobutsu* (行仏威儀).” This *Gyobutsu* is a Buddha named *Gyo* (行). That means our practice is Buddha.

When we practice displaying the Buddha

mudra – that means our zazen – this Buddha named *Gyobutsu* is born, moment-by-moment. So *Gyobutsu* is the “new buddha,” born of our practice. And through the birth of this new buddha in each moment, the ancient or eternal buddha is manifested. This eternal buddha is actually the one doing our practice. The eternal buddha keeps giving birth to newborn baby buddhas, moment by moment. This is truly something beyond our common understanding of Buddhism.

The actual, living buddha is this baby buddha, because Shakyamuni has already been dead for more than two thousand years, and “eternal buddha” is just an image or concept. If we don’t practice and give birth to this practice buddha, there’s no existing buddha at all. The past buddhas exist only as ideas in ancient Buddhist texts if we don’t actually practice and give birth to the new buddha, moment by moment. Here Dogen is saying the only real buddha is manifested in our practice as *Gyobutsu*, here and now. Our practice keeps Shakyamuni Buddha alive and makes the dharmakaya buddha real.

#### [4]明珠の所在 (The bright jewel hangs in empty sky)

(21)

正当恁麼時、あるひは虚空にかかり、衣裏にかかる、あるひは領下にをさめ、髪中にをさむる、みな尽十方世界一顆明珠なり。

At this very moment, the bright jewel hangs in empty sky or is sewn inside the robe. Or it is stored under the [dragon’s] jaw or in the [king’s] hair topknot. Each and every one of them is nothing other than the bright jewel of the entire ten-direction world.

ころものうらにかかるを様子とせり、おもてにかけんと道取することなけれ。

It is the way it should be that this jewel is sewn inside the robe; do not say that you will hang it on the outside.

髪中領下にかかるを様子とせり、髪表領表に弄せんと擬することなけれ。

It is the standard that this jewel is stored in the hair topknot or under the jaw; do not aim to put it in front of the hair topknot or outside of the jaw.

酔酒の時節にたまをあたふる親友あり、親友にはかならずたまをあたふべし。

There is an intimate friend who gives a jewel to you when you are drunk. We should give a jewel without fail to an intimate friend.

たまをかけらるる時節、かならず酔酒するなり。

When the jewel is hung, we are drunk without fail.

既是恁麼は、尽十方界にてある一顆明珠なり。

Thus is the one bright jewel that is the entire ten-direction world.

*At this very moment, the bright jewel hangs in empty sky or is sewn inside the robe. Or it is stored under the [dragon’s] jaw or in the [king’s] hair topknot. Each and every one of them is nothing other than the bright jewel of the entire ten-direction world.*

In this paragraph (21), Dogen introduces some examples of the bright jewel mentioned in Buddhist scriptures and Chinese classics. It begins with, “At this very moment.” This refers to the moment of the bright jewel’s rolling freely round and round. The bright jewel is already turning. The jewel is not something hidden that we have to discover it, but it is already turning at this very moment. We are already living and

practicing and functioning as a bright jewel at this very moment.

“The bright jewel hangs in empty sky” refers to the mani jewels in Indra’s net that hangs in his palace in heaven. However, this “hanging in the sky” doesn’t refer to heaven or the sky above the clouds. When Dogen Zenji used this word 虚空(*koku*), “empty sky” or “empty space,” it often refers to emptiness or the wisdom (*prajna*) that sees the emptiness of all beings. In *Shobogenzo Makahanyaharamitsu*, for example, Dogen introduces his teacher Rujing’s poem about a wind-bell hanging in the sky or empty space. There he quotes Rujing as saying “empty space” is *prajna*, not space void of existence.

“Sewn inside the robe” is from the Lotus Sutra. Authors of the Lotus Sutra wanted to say that all Mahayana Buddhists or all living beings are bodhisattvas. Bodhisattvas are the children of the Buddha, so the practice direction for everyone is to become a buddha. But for the authors there was a problem because the Buddha’s great disciples had attained arhatship and already entered nirvana. There was no way for them to become a Buddha. Once they entered nirvana they couldn’t return to samsara and practice. This was, in a sense, a dead end. It seemed for at least some people there was no possibility of becoming a buddha, and these were in fact, other than the Buddha himself, the most important people in the history of the Buddhist tradition.

To resolve this problem, the authors said the arhats’ nirvana wasn’t real and had them return to samsara where they attended the Buddha’s

preaching of the Lotus Sutra on Vulture Peak. There Shakyamuni said that after many kalpas of practice each of them would attain buddhahood. The arhats were happy to receive the predictions and to again begin practicing in samsara as bodhisattvas. This is one of the main themes in the first half of the Lotus sutra.

“Sewn inside the robe” is a reference to a parable used in chapter 8 of the Lotus Sutra, “Five Hundred Disciples Receive the Prediction.” In this chapter, five hundred monks, including Pruna and Kaundinya, received a prediction of buddhahood and repented, saying they were like a foolish poor person who visited his rich friend’s house. In the parable the person gets drunk on wine and falls asleep. His rich friend has to go away on official business and sews a gift of a priceless jewel into the lining of his friend’s robe before leaving. Unaware of the gift sewn into his robe, the poor man awakens and leaves his friend’s house. The man wanders here and there, undergoing exceedingly great hardships. Many years later the rich friend meets the man and asks him, “Why must you do this? The last time we met I sewed a priceless jewel into the lining of your robe. It must still be there.” The priceless jewel in this story refers to the buddha’s wisdom that comprehends everything.

“The Jewel under the dragon’s jaw,” is from chapter 32 of a Daoist classic, *Chuang Tsu*, a collection of many interesting stories. This pearl from under the chin of the black dragon appears in much Chinese literature, including Zen writings. Dogen introduces a verse by Xuedou in *Tenzo Kyokun* (Instruction For The *Tenzo*) in which this black dragon’s pearl is used:

One character, three characters, five and seven characters.

Having thoroughly investigated the ten thousand things,  
none have any foundation.

At midnight the white moon sets into the dark ocean.

When searching for the black dragon's pearl,  
You will find they are numerous.<sup>3</sup>

Upon the surface of the peaceful ocean, the moon is setting. Numberless waves are rising and on each of them the moonlight is reflected. Each and every reflection of the moon on the waves is the pearl of the black dragon. This is Dogen's image of this bright jewel. The bright jewel is not some essential substance hidden inside of human beings, but it's always revealed and illuminated by the moonlight. This is the same as what Dogen wrote in *Genjokoan*, that each and every drop of water is illuminated by the vast, boundless moonlight. It's always there, revealed, not hidden, and it's impermanent. This image is very different from the image of the bright jewel as a symbol of hidden, permanent Buddha nature.

"In the king's hair topknot," is from chapter 14, "Safe and Easy Practices" (安樂行品 *anraku-gyo hon*) of the Lotus Sutra. *Anraku*, or *sukha* in Sanskrit, is the opposite of *dukkha*, suffering in samsara. The four practices presented in the chapter allow us to proceed to the cessation of suffering, or we can say these are practices within *sukha* (peace and joy).

This chapter presents an analogy in which a very precious jewel is placed in the wheel turn-

ing king's topknot. He keeps it there because this is his most valuable treasure. Whenever the King's retainers performed a great feat the king gave them something precious as a reward, but he never gave away this jewel because it was a symbol of his throne. In this parable, the precious jewel refers to the teaching of the *Ekyayana*, or One Buddha Vehicle of the Lotus Sutra.

Dogen Zenji used metaphors of the bright jewel he found in Buddhist and Chinese classics. He said all of them referred to nothing other than the bright jewel that is one with the entire ten-direction world.

***It is the way it should be that this jewel is sewn inside the robe; do not say that you will hang it on the outside. It is the standard that this jewel is stored in the hair topknot or under the jaw; do not aim to put it in front of the hair topknot or outside of the jaw.***

I have been saying in Dogen's teachings the bright jewel is not something hidden and it is always revealed. But here he says the jewel should not be placed where it is seen by others. I have had difficulty in interpreting these two sentences. Probably this points to the same reality as the young lady and the old lady in the painting I mentioned, the reality of karmic nature and buddha nature. They are exactly the same but completely different. When we see the young lady in the painting, the old lady can't be seen. When one side is seen, another side is hidden or in the dark. For example, when I make a name card, I don't write I am a bright jewel, I write that my name is Shohaku Okumura, a Buddhist priest, etc. I write my karmic attributes on the

cards because those are the things we need in our social life where the side of the bright jewel or emptiness is hidden.

***There is an intimate friend who gives a jewel to you when you are drunk. We should give a jewel without fail to an intimate friend. When the jewel is hung, we are drunk without fail.***

This intimate friend refers to Buddha. The Buddha gave the jewel to his poor friend when his friend was drunk. In the story the poor person was drunk with the wine of ignorance. Here Dogen says when we are drunk we are given the jewel. Being drunk here probably doesn't have a negative meaning. Bokusan Nishiari Zenji said in his *teisho* on this fascicle that "being drunk" in this case means being drunk with the dharma. He says when we are drunk with the wine of dharma, the bright jewel is given to us, referring to the Caoshan's saying, "Caoshan likes to get falling-down drunk," in case 73 of the Book of Serenity.

***Thus is the one bright jewel that is the entire ten-direction world.***

It is interesting that Dogen says a jewel is the entire ten-direction world. How can we give or receive the entire world to a friend? This does not make sense at all in our regular, habitual way of thinking. However, I think my teacher gave me the bright jewel that is the entire world by giving me an actual example of a person living out the universal self. Without any trading or giving and taking, the bright jewel has been transmitted from the Buddha through the generations of ancestors.

<sup>1</sup>. See lecture (5) for an explanation of  $1=0=\infty$ .

<sup>2</sup>. See lecture (2) for a discussion of this point.

<sup>3</sup>. Dogen's Pure Standards for the Zen Community : A Translation of *Eihei Shingi* (translated by Taigen Daniel Leighton and Shohaku Okumura, State University of New York Press, 1996) p. 43

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**Treasury of the True Dharma Eye  
Book 5**

**The Mind Itself Is the Buddha  
*Soku shin ze butsu***

Translated by  
**The Soto Zen Text Project**

***Introduction***

This relatively short text occurs as number 5 in both the sixty- and seventy-five-chapter compilations of the *Shōbōgenzō*, and as number 6 in the vulgate edition. It was written at Kōshōji in the summer of 1239, toward the end of a five-year period during which Dōgen, no doubt preoccupied with the founding of his new monastery, seems to have done little work on the *Shōbōgenzō*. The doctrinal theme of the text stands out from Dōgen's other work dated to 1239 (*Jūundō shiki*, *Senjō*, *Senmen*), all of which tend to focus on monastic practice.

The title phrase, "the mind itself is the buddha" (or "this very mind is the buddha"), is a well-known saying in Chan literature, usually associated with the famous eighth-century master Mazu Daoyi. Dōgen opens his essay with a lament that so many Chan students misunderstand the saying,

thinking that “the mind” here refers to the consciousness present in all forms of awareness. Such a view, he identifies as the non-Buddhist understanding of the brahman Śrenīka, who argues in the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* for a self that migrates from body to body.

For his part, Dōgen prefers a Chan saying that the mind is “the mountains, rivers, and earth; the sun, moon, and stars.” Yet, lest we think that he is talking simply of a cosmic buddha consciousness, he reminds us that the mind of the buddhas is also the mind of undefiled aspiration, practice and awakening. Finally, in a rather surprising turn, he ends by collapsing all the buddhas into the Buddha Śākyamuni, who is “the mind itself is the buddha.”

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 Mind Itself Is the Buddha

What buddha after buddha and ancestor after ancestor have maintained without fail is just “the mind itself is the buddha.”<sup>1</sup> However, “the mind itself is the buddha” did not exist in Sindh in the West; it was first heard in Cīnasthāna.<sup>2</sup> Since many students misunderstand it, they do not “take a mistake as a mistake”; and because they do not “take a mistake as a mistake,” many drop into other paths.<sup>3</sup>

Hearing the words “the mind itself,” the foolish think that the considering, knowing, thinking, and perceiving of living beings, not yet

having brought forth the mind of bodhi, is taken as “the buddha.”<sup>4</sup> This is because they have never met a true teacher.

To say that they join other paths refers to one such member of another path in the Land of Sindhu in the West, whose name was Śrenīka.<sup>5</sup> His viewpoint was that the great way is in our present body, and that its true state is easily knowable. It distinguishes pleasure and pain, knows of itself cold and heat, cognizes pains and itches. It is unimpeded by the myriad phenomena and unassociated with its objects. Although things come and go, and its objects arise and cease, the spiritual knowing always exists and is unchanging.<sup>6</sup> This spiritual knowing extends everywhere; there is no division among commoners, the holy, and all the animate.<sup>7</sup> Within it, there may temporarily be the “sky flowers” of false objects, but when the wisdom of a single thought’s correspondence appears, when things die out and objects cease, the original nature of the spiritual knowing alone is clear and constant.<sup>8</sup> Though the corporeal form may break down, the spiritual knowing departs intact. It is just as the owner of a house departs when the house is destroyed by fire.<sup>9</sup> Its existence is luminous and spiritual, and it is said to be “the nature of the awakened and the wise.” It is spoken of as “buddha” and called “awakening.” It endows equally self and other; it pervades both delusion and awakening. The myriad dharmas and various objects be as they may, the spiritual knowing does not accompany the objects, is not the same as things; it constantly abides across the kalpas. The objects existing in the present, if they depend on the existence of the spiritual knowing, should also be spoken of as real: because they arise dependently from the original nature, they

are real phenomena. Nevertheless, they are not constantly abiding like the spiritual knowing, for they exist and vanish. It is unrelated to light and darkness, because it knows spiritually. This is called “spiritual knowing.”<sup>10</sup> Again it is designated “the true self”; it is called “the source of awakening”; it is designated “the original nature”; it is designated “the original substance.” One who awakens to this kind of original nature is said to have returned to constant abiding and is called a great one returned to the true. Thereafter, without further drifting about in birth and death, one verifies and enters the ocean of the nature that neither arises nor ceases. Anything other than this is not the true. To the extent that this nature has not been manifested, the three realms and six paths [of samsāra] arise in profusion. This, then, is the view of Śrenīka, of another path.

*The Reverend Huizhong, the National Teacher Dazheng, of the Land of the Great Tang, asked a monk, “Where do you come from?”<sup>11</sup>*

*The monk said, “I came from the south.”*

*The master said, “What friends are there in the south?”<sup>12</sup>*

*The monk said: “There are a great number of friends.”*

*The master asked: “How do they instruct people?”*

*The monk said, “The friends there instruct their students straight away that the mind itself is the buddha.” [They say,]*

*“Buddha” means “awakened.” You are all already endowed with a nature that sees, hears, senses, and knows.<sup>13</sup> This nature enables you to raise your eyebrows and blink your eyes, to come and go and make use of things. It pervades your body: when you poke your head, your head knows it; when you poke*

*your foot, your foot knows it. Therefore, it is called “correct pervasive knowing.”<sup>14</sup> Apart from this, there is no other buddha. This body is subject to arising and cessation, but since the beginningless past, the nature of the mind has never arisen or ceased. The arising and ceasing of the body are like the dragon changing its bones, resemble the snake shedding its skin or the person leaving an old house.<sup>15</sup>*

*“What they say in the south is roughly like this.”*

*The master said, “If this is so, then there’s no difference from that Śrenīka, of another path.*

*He said, ‘Within this body of mine, there is a spirit nature.<sup>16</sup> This nature knows pain and itching. When the body disintegrates, the spirit departs, like the owner of a house departs when the house burns. The house is impermanent, but the owner is permanent.’*

*“When we examine it, something like this fails to distinguish between true and false. Who would take it as right? When I was wandering about some time ago, I often encountered this type. These days, they’re particularly flourishing. They gather assemblies of three to five hundred and, gazing up at the milky way, tell them, ‘This is the message of the South.’<sup>17</sup> They revise the Platform Sūtra, mixing in vulgar tales and erasing the holy one’s intent, misguiding and confusing later followers.<sup>18</sup> How could it represent the oral instruction?<sup>19</sup> How painful that our tradition has so declined. If we take seeing, hearing, sensing, and knowing as the buddha nature, Vimalakīrti would not have said, ‘The dharma is apart from seeing, hearing, sensing, and knowing. If we’re engaged in seeing, hear-*

*ing, sensing, and knowing, this is seeing, hearing, sensing, and knowing; it is not seeking the dharma.”<sup>20</sup>*

The National Teacher Dacheng was a superior disciple of the old buddha of Caoqi; he was a great good friend both in the heavens and among humans.<sup>21</sup> We should clarify the message presented by the National Teacher and make it the model for our study.<sup>22</sup> Knowing what is the viewpoint of Šrenika, of another path, do not adopt it.

In recent times among those fellows who serve as the heads of monasteries in the Land of the Great Song, there could be none like the National Teacher. Since long ago, no friend to equal the National Teacher has appeared in the world. However, people of the world mistakenly believe that Linji and Deshan must be the equal of the National Teacher.<sup>23</sup> Only such fellows are numerous. How deplorable that there are no teachers with the clear eye.

“The mind itself is the buddha” maintained by the buddhas and ancestors is not something even dreamt of by the other paths or the two vehicles [of *śrāvaka* and *pratyeka-buddha*]. “Only buddhas and ancestors with buddhas and ancestors” alone have been doing “the mind itself is the buddha,” have been thoroughly investigating it.<sup>24</sup> They have the hearing of it; they have the practice of it; they have the verification of it.

“The buddha”: he has been taking away, has been losing, the hundred grasses.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, he is not talked of as the sixteen-foot golden body.<sup>26</sup> “Itself”: there is a kōan; it does not depend on realization; it does not escape destruction.<sup>27</sup> “Is”: there are the three realms.<sup>28</sup> It is not that one withdraws; it is not that they are only mind.<sup>29</sup> “Mind”: there are fences and walls.<sup>30</sup>

They do not [consist of] mud and water; they are not constructed.<sup>31</sup> We investigate “the mind itself is the buddha,” or we investigate “itself the mind the buddha is,” investigate “the buddha itself is the mind,” investigate “the mind itself the buddha is,” investigate “is the buddha the mind itself.”<sup>32</sup> This kind of investigation is truly “the mind itself is the buddha,” which takes this up and directly transmits it to “the mind itself is the buddha.”<sup>33</sup> Directly transmitted in this way, it has come down to the present day.

The mind said to have been “directly transmitted” means “one mind is all dharmas, all dharmas are one mind.”<sup>34</sup> Therefore, a man of old has said, “If a person knows the mind, there isn’t an inch of ground in the whole earth.”<sup>35</sup> We should know that, when we know the mind, the whole of heaven crashes down and the entire earth is rent asunder.<sup>36</sup> Or, when one knows the mind, the earth gets three inches thicker.

*A virtuous one of old has said, “What is the wondrous, pure, clear mind? The mountains, rivers, and the whole earth; the sun, moon, and stars.”<sup>37</sup>*

It is clearly understood that “the mind” is “the mountains, rivers, and the whole earth,” is “the sun, moon, and stars.” Although this is so, in what is said here, when you advance, it is not enough, when you retreat, it is too much.<sup>38</sup> The mind of “mountains, rivers, and the whole earth” is just mountains, rivers, and the whole earth: there are no additional waves and billows, no winds and vapors.<sup>39</sup> The mind of “sun, moon, and stars” is just sun, moon, and stars: there is no additional fog, no mist.<sup>40</sup> The mind of “birth and death, coming and going,”<sup>41</sup> is just birth and death, coming and going: there is no additional delusion, no awakening. The mind of “fences,

walls, tiles, and pebbles”<sup>42</sup> is just fences, walls, tiles, and pebbles: there is no additional mud, no water.<sup>43</sup> The mind of “the four elements and five aggregates” is just the four elements and five aggregates: there are no additional horses, no monkeys.<sup>44</sup> The mind of the chair and the whisk is just the chair and the whisk<sup>45</sup>: there is no additional bamboo, no wood.<sup>46</sup> Since it is like this, “the mind itself is the buddha” is an undefiled mind itself is the buddha. The buddhas are “undefiled buddhas.”<sup>47</sup>

Such being the case, “the mind itself is the buddha” means the buddhas who bring forth the mind [of bodhi], practice, attain bodhi, and enter nirvāṇa. Without bringing forth the mind, practicing, attaining bodhi, and entering nirvāṇa, it is not “the mind itself is the buddha.” If we bring forth the mind and practice and verify even for one moment, it is “the mind itself is the buddha”; if we bring forth the mind and practice and verify even within one atom, it is “the mind itself is the buddha”; if we bring forth the mind and practice and verify even for innumerable kalpas, it is “the mind itself is the buddha”; if we bring forth the mind and practice and verify even within one thought, it is “the mind itself is the buddha”; if we bring forth the mind and practice and verify even in half a fist, it is “the mind itself is the buddha.” However, those who say that to practice over long kalpas to make a buddha is not “the mind itself is the buddha” have not yet seen “the mind itself is the buddha,” not yet understood it, not yet studied it. They have not seen a true teacher who expounds “the mind itself is the buddha.”

“The buddhas” here means the Buddha Śākyamuni. The Buddha Śākyamuni is “the mind itself is the buddha.” When any of the buddhas of past, present, and future become buddhas,

they invariably become the Buddha Śākyamuni. This is “the mind itself is the buddha.”

Treasury of the True Dharma Eye  
The Mind Itself Is the Buddha  
Number 5

Presented to the assembly, at the Kannon Dōri  
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Ejō

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**Notes**

1. **“the mind itself is the buddha”** (*soku shin ze butsu*): Or “this very mind is the buddha.” A very common phrase in Chan literature, with slight variants such as *ze shin soku butsu*, *soku shin soku butsu*, *ze shin ze butsu*. Often associated especially with Mazu Daoyi (709-788), in response to a question by Damei Fachang (752-839), an exchange cited in Dōgen’s *Manasōbōgenzō* (DZZ.5:266, case 278) and many other Chan sources; see, e.g., *Jingde chuandeng lu* (T.2076.51:254c3-4):

[Damei Fachang] asked, “What is the buddha?” Dajī [i.e., Mazu] said, “This very mind is the buddha.”

The master [Damei] immediately had a great understanding.

2. “the mind itself is the buddha” did not exist in Sindh in the West; it was first heard in Cīnasthāna (*Saiten ni wa soku shin ze butsu nashi, Shintan ni wa hajimete kikeri*): Dōgen uses here a Chinese transliteration (*Shintan*) of the Sanskrit term for China. The claim seems to be that it was the Chinese who first gave voice to what the buddhas and ancestors of India had “maintained” (*hōnin*) without expressing. While the particular phrase, “the mind itself is the buddha,” does seem first to occur in China, there is Indian precedent for the equation of the mind and the buddha — most famously, perhaps, in the line from the *Avatāmsaka Sūtra*, “mind, buddha, and living beings — these three are without distinction” (*xin fo ji zhongsheng shi san wu chabie*) (*Huayan jing*, T.278.9:465c29). Though its provenance is in fact uncertain, the Chan tradition sees an early precedent in the *Xin wang ming*, a verse attributed to the sixth-century figure, Fu dashi (497-569), that asserted “the mind is the buddha; the buddha is the mind” (*shi xin shi fo shi fo shi xin*) (*Jingde chuandeng lu*, T.2076.51:457a2-3).

3. “take a mistake as a mistake” (*shōshaku jushaku*): An idiom, found in Chan texts, meaning “to recognize one’s mistake as such” or “to turn a mistake to one’s advantage.”

**other paths** (*gedō*): I.e., [the views of] non-Buddhist religions.

4. **considering, knowing, thinking, and perceiving** (*ryo chi nen kaku*): A tentative translation of an unusual list of terms for cognitive functions appearing several times in the *Shōbōgenzō*. Depending on one’s interpretation of its individual members, the set might also be rendered,

for example, “discriminative knowledge, recollection, and sensing.”

**not yet having brought forth the mind of bodhi** (*mihotsu bodai shin*): I.e., without the bodhisattva’s aspiration for buddhahood, or “thought of bodhi” (*bodai shin*; S. *bodhi-citta*).

5. **Śrenīka** (*Senni*): Tentative reconstruction of the Chinese Xianni, the name of a brahman appearing in the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* (*Da banniepan jing*, T.374.12:594a14-596b10), who argues for a self that transmigrates from body to body. The views expressed here suggest he was an exponent of the Sāṃkhya philosophy, a prime target of Buddhist criticism, in part for its doctrine of a transcendental subject (S. *puruṣa*).

6. **spiritual knowing** (*reichi*): Or, perhaps, “numinous knower.” The term is not used in the *Nirvāṇa-sūtra* account of Śrenīka’s views but is quite common in Chinese Buddhist texts, including those of Chan.

7. **commoners, the holy, and all the animate** (*bonshō ganrei*): A fixed expression for ordinary humans, advanced Buddhist adepts, and all sentient beings. “The animate” renders *ganrei* (“beings endowed with spirit”), a translation that loses the syntactic continuity here with *reichi* (“spiritual knowing”)

8. **“sky flowers” of false objects** (*mōbō no kūge*): I.e., illusions. “Flowers in the sky” (*kūge*) is a standard Buddhist expression for spots appearing as a result of visual impairment. Note, however, that below Dōgen reports that the objects (*shokyō*) of spiritual knowing are held to be real (*shinjitsu*) — a position more in line with the Sāṃkhya

treatment of the object realm (S. *prakrti*).  
**the wisdom of a single thought's correspondence** (*ichinen sōō no chie*): A fixed expression for a state in which one is (a) cognizant of the truth and/or (b) in full accord with one's true nature.

**9. just as the owner of a house departs when the house is destroyed by fire** (*tatoeba ninsha no shikka ni yakuru ni, shashū idete saru ga gotoshi*): A simile drawn from Śrenika's account of his position in the sūtra (*Da banniepan jing*, T.374.12:594a28-b1).

**10. It is unrelated to light and darkness, because it knows spiritually. This is called spiritual knowing.** (*meian ni kakawarezu, reichi suru ga yue ni. Kore o reichi to iu*): The translation here follows Kawamura's punctuation. The passage could also be parsed, "Because, unrelated to light and darkness, it knows spiritually, this is called spiritual knowing."

**11. The Reverend Huizhong, the National Teacher Dazheng, of the Land of the Great Tang** (*Daitō koku Daishō kokushi Echū oshō*): I.e., Nanyang Huizhong (d. 775), disciple of the Sixth Ancestor and the subject of a number of famous kōan. The conversation quoted here occurs at *Jingde chuandeng lu*, T.2076.51:437c17-438a6.

**12. “What friends are there in the south?”** (*nanpō u ka chishiki*): “Friends” (*chishiki*) is a standard term for a Buddhist teacher. Dazheng lived in the north, at the capital, Chang'an.

**13. “Buddha” means “awakened.” You are all already endowed with a nature that sees, hears, senses, and knows** (*butsu ze kaku gi, nyo kon*

*shitsu fu ken mon kaku chi shi shō*). The translation obscures the recurrence of the term *kaku* here, rendered first as “awakened” and then as “senses.” The expression “sees, hears, senses, and knows” (*ken mon kaku chi*) is a standard fixed set, standing for the operations of the six consciousnesses.

**14. Therefore, it is called “correct pervasive knowing”** (*ko myō shōhenchi*): The translation seeks to preserve the word play in the original, which here provides its teaching of the pervasiveness of consciousness throughout the body as an etymology for the term *shōhenchi*, one Chinese rendering of the buddhas' epithet “perfectly awakened one” (S. *samyak-sambuddha*).

**15. like the dragon changing its bones** (*nyo ryū kan kotsu*): Based on the belief that a dragon “changes” its bones as it outgrows them.

**16. “Within this body of mine, there is a spirit nature”** (*ga shi shin chū u ichi shinshō*): Judging from its description here, we can probably take the term “spirit” (*shin*) here as more or less synonymous with the “spiritual knowing” (*reichi*) used by Dōgen above.

**17. gazing up at the milky way** (*mokushi unkan*): A fixed expression, typically for an idle or vacant state.

**“This is the message of the South”** (*ze nanpō shūshi*): Likely here a reference, not merely to southern China, but to the so-called Southern school, whose members claimed descent from Huizhong's master, the Sixth Ancestor, Huineng (638-713).

**18. The Platform Sūtra** (*Dankyō*): I.e., the *Plat-*

form *Sūtra of the Sixth Ancestor* (*Liuzu tanjing*, T.2007) the text purporting to record the teachings of Huineng. The work, originating in the second half of the eighth century, underwent much revision over the centuries. In his *Shōbōgenzō shizen biku*, Dōgen also dismisses the text current in his time as not the teachings of the Sixth Ancestor.

**erasing the holy one's intent** (*sakujo shōi*): Presumably, “the holy one” here refers to the Sixth Ancestor. Some would take the expression (*shōi*) here to mean “sacred meaning.”

19. **How could it represent the oral instruction?** (*ki jō gonkyō*): Presumably, here again, the teachings of the Sixth Ancestor.

20. **Vimalakīrti** (*Jōmyō*): From Kumārajīva’s translation of the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* (*Yuima kyō*, T.475.14:546a23-25). The actual sūtra passage begins following the first sentence here.

21. **the old buddha of Caoqi** (*Sōkei kobutsu*): I.e., the Sixth Ancestor, Huineng (638-713) of Caoqi. **he was a great good friend both in the heavens and among humans** (*tenjō ningen no dai zenchishiki nari*): Allusion to the tradition, mentioned elsewhere in the *Shōbōgenzō*, that Huizhong was teacher, on earth, to the emperors of China and, in the heavens, to Indra, king of the devas.

22. **model for our study** (*sangaku no kikan*): “Model” here loosely translates the term “tortoise mirror” (*kikan*), something that provides a “pattern” for behavior, as cracks in a heated tortoise shell were used by diviners in ancient China.

23. **Linji and Deshan** (*Rinzai Tokusan*): I.e., Linji Yixuan (d. 867), founder of the Linji lineage; and

his contemporary Deshan Xuanjian (780-865). These two figures are singled out for criticism elsewhere in the *Shōbōgenzō*.

24. **“Only buddhas and ancestors with buddhas and ancestors” alone have been doing “the mind itself is the buddha”** (*yui busso yo busso nomi soku shin ze butsu shikitari*): Dōgen here turns the phrase “the mind itself is the buddha” into a verb. The expression “only buddhas and ancestors with buddhas and ancestors” recalls the famous line in Kumārajīva’s translation of the Lotus *Sūtra*, “only buddhas with buddhas can exhaustively investigate the real marks of the dharmas” (*wei fo yu fo nai neng jiujin zhufa shixiang*) (*Miaofa lianhua jing*, T.262.9:5c10-11).

25. **“The buddha”** (*butsu*): Dōgen here begins a set of short comments on each of the four words in the expression “the mind itself is the buddha.” The translation treats each of the words as the topic, rather than the grammatical subject of the comment that follows. Dōgen’s order here rearranges the expression to “the buddha itself is the mind.”

**he has been taking away, has been losing, the hundred grasses** (*hyakusō o nenkyaku shikitari, dashitsu shikitaru*): “The hundred grasses” (*hyakusō*) is a common term for the manifold phenomena of the world. The point here may be that the buddha is beyond the phenomenal world.

26. **he is not talked about as the sixteen-foot golden body** (*jōroku no konjin ni setsuji sezu*): Reference to the body of a buddha (or the image of a buddha). The association here with “the hundred grasses” may reflect the well-known Chan saying, referred to several times in the *Shōbōgenzō*,

“to use one blade of grass as a sixteen-foot golden body.” See, for example, the *Biyan lu* (T.2003.48:148a27-28):

Sometimes we take one blade of grass and use it as a sixteen-foot golden body; sometimes we take a sixteen-foot golden body and use it as one blade of grass.

27. **“Itself”: there is a *kōan*** (*soku kōan ari*): An obscure remark, which could also be read “there is a *kōan* of “itself”; presumably the sense is that the term “itself” is itself a *kōan*.

**it does not depend on realization** (*genjō o sōtai sezu*): From the well-known “realized *kōan*” (or “resolved case,” *genjō kōan*).

28. **“Is”: there are the three realms** (*ze sangai ari*): Or, “‘is’ has three realms” or “there are three realms of ‘is.’” I.e., the realms of desire (*yokukai*, S. *kāma-dhātu*), the realm of form (*shikikai*, S. *rūpa-dhātu*), and the realm of formlessness (*mushikikai*, S. *ārūpya-dhātu*), which together make up existence in *samsāra*.

29. **It is not that one withdraws; it is not that they are only mind** (*taishutsu ni arazu, yuishin ni arazu*): The former phrase suggests the Buddhist goal of liberation from the threefold realm of *samsāra*; the latter, the common claim that “the three realms are only mind” (*sangai yuishin*).

30. **“Mind”: there are fences and walls** (*shin shō heki ari*): Or, “‘mind’ has fences and walls” or “there are fences and walls of ‘mind.’” Invoking the famous Chan saying, usually associated with the above-cited Nanyang Huizhong, that the buddha mind is “fences, walls, tiles, and pebbles” (*shō heki ga ryaku*), to which Dōgen will refer below.

31. **They do not [consist of] mud and water** (*imada deisui sezu*): seemingly a reference to the walls, but perhaps also invoking the common Chan use of “mud and water” for the “dirty” work of teaching Buddhism in the world — as in the expression “dragged through the mud and drenched in water” (*dadei taisui*). The use of *deisui* 泥水 as a verb also occurs in *Shōbōgenzō ango*.

32. **or we investigate “itself the mind the buddha is”** (*shin soku butsu ze*): The translation here and in the following three phrases struggles to express Dōgen’s four variations on the syntax of the saying, despite the grotesque linguistic consequences. Most interpreters take the point of this exercise to be that each of the four words in the saying is equal the others.

33. **This kind of investigation is truly “the mind itself is the buddha,” which takes this up and directly transmits it to “the mind itself is the buddha”** (*kaku no gotoku no sankyū, masashiku soku shin ze butsu, kore o ko shite sokushin ze butsu ni shōden suru nari*): A tentative translation of a sentence subject to varied readings. The sense seems to be that the expression “the mind itself is the buddha” is “directly transmitted” when it is subjected to “this kind of investigation.”

34. **“one mind is all dharmas, all dharmas are one mind”** (*isshin issai hō, issai hō issshin*): In his *Shōbōgenzō tsuki*, Dōgen repeats this sentence as the saying of “an old buddha” (*kobutsu*). While similar passages do appear in earlier texts, the actual source of Dōgen’s version has not been identified.

35. **a man of old has said** (*kojin iwaku*): I.e., Changling Shouzhou (1065-1123), whose saying can be found at *Jingde chuandeng lu*, T.2076.51: 464a26. The expression “there isn’t an inch of ground in the whole earth” (*daichi mu sun do*) is a fairly common one in Chan texts and occurs elsewhere in the *Shōbōgenzō*.

36. **the entire earth is rent asunder** (*sōchi reppa*): Dōgen reuses this image, together with the “inch of ground” mentioned above, in his *Shōbōgenzō ango*: when the summer retreat is dissolved, “it rends asunder the entire earth, without an inch of ground remaining” (*sōchi o reppa su nokoreru sundo arazu*).

37. **A virtuous one of old** (*kotoku*): I.e., Weishan Lingyou (771-853). The quotation reworks a conversation between Lingyou and his disciple Yangshan Huiji (803-887), found at *Liandeng huiyao*, ZZ.136:544a5-7, and recorded in Dōgen’s *Manasō Shōbōgenzō* (DZZ.5:212, case 168):

Dawei [Lingyou] asked Yangshan, “The wondrous, pure, clear mind — how do you understand it?”

Yang said, “The mountains, rivers, and the whole earth; the sun, moon, and stars.”

38. **when you advance, it is not enough, when you retreat, it is too much** (*susumeba fuzoku ari, shirizokureba amareru*): Likely meaning that we cannot add to or subtract from “what is said here.”

39. **no additional waves and billows, no winds and vapors** (*sara ni harō nashi, fūen nashi*): Dōgen begins here excluding a set of terms used to qualify or effect the mind. The mind, for example, is regularly likened to water, and medi-

tators, are told to still the “waves” of the mind, and to protect themselves from “winds and vapors.”

40. **no additional fog, no mist** (*sara ni kiri nashi, kasumi nashi*): As in the common simile of the mind likened to the sun (or moon) behind the “fogs” (*kiri*) and “mists” (*kasumi*) of ignorance.

41. **The mind of “birth and death, coming and going”** (*shoji korai shin*): I.e., the mind subject to the vicissitudes of rebirth.

42. **The mind of “fences, walls, tiles, and pebbles”** (*shō heki ga ryaku*): Likely reflecting the saying, alluded to elsewhere in the *Shōbōgenzō*, of Nanyang Huizhong (d. 775) (see, e.g., *Jingde chuandeng lu* (T.2076.51:438a9):

A monk asked further, “What is the buddha mind?”

The master answered, “Fences, walls, tiles, and pebbles.”

43. **no additional mud, no water** (*sara ni dei nashi, sui nashi*): Perhaps reflecting the common idiom “dragged through the mud and drenched with water” (*dadei taisui*), used in reference the Zen master’s teaching duties.

44. **no additional horses, no monkeys** (*sara ni ba nashi, en nashi*): From the common use of wild horses and forest monkeys as metaphors for the restless mind, as in the familiar expression “the will is a horse; the mind, a monkey” (*iba shin’en*).

45. **The mind of “the chair and the whisk”** (*isu hossu shin*): An unusual combination, the Zen master’s “whisk” (*hossu*) usually being paired

with his “staff” (*shujō*).

46. **no additional bamboo, no wood** (*sara ni chiku nashi, boku nashi*): From the conversation about a chair between Lohan Guichen (867-928) and his master, Xuansha Shibei (835-908) (*Jingde chuandeng lu*, T.2076.51:371a9-13), recorded in Dōgen’s *Manas Shōbōgenzō* (DZZ.5:186, case 112):

The Great Master Zhenying of the Dizangyuan was once asked by Xuansha, “‘The three worlds are but one mind.’ How do you understand this?”

The master pointed to a chair and said, “What do you call this?”

Xuansha said, “A chair.”

The master said, “The reverend does not understand ‘the three worlds are but one mind.’”

Xuansha said, “I call it bamboo and wood. What do you call it?”

The master said, “I also call it bamboo and wood.”

Xuansha said, I can’t find a single person anywhere on earth who understands the buddha dharma.”

47. **undefiled mind itself is the buddha** (*fu zenna soku shin ze butsu*): Recalls the conversation, alluded to throughout the *Shōbōgenzō*, between the Sixth Ancestor and his disciple Nanyue Huairang (677-744), to the effect that buddhas and ancestors are “undefiled” (*fu zenna*) by Buddhist practice and verification. (See Dōgen’s *Manas Shōbōgenzō*, DZZ.5:178, case 101).



## My Footnotes on Zazen (16)

### “Just breathe naturally through your nose”(1)

Rev. Issho Fujita

At the end of my last article, I wrote, “Even without forcibly trying to raise the breath, it arose on its own.” In the *Bendoho* (“The Model for Engaging the Way”) chapter of Dogen Zenji’s *Eihei Shingi* (“The Pure Standards for the Zen Community”), Dogen Zenji wrote, “Just breathe naturally through your nose.” In this article, I would like to think about this statement, “just breathe naturally.”

In our zazen, it is important that regarding our breath now, there is nothing forced such as “this is the way it must be” or “this is the way I want it to be.” There mustn’t be control or expectations, or a push for some idealistic image. Rather, we should let the breath rise on its own, remaining in an accepting condition. In this way, this is to simply sense the breath, moment to moment, meticulously leaving it as it is. Then, the breath on its own will become steady and we can leave it be. Of course, this first becomes possible when we are sitting in the upright position.

But in fact, while this is easy to talk about, it is difficult to do. It is rather difficult for us to let the breath be spontaneous. The instant we become conscious of the breath, which until that time we have done habitually and unconsciously, we inevitably end up artificially interfering with the natural flow of the breath. Do you readers understand the subtle difference between these two

ways of breathing: the way of leaving the breath take place spontaneously and the way of you somehow “doing” the breath? I would like you, by all means, to once try to experience this for yourself.

Here, I would like to relate a personal experience associated with this question.

The first time I did zazen was nearly forty years ago at a winter sesshin held at Kojirin (a Zendo specifically for lay practitioners) at Engakuji Temple in Kamakura. Until that time, I had never once sat in zazen. At that time, the instructor told me to do *susokukan*, the practice of counting the breath. For beginners such as me, this is where everyone started. Counting breaths is, while sitting in the posture of zazen, to count your breaths [One], [Two] in your mind up to [Ten]. On reaching [Ten], you return to [One], [Two], [Three]... repeating this over and over. There are various ways of counting, but for me, the easiest way was to count half of the number on the inhalation and the second half on the exhalation. [Translator’s note: Most numbers in the way these particular numbers are counted in Japanese have two or three syllables]. It if happens that while you are counting you become distracted and lose track of which number has last been counted, then you once again begin counting [One], [Two], and so on.

When I first heard of this practice, I thought, “What?! Simply counting the breaths from one to ten? That’s going to be easy!” But when I tried to do it, I saw that this is really very difficult. While tormented by sitting in a position that I was unaccustomed to with my legs rising up and with pain in my lower back, I tried with all my might to do this practice just as I had been instructed: [One], [Two], but by the time I started to count [Three], delusive thoughts were some-

where arising in my mind and I was separated from my breath. I had forgotten the counting. Once again, I started over with [One], [Two], but again I was distracted. Repeating this over and over, it was totally impossible for me to reach [Ten].

Now, when I look back at sitting in zazen at that time, it was truly a pitiful, pathetic situation. It was completely not possible for the sitting itself to be zazen. But I think that this experience became the circumstances through which zazen “grabbed me by the scruff of the neck.”

In any event, I continued from that time on practicing the zazen of counting the breath for about six months. Before long, I was gradually able to count from one to ten without losing track, repeating this for many cycles. And then, one day, I realized, “I’m synchronizing my breath with the numbers I’m counting.” Rather than directing consciousness toward the naturally arising breath and counting those breaths, my intention had become to consciously breathe by synchronizing the breath with the counting. For the breath itself, even before an exhalation was finished or before the inhalation was complete, I had already started to count the next number and consequently was synchronizing the inhalation and exhalation with the numbers. This meant, to the contrary, that for the breath it happened before the exhalation was completed, there was a desire to inhale or before the inhalation was completed, there was a desire to exhale. This is to say that rather than counting the next number the movement of the breath was being stopped. This might have been “counting numbers,” but was it really “watching” the breath?

To synchronize the breath with counting

numbers so that the breath becomes artificially longer actually caused discomfort to arise in my chest. Also, there were times when rather than the importance of the breath which I had been counting, this practice ended up being biased toward the numbers.

Thus, once I noticed that I was putting too much force into counting the numbers, I kept in mind the need to do the breath-counting practice in a more relaxed way. I was then able to breathe in the way the body wanted to breathe and so I was able to pay attention to the manner of the breathing rather than the counting. The result was a sense that the numbers became closer to the breath and this made it much easier to count. Breathing became smooth and there was a sense that the landscape of the way to practice had totally changed. This was an invaluable experience in which I learned, “Oh, now, I see. In this type of practice, it isn’t good if it is based on an

incorrect understanding. A little thing could end up becoming something completely different.” This was a point that I suddenly realized one day on my own. It was not something that I realized because someone had given me that instruction. But now, I think, “Wouldn’t it have been better if, from the beginning, the instructor had given me that precaution?”

Regardless of whether or not a person is able, from the beginning, to entrust the breath to the breath, shouldn’t it be that from the very beginning the instructor puts into the mind of the practitioners as their problem consciousness – as their awareness of the problem – that when we are sitting in zazen, the breathing must be spontaneous and natural? This is because when we become conscious of something, then already unconsciously, we have the habit of wanting to control the target of our attention.

(To be continued)

## NEWS

### **September 7–18, 2018**

Dharma talks by Soto Zen Buddhism South America Office were held at six places in South America.

### **September 12–16, 2018**

Dharma talks by Soto Zen Buddhism North America Office were held at two places in North America.

### **October 12–14, 2018**

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

### **November 2–5, 2018**

Hawaii Soto Zen Workshop was held at Taiheiji in Hawaii, U.S.A.

### **November 2–12, 2018**

Baika classes by Soto Zen Buddhism Europe Office were held at five places in Europe.

### **November 29–30, 2018**

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

### **February 14–24, 2019**

Baika classes by Soto Zen Buddhism Hawaii Office were held at four places in Hawaii, U.S.A.

### **February 23, 2019**

Hawaii Minister’s Spring Meeting was held at Shoboji in Hawaii, U.S.A.

### **March 29, 2019**

South America Soto Zen Conference was held in Cusco, Peru.

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