

DHARMA EYE



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News of Soto Zen Buddhism: Teachings and Practice

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### A Greeting

Rev. Shoyu Kawamura  
Director, Educational Division  
The Administrative Headquarters of Soto Zen Buddhism



I trust that this issue of *Dharma Eye* finds all of its readers in good health. Thank you for your interest in *Dharma Eye* and for taking the time to read it.

Zen has been a great influence on Japanese culture. We can see influences of the Zen teaching on painting, gardens, architecture, literature, the tea ceremony, calligraphy, the martial arts, the performing arts, language, and also within the general forms of Japanese people's lives. One of the representative art forms of traditional Japanese culture is Noh. It is said that Seami (c. 1363-1443), who achieved great success in Noh, was also influenced by the teachings of Dogen Zenji, the Japanese priest who introduced the Soto Zen teaching to Japan. In reading *Kadensho*, a book written by Seami and considered to be the theoretical manual for Noh, we can clearly see the influences of Zen thought. We can also discern Zen influences in the everyday customs of Japanese people including brushing their teeth and washing their faces when they get up in the morning as well as in meal etiquette, customs that are similar to the way Zen monks live a complete life of practice.

It can be said that there are two characteristics of Soto Zen teaching that have influenced Japanese culture: a high sense of spirituality as well as an ordinariness that makes it possible for anyone to practice. I think it is also especially because of these two characteristics that interest around the world is growing in this teaching.

When I became Director of the Educational Division, I decided to do two things: one had to do with teaching materials for dissemination of the Sotoshu teaching to lay supporters and believers (we had received many requests for better materials) and the other was to change the dissemination and education of the teaching from an inward-facing stance to one that was more facing society in an outward manner. One of the things we did in order to introduce Soto Zen to more people was to begin publishing on a regular basis throughout the year three educational magazines: *Zen Friends* (in English), *Caminho Zen* (in Portuguese), and *Zen Amigos* (in Spanish).

Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) said "If you want to change the world, then first you must change yourself." In view of the fact that there are now more than 1.5 billion people worldwide who are using the Internet, we have decided to change the publication of these magazines to an electronic format and are planning to increase the number of languages that this material will appear in to six: English, Spanish, Portuguese, French, German, and Italian.

At present, translation of the basic Sotoshu website ([www.sotozen-net.or.jp](http://www.sotozen-net.or.jp)) is only in English, so we first plan to make this available in each of the six above-mentioned languages. We will carry information about each respective region and in the future, we plan to make available translations of the *Shobogenzo* as well as other texts and

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sutras. By dispatching information on this greatly expanded website, it will be possible from now on for anyone to freely access this homepage. In this way, it will be possible for people around the world to receive the message conveyed by *Zen Friends*, but also other information that we have not been able to include sufficiently in the magazine format. Through the great hidden potential of the Web edition of *Zen Friends*, we aim to make this a place to send out information to all those people who are interested in Buddhism, Zen, and especially Sotoshu. We would be happy if our readers of *Dharma Eye* also enjoy reading the new Web version of *Zen Friends*.

There is a Japanese proverb, "Learn from an ancient buddha." Learn, in this instance, can mean both to study and to imitate. We ask question of the Ancestors' teachings and it is also, I think, important to carry on that effort. I would like to walk together with you on the path of Buddha.

I pray from the bottom of my heart that the teachings of the Eminent Ancestor Dogen Zenji and the Great Ancestor Keizan Zenji will be spiritual supports as well as guiding principles for your lives.

Namu Shakyamuni Butsu

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## Recent Soto Zen Activities in Brazil

Rev. Jiten Kurosawa  
Busshinji, Rolandia, Brazil

### The 45th Anniversary of the Founding of Busshinji

More than two years have passed since I was appointed a Kokusai-fukyoshi to Brazil. During the first year, I stayed at Ryo-Daihonzan Betsuin Busshinji in Sao Paulo. It was during my stay there that due to an inexplicable connection between the temple family of Rev. Dogen Yoshida, founder of Busshinji, at Dorinji in Miyagi Prefecture Japan and my late master that my activities began in April 2004 at the temple in Rolandia. It was a little more than a year after I had come here that I encountered the big ceremony of the 45th anniversary of the founding of Busshinji. And so it happened that an inexperienced priest such as me was put in charge of that event.

We were blessed with beautiful weather on the day of the ceremony. Many priests attended and among them were fifteen from Japan and North America, including: Rev. Dosho Saikawa, Director of the Soto Zen Buddhism South America Office; Rev. Koichi Miyoshi, former Director of the Soto Zen Buddhism South America Office; Rev. Shinei Miura, a specially dispatched Fukyoshi from Japan, as well as a group of people from Dorinji in Miyagi Prefecture (led by Rev. Choki Ibaraki of Sairenji in Nagasaki Prefecture). Nearly all of the supporters and devotees of Rolandia participated in the ceremonies. There were also reporters

from two local newspapers who came to cover the event. From my standpoint, I thought this ceremony must have been the climax of an event that this temple had not seen the likes of for many decades.



Participants in the ceremony

The ceremony began with a service for the past priests of the temple (Officiant, Rev. Miyoshi), a service with an offertory for the supporters and devotees (Officiant, Rev. Kurosawa), a sermon and Dharma talk (Rev. Miura), and finally the actual ceremony commemorating the 45th anniversary of the founding of Busshinji (Officiant, Rev. Saikawa) was carried out strictly and formally. Then, celebratory words and telegrams were offered, a commemorative photo of everyone was taken, and thus the celebration was safely brought to a conclusion. Following the ceremony, we had lunch in the hall for supporters and devotees and in the evening we gathered again at a local restaurant for a congratulatory banquet.

At 3:00 a.m. the next morning, the group of visitors from Miyagi Prefecture made their last offering of incense at the temple, although they were surely feeling tired from the dinner party the previous evening. Forty-five years ago, Mrs. Fukako Yoshida, a relative of Rev. Yoshida who was the founder of Busshinji, had lived at this temple for some time and still considers Rolandia her hometown. She especially felt deeply touched to reestablish connections with local people and while it was difficult to say good-bye,



Rev. Kurosawa reading the dedication

she was also full of happiness. The group left the temple grounds before daybreak.



45th anniversary of Busshinji at Rolandia

Busshinji was without a Kokusai-fukyoshi for some time and consequently some of the supporters and devotees had forgotten the temple. It was in this condition, that the 40th anniversary of founding the temple was carried out by a group of people from Dorinji and a group of temple members. There have been times in the past when there were no Kokusai-fukyoshi in South America and even if there were, several temples existed that did not actually function as temples. The fundamental function of a Kokusai-fukyoshi is to perform ceremonies and lead zazen groups, activities that adopt elements of Japanese culture. I think it is necessary that from now on Kokusai-fukyoshi in South America establish cooperation and solidarity among themselves.

This ceremony commemorating the founding of Busshinji was very satisfying for the supporters and devotees of Rolandia as well as the group who came all the way from Miyagi, Japan. I think everyone was deeply touched by the experience. I am grateful that it was possible to perform this ceremony and for the opportunity to taste this joy for the Dharma. From now on, I look forward to the 50th anniversary ceremony and plan to make effort to refresh my spirit each day to that end.

## The Third South America Sesshin

Following the activities commemorating the founding of Busshinji, a five-day sesshin was held in the temple's dojo. This was the Third South American Sesshin. Immediately following the ceremony, preparations quickly began for the sesshin. It was gratifying to host this event; however, since there was no place at the temple for people to sleep, a local boarding house was used for that purpose.



The Third South America Sesshin

All together, ten priests and thirty lay people attended the sesshin, the same number as sesshin in years past. Most of the lay practitioners were from Sao Paulo and only four were from Rolandia. Perhaps this was due to the difference in region. In our area, there are few people who understand zazen and even though we have a zazen group at the temple, there are few people who are interested. In the neighboring area of Londrina, there are some people who know about zazen, but not many people come to this temple to practice zazen. Most of the participants this time were either from Busshinji in Sao Paulo or Tenzui Zendo (Rev. Koen de Souza). The sesshin began on Sept. 5th with registration, followed by an opening ceremony, orientation, and lunch. As in past years, one period of zazen was thirty minutes long, followed by five minutes of kinhin, and a ten-minute break. I heard some of the priests say, "this isn't sesshin," but it is a fact that the usual sesshin schedule of a Japanese monastery (forty-minute periods of zazen and zazen directly following meals) would be difficult for Brazilian

practitioners. Nevertheless, even with a relatively relaxed schedule, I think it was easy to see that each practitioner was earnestly grappling with sesshin. It is important to consider the way to practice in relation to the culture and characteristics of the people who are practicing.

Traditional practice continues throughout the day, from the sound of the wake-up bell till it is time to go to bed and even while sleeping. For that reason, I keenly felt something was lacking in our sesshin because in the traditional teaching method people sleep at the temple overnight. Many of the participants were satisfied, though, and it was a fact that this sesshin provided lots of input that can be used in future Zen practice in Brazil.

With regard to the practitioners who attended this sesshin (and this applies to people who practice zazen throughout Brazil) as well as those who come to Busshinji in Rolandia to practice zazen, many of them also practice karate or yoga, and in general, it is easy to see that they are seeking peace and quiet through the practice of zazen. In this way, there are many who have no experience of zazen as a complete practice in which eating with oryoki, samu (daily work), daily sutra services, teisho, as well as theoretical and study aspects are also included. I keenly felt that next time it is important to have a sesshin that extends throughout the whole 24 hours of the day, a sesshin in which "everyone practices as one."



The Third South America Sesshin



## The 50th Anniversary of the Founding of Zengenji, Mogi das Cruces, Brazil

Following the ceremony and sesshin in Rolandia, the 50th anniversary of the founding of the oldest Sotoshu temple in Brazil was held on September 11th at Zenji in Mogi das Cruces. Mogi is located approximately one hour by car from Sao Paulo, a city where many Japanese-Brazilians live. While Rolandia is located in the center of the agricultural district of northern Parana State, Mogi is a town that is home to many people of Japanese descent who have been successful in business. Since it is located close to Sao Paulo, it is also a place where it is easy to get many people to gather. The suburbs of Sao Paulo are where the most Japanese-Brazilians live.



At Zengenji in Mogi

Before the ceremony began, the large temple bell was struck and a long line of children formed a procession, many of them were Japanese-Brazilian. Included in the celebrations was the main ceremony marking the 50th anniversary of the founding of Zengenji (Officiant, Rev. Saikawa), a service for the past priests of the temple (Officiant, Rev. Miyoshi), and a general memorial service for the supporters and devotees (Officiant, Rev. Kosu Saito) in which more than 250 people participated. Following a talk by Rev. Miura, there was a luncheon that was attended by many people.

This concluded a week-long series of events, a great activity that marked a certain stage for the Soto Zen Buddhism South America Office. It was through the great efforts and kindness of many people that it was possible to conduct these ceremonies and bring them to a peaceful conclusion. I am full of gratitude for these people and the protection of the Buddhas. Next year, commemorative celebrations for the 50th anniversary of Busshinji in Sao Paulo are planned. It is my hope that from now on there will be a continuation of cooperation and solidarity between Kokusai-fukyoshi, local resident priests, supporters and devotees, so there will be continued Sotoshu development as we conduct many different activities and events.



Memorial ceremony at Zengenji



Children at the ceremony



## Sotoshu Workshop 2005 At Jakkô-ji, Germany

Rev. Tenryu Tenbreul  
Jakkoji, Muenster, Germany

The 2005 Sotoshu Workshop took place for the first time in Germany, at Jakkô-ji on the 14th and 15th of October. They were two bright and clear autumn days. It was a nice opportunity to share the everyday practice of Jakkô-ji with our old fellow practitioners and foreign teachers with whom friendly connections had been already established.

This was the first workshop organized in such a style and form: practising together Zazen, morning service, and breakfast in the Dojo with Oryoki. After morning Zazen, Choka and breakfast, almost the entire time was spent in studies, training and exchange. Imamura Sokan Roshi gave us a lot of precious information and background material about the historical roots of the funeral service and answered any question with a remarkable competence. And we all felt deep gratitude to his assistants, Rev. Taiken Yokoyama and Rev. Jiso Forzani, for their accurate translation and their natural and efficient support. This together with the general open mind and attention of all the members, created a very heartfelt atmosphere and a fruitful exchange. After Teisho, Imamura Roshi performed in the Dojo demonstrations of most of the aspects of the ritual during the different parts of a funeral. He did that with nobility and natural ease, never tiring to repeat on request several sequences of this ritual, till each participant could get the feeling that he or she got a good basis to work on, which could be developed and used in the future in his or her community.

Not only in the Dojo, but during the whole practice period, we could highly appreciate this natural, humble, friendly and determined way of Imamura Roshi, which made all communication easy and smooth. For the Jakkô-ji community it was a great chance to meet him and all the European Zen teachers. To host them and take care of the well-being of everybody was not a task, but a fortunate event of high value which brought to every one of us a hearty feeling and the deep sensation of positive and united energy.

When I came back from Jakkô-ji to Berlin, the husband of a disciple had just died three days before. We went to the cremation place in the next morning. In front of the opened coffin we offered incense and after the *Hannya Shingyo*, I chanted the new Eko that we studied in Jakkô-ji for the first time. Then the coffin was closed again and taken into the fire. In this moment of absolute and plain reality, there is only fire. But the ungraspable world beyond words is present and penetrates each part of our body and the entire space. Nobody can deny it. A circle is closed and a new one begins. The connection with the days before Jakkô-ji could not have been stronger.

It is my great hope for the future that our meetings and workshops may continue regularly. At least, independent of the subject we have to work about, a real common basis of communication is always "the great matter of life and death". This very basis of life and death, the matter of everyday and everybody, is a really large basis and in the same time our mutual and eternal Koan, in front of which we can really become ourselves, casting off all artificial understanding and behaviour. In this perspective, directly connected with our last October meeting still very living in my memory, I would like to express my gratitude to all participants who shared this precious time with us in Jakkô-ji. I hope to see you all soon again



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# To Climb the Mountain

Rev. Taigo Fumagalli  
Fudenji, Salsomaggiore, Italy

At the rail station of Niihama, Myoko San and I took a cab to go to ... “Zuiouji”, said the taxi driver wearing white glows, guessing our destination from our clothes (more than the eyes, it is the habit that does make the friar).

Well, in a short while we would have crossed the Temple’s gate for the Dendokyoshi Kenshusho.

The taxi glided in the streets of Niihama lined with buildings, supermarkets, petrol pumps and shops. Nothing was astonishing except for the maze of power lines taking light and communication into the houses and for the atmosphere created by the colours of the neon signs of the publicity: shades of blue, green and pink, very gentle pastel colours. First visions, first impressions.

Suddenly in front of us, over the windscreen, the landscape changed, the houses gave space to a wood and the road started sloping steeply upwards towards the mountain where the Temple was still concealed from our sight. After a really steep stretch of road we finally reached the Temple’s back door, on our right; on our left there was a school complex, a big courtyard of tamped earth, surrounded on tree sides by buildings. Here and there we could see the children’s games. Obviously it was a nursery school.

Pushing our heavy suitcases, we approached what seems to be the reception, an overhead opening that made me think of the entrance to Sen-no Rikyu’s House of Tea. After the ritual greetings a young monk asked a brother to take us to our lodging, on the left of the Hatto (Dharma Hall) at the west extremity of the monastic complex. The Temple seemed uninhabited. It was ten o’clock in the morning, where were the Unsui?

From the mountain covered with a luxuriant vegetation, in the shelter of the north side of the Temple, we could hear birds singing and some disturbing screeches of, as we discovered later, monkeys. From the south, instead of the typical noises of the city we heard messages

addressed to the population emitted by loudspeakers, and drums sounds. The following day we discovered that they started to play at 4 o’clock in the morning, just after Shinrei (Wake-up bell).

In the midst of all this there was the Temple, totally silent, with its paths, colours, roofs, trusses, tatamis... and those steps going deeply into the mountain, God knows where, guarded by two stone lions.

The emotion caused by the arrival, the amazement as well as the curiosity inspired by the place made us hesitate next to our luggage. Suddenly this feeling was interrupted by the invitation to go to the refectory (Kuin) for lunch, entering deeply into the womb of the Temple to meet the community. The experience of this lunch made me take a decision that marked my whole staying: I decided to follow at all costs the community formalities and rhythms. And so it went, moment after moment, day after day, practice after practice, according to the program proposed: Za Zen, conferences, study of ceremonies, Samu, meetings with the community plunged into the practice of the Path of the Buddha, dressing, eating and living in harmony with the Dharma.

It was an every day family life, like the one proposed and promoted in Fudenji by our teacher Taiten Guareschi.

However, forty years after the arrival in Europe of Taisen Deshimaru Roshi and twenty years after the foundation of Fudenji some “variations on a theme” started to appear and to mark the daily practice with peculiarities that are not foreign to local religious and cultural traditions. A good example is the chanting of the Sutra. In fact its Italian poetical translation requires a more austere reciting in the rhythms as well as in the tones.

“Variations on a theme” sometimes perceived as such, sometimes seen as “diversities” because of their separating force, even if Senpo San (a monk born and brought-up in Argentina by Japanese parents) said that all of us recite the

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Maka Hannya Haramitta Shingyô.

The problem of “diversity” is the recurring theme of the meetings with the Zuioji Community, of the debates with the Masters of Dharma and with the members of Soto Shu. During an exchange of point of views a young Unsui ventures a courageous suggestion that maybe reveals the disquiet about the destiny of Zen in Japan or, maybe, is an encouragement kindly addressed to us: “Within a generation in Eihei-ji we might have an occidental Zen-ji”. I too have ventured a question, rather impertinent maybe: “But the Zen-ji of Eihei-ji is a Japanese or just a Zen-ji?”

One thing is certain; beside a few exceptions the members of the Zuioji Community are the young sons (between twenty and thirty) of Zen priests who see themselves as the successors and as the continuity. In the western countries the people who approach the study and the practice of the Buddha-Dharma come from Christianity, Hebraism and from a diversified world made up of laics, atheists, agnostics and anarchists. Very often they are not... that young anymore; nevertheless all of them are adventurers seeking for a sense of life or for healing, for complementary therapy or for happiness...

What can be done? The answer cannot be univocal, it has to be articulated and diversified, it has to combine and integrate elements of different traditions. It is indeed a century-long process.

Certainly the young Doshi, Doan and Unsui of Zuioji have observed us as much as we have observed them but, in spite of the impossibility to communicate due to the language barriers, during the various activities the accent has been put on the body language.

Then, slowly, these faces I was scrutinising almost without any restraint, fascinated by their enigmatic charm, began to unfold, to communicate something undefinable, an atmosphere of fraternal acceptance, of sharing the same fate.

Progressively, day by day, also the monastic complex revealed itself to be a living organism in which ancient, old and new, life and death, live together harmoniously in the fragrance of the Nyôhô unmistakable style: the colours, the wood, the forms, the sounds, the scents, the children's

nursery and the scattered graves as well as the enormous cobwebs spun on the trees surrounding the Temple by fat spiders, as if they wanted to protect it from the mosquitoes, still around in spite of the late season. Zuioji reminded me of the Kesa. And it is a Kesa that “allows us to plunge deeply in the endless flow of reality to continue our life tranquilly, moment by moment”.

I asked to the reverend Imamura Roshi: “The conditions to organise a Dendokyoshi Kenshusho do exist in Europe?” He answered: “On the condition that we have a Senmon Sôdô.” I closed my eyes and the Big Kesa of the universal transmission unfolded, immense and peaceful.

This experience was about to finish. It had been possible to win the bet to wisely integrate the program reserved to us, the aspiring Dendokyoshi, with the daily life of the Zuioji Community. Now a last test was ahead of us, to climb the Mountain at Eihei-ji and at Sojji to honour the Founding Fathers.

The leave-taking from Zuioji was fraternal and warm; a last greeting to the magnificent Abbot Tsugen Narasaki Roshi, gassho and embraces with the monks. “Your example and your practice have given me strength and courage”, I whispered to a monk; “You too”, he answered.

Once again we were at Niihama Station with our heavy suitcases. It was yet another parting, another separation. Daigaku San, our interpreter from Japanese into English as well as our ceremony teacher and our connection with the external world (an American who looks down at the world from his 6 1/2 feet) was journeying somewhere else. Thank you Daigaku San.

We, the newly certified Dendoshi, took the train to Kyoto where we stayed two days before parting. For the Haito-ceremony, the European group went first to Eihei-ji and the American one to Sojji, then the groups exchanged places.

My dear Myoan San, Gigen San, Konjin San, Myoko San, Seigetsu San and Aigo San, we have met and for five weeks we have shared the same place, the same itineraries, the same daily life but not the same joys and sufferings, then we have parted. With a lot of discretion and tact we



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have created an atmosphere of solidarity and we have interwoven relationships that were respectful of our specificities. I hope to meet you again and I hope to meet again the Dharma teachers who have so wonderfully commented some chapters of Dôgen Zenji's Shobogenzo and the many representatives of Soto Shu who were gravitating around us, always ready to satisfy our requests.

Today, after a month, the memory of the experiences lived during those five weeks is still fresh in my heart and

mind. I would repeat them exactly in the same way.

Dear Master, thanks to your kindness and your immeasurable compassion and foresight I was able to prostrate to the Founding Fathers. In the nine prostrations that I am about to perform I will deposit all of my gratitude.

Erto Taigo Fumagalli  
Lugano, December 11th 2005

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## Report on Dendokyoshi Kenshusho Fall, 2005

Rev. Gigen Victoria Austin  
San Francisco Zen Center, San Francisco, CA, USA

For several years, the Shumucho had invited me to participate in Dendokyoshi Kenshusho; however, my responsibilities at San Francisco Zen Center did not permit me to leave until I finished my term as President. This year upon finishing my term, I decided to participate in the Kenshusho. I went with the intention to touch base with my practice, to contemplate and reflect on the Dharma before deciding what to do next. Over the past few years, people have been asking me to light the dharma lamp with them. I felt that my participation in the Kenshusho would provide a richer context and opportunities for my students, and enrich the sanghas in which I sit, study and work.

Once settled at Zuioji, it became apparent that I was part of a mandala of complex design, that included many colors, forms and rhythms. Though at the center was the same simple light we shine inwards every day, many people worked hard to hold up various aspects of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha so that the Kenshusei could study them intensively for a month.

First, there were sanghas within sanghas, and sanghas unfolding from the sangha. Living with three other Americans from Suzuki Roshi's line plus three Europeans from Deshimaru's line, I felt a new experience of sangha intimacy. All around us, the resident monks of Zuioji were

demonstrating Dogen Zenji's way to the best of their ability. I was conscious that the teachers and senior staff of Zuioji travel with the support of their own Japanese communities week after week to be able to hold up the example of Zuioji in this time and place. And the Shumucho staff members and administrators who provided the container came from all over the world. Like the patterns in a mandala, small and large sanghas all formed one rhythm for a short period of time.

Next, the Kenshusho provided an education in culture. Kind hands and voices gave us many different offerings during the month: printed translations, bowls of tea, instruments for goeika, cameras, brooms, geta, obento, money, robe belts, incense packets, photos, monju, train maps, mikan, teachings, apologies, calligraphy, rakus, ... this is not even a one-hundredth of the total list. Each gift included a whole tradition which I could see, feel and taste. Like the colors in a mandala, both harmonizing tints and sharp contrasts had their places in the whole.

Every day, both Zuioji and Shumucho instructors helped the Kenshusei refine our understanding of the forms of practice. What is the correct use of five bowls at breakfast? When is it appropriate to wear tabi, when bessu? How are the okesa, zagu, kotsu, hossu taken up and put

down at Zuioji, Sojiji, Eiheiiji? Could seven people from different temples harmonize at nicchu fugin? Which would come first, understanding or the end of the month?

Although I have been practicing for 35 years and have participated in tokubetsu sesshin in the past, this time the experience felt new. I think that the Kenshusho provides a valuable context for anyone who will be ordaining people and transmitting the Middle Way in our lineage.

I feel deeply grateful for the contributions of many different people, both in the U.S. and at all the institutions in Japan, who provided material resources and guidance during the Kenshusho. One result of their huge contribution is that I now feel a strong connection with a wider Dharma family than before. My experience of these people is that they are developing, and helping the teachers develop, into strong guides to help the Buddhadharma flourish.

I hope that the Zuioji monks, teachers, and administration, as well as the International Departments of the Shumicho, Eiheiiji and Sojiji, all realize how much their effort means to us. It was truly a once in a lifetime experience, that will allow me to understand much more about how our practice comes to us.



## My Zazen Notebook (16)

Rev. Issho Fujita

### Fragmentary Thought XXV “The Whole of Zazen”

In preceding articles, I have often used the expression “the whole of zazen.” I would like to explain why I have expressly used this redundant expression and was not able to simply leave it at “zazen.” To explain this from the conclusion, the reason is that I wanted to emphasize that zazen itself fills heaven and earth; that zazen transcends our limit of knowing and is infinitely vast and deep.

Most people, if they are asked to draw an image of zazen on a piece of paper, would draw a person sitting in the lotus position. This shows that when we think of zazen, we only think of the sitting person’s body as well as the internal mental activity that cannot be seen. In other words, we only see zazen in terms of the mental and physical activities of one individual person. However, Dogen Zenji did not think of zazen as simply the capability of one individual person. As Kodo Sawaki Roshi said, “Zazen is not one person shut up in one corner of the universe enjoying respite from his or her suffering.” So, if we were to show Dogen Zenji such a drawing, surely he would say, “This is completely inadequate. We cannot possibly say that this is a drawing of the whole of zazen.”

In Dogen Zenji’s writings, we often see words such as “throughout the ten directions,” “all things,” “the entire world,” “throughout heaven and earth,” and so forth. He used these expressions to express an infinite depth and vastness that cannot be measured. When Dogen Zenji speaks of zazen, he is actually speaking of it in terms of this idea of “entire” or “complete.” For example, in *Shobogenzo Yuibutsu Yobutsu* he wrote, “The Buddhas practice simultaneously with the entire world and all sentient beings. If it is unable to do this with all things, then it is still not the practice of the Buddhas.” It is possible to replace the expression “the practice of a Buddha” in this sentence with “zazen.” “Sitting is the practice of a Buddha,” so that zazen, which is a practice of a Buddha, must be “zazen that permeates all things.”

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As is often the case for us, each of us sits zazen in order to attain satori or peace of mind as my own possession. Then in the name of “seeking the Way” or “practice” we each become obsessed with spiritual practice as a means of resolving our individual internal sufferings and in the process become more and more absorbed in a narrow, complicated world. From the beginning, there is no idea of “throughout all things” in this standpoint. This is nothing other than setting off from the small self and returning to the small self in a narcissistic sort of way. However, as Sawaki Roshi said, “If there is even the slightest amount of personal interest, then zazen will never be pure and unadulterated.” For that reason, no matter how ardently we practice in a way that is exclusively personal, then it is not possible to do zazen. For zazen to be truly zazen, there is this strict condition that will not permit compromise. From this basic formula that “Buddhist practice=zazen=together with all things”, when drawing a picture of zazen, it is necessary not only to draw the image of an individual person, but an image that includes the whole world.

Earlier, I touched on the subject of a painting of Shakyamuni Buddha attaining the Way, a painting in which not only is there Shakyamuni Buddha’s “Attaining the Way.” There is not only Shakyamuni Buddha sitting in zazen, but the great earth, trees, sky, stars, and so forth are also depicted. It is not actually possible to completely draw “all things” and so it is also not possible to draw a perfect drawing of zazen. Nevertheless, this painting can be said to be a relatively good depiction of zazen. And yet, more often than not, we are likely to pay attention only to the figure of Shakyamuni Buddha and think that that is zazen, while considering the rest of the painting as simply the stage of zazen. In other words, we think of Shakyamuni Buddha as the center design of the painting and the rest as the background and in this way we think of only the central image as zazen. However, the correct way to appreciate this painting of “Attaining the Way” is not to see it as a dichotomy between the design (zazen) and the rest of the painting (not zazen). Wouldn’t it rather be better to see the whole thing in a holistic way? In a word, this would be to see all things depicted in the painting as being zazen itself. It would appear as if the words Shakyamuni Buddha is said to have uttered when attaining the Way “I have attained the Way together with the great

earth and all sentient beings” would be supporting evidence for this way of looking at such a painting. In short, this is to say that when Shakyamuni Buddha attained the Way it was not only the individual person Shakyamuni Buddha sitting in the lotus position who attained the Way, but the infinite 3,000 worlds – the whole Universe – that attained the Way.

If the zazen practice of Shakyamuni Buddha was not an individual effort that excluded “all things,” and rather was zazen which included “all things,” then those of us who are his disciples must be able to conceive of a zazen on a much more magnificent, infinite scale. Furthermore, we must study and practice zazen like Shakyamuni Buddha so that our practice is always facing the infinite, opening to everything. And yet, it would appear that nowadays, many people think of a drawing of practice of zazen in a way that is restricted to the small scale of one individual person. That is why I have used this seemingly unnecessary expression, “the whole of zazen,” in an attempt to distinguish it from the common sense, limited way in which many people think of it.

This will be repetitious, but I would like to think a bit about this question using the example of a fish in water. For fish that are living and swimming in water, it is not possible to be separate from water. It can be said that because a fish is in water a fish can swim in a lively, active manner. If we try to apprehend the living nature of a fish itself, then we must not look only at the fish, but we must look at the whole thing including both the fish and water. However, even in that case, if we see the whole thing as being a combination of the swimming fish in the environment of water, it must then be said that we have clearly fallen into a dualistic standpoint. But rather than that, first there is one complete whole where there is no seam and what is referred to as a “fish” and “water” is expediently divided into two parts. Each part has different features and functions and appears to us for that reason as if the two things are independent. In Dogen Zenji’s *Shobogenzo Zazenshin*, there is the line “Fish are swimming like fishes,” and so the seamless whole is “the whole fish” or if this is expressed even more directly, the whole thing should be called one word “fish.” (Of course, this is not something fixed that does not move. The fish swims and

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the water moves, so this is a something that continuously moves in a fluid way).

Our usual way of paying attention to an individual object is in this case like treating a fish as if it were out of water, – a dead, dry object. In Dogen Zenji's *Shobogenzo Genjokoan*, there is the line "If a fish leaves the water, it perishes at once." A fish without water is nothing more than an abstraction of a fish and as expressed in Wanshi Zenji's *Zazenshin*, "The water is clear right to the bottom. Fishes swim leisurely." There is a great distance between a fish swimming leisurely within limitless water and the imaginary fish that only exists within our conceptions. For that reason, we must understand this verse "Water clear to the bottom, a fish swims leisurely" to express the real fish itself.

To think of zazen as only being limited to one person sitting is similar to thinking of a fish removed from water. This is nothing other than grasping the whole of zazen as an abstraction. In that way we only see the desiccated form of zazen that is dead and lose sight of the essential nature of zazen that permeates life in a fresh and lively manner. For a fish, the thing we call "water" is for us in zazen like being surrounded by "throughout all things." This means that raw zazen itself which has not become something abstract is nothing other than the unlimited whole that comes from the mind-body of our zazen and "throughout all things."

In sense perception psychology, it is taught that the scope of what we can perceive is quite limited. For example, people are able to perceive sounds anywhere between a vibration frequency of 20 per second on the low end to 20,000 vibrations per second on the high end. We are not able to perceive sound outside of this range which is to say such sounds do not exist for us. That does not mean, however, that those sounds do not exist at all. There are animals that can perceive such sounds and it is also possible to detect them by means of machines. In the same way, we have a horizon (a line that marks the limit beyond which perception does not reach) that limits our perceptions and so it is only natural that it isn't possible to grasp completely the whole of infinite zazen. No matter how we try to perceive it, the zazen we glimpse is only one

part or one side of it.

Within his writings, Dogen Zenji discussed various aspects of the limitations of perception. For example, in *Fukanzazengi*, there is the expression "a glimpse of wisdom." "To glimpse" means that no matter how hard we try to perceive the whole of zazen, we will never be able to see more than one part of it. This is to say that with these words Dogen Zenji cautions us to be careful of feeling some kind of ecstasy as a result of getting into some position where we cannot move because we are caught by that experience. No matter how profound and refined the insight, or delicate and subtle the perception might be (that in itself is a valuable thing...), it is limited as it is a human perception and inevitably is partial or one-sided.

It is possible of course for us to widen our range of perception through training, although this is not an objective of zazen. However, as zazen deepens it can be a side-effect to the extent that it will be possible to glimpse many things that previously were unperceivable. However, we must not forget that this is merely one part of the whole of zazen. In *Shobogenzo Genjokoan*, Dogen Zenji wrote "We can see and understand only to the extent our eye is cultivated in practice. If we are to grasp the true and particular natures of all things, we must know that in addition to apparent circularity or angularity, there are inexhaustibly great virtues in mountains and seas. We must realize that this inexhaustible store is present not only all around us, it is present right beneath our feet and within a single drop of water."

The whole of zazen is far vaster and deeper than perception. For example, "the flowing movement of fluid in the cerebrospinal cord system" that I mentioned in an earlier article, in itself is not directly an object of perception. It is only something indirectly perceived by passing through the minute movements of each part of the body. This cerebrospinal cord fluid completely unperceived by the human consciousness continues to flow as long as a person is living and makes possible the biological function we call perception. In the condition we call "zazen," there is a tendency to shift the center of balance towards paying attention only to what we are able to perceive. However, in the same way as the flowing



movement of cerebrospinal fluid, the world [that supports perception and certainly exists even though by means of perception it can never be caught objectively] spreads infinitely, outside (behind?) perception. Not to think about this would be as foolish the Japanese proverb of “trying to see the ceiling through a hollow reed.”

The whole of zazen, or more straightforwardly “zazen”, is something that cannot be gauged by means of perception. (This is what Yakusan Zenji stated as “Not even 1,000 sages know it.”) Nevertheless, if we simply sit correctly in zazen, the whole infinite body that transcends perception will appear with nothing held back. “When even for a short period of time you sit properly in samadhi, imprinting the Buddha-seal in your three activities of deed, word, and thought, then each and every thing throughout the dharma world is the Buddha-seal, and all space without exception is enlightenment.” (*Bendowa*) As long as we are making effort to sit in zazen, it will not be possible to see outside the whole and so it is not possible to see the whole of zazen while sitting zazen. So, without trying to do what is not possible and entrusting everything with peace of mind to zazen and soaking in that wholeness, it would be enough to simply continue with the practice of letting zazen become zazen. That is why it is called “shikantaza.”

Let me add one other thing, isn't it possible to understand “casting off body and mind” and “body and mind cast off” in this context, expressions often used in connection with zazen? In other words, “casting off body and mind” is a depiction of being freed by means of zazen from the individual, private, limited body-mind that each person holds onto and becoming the universal, public, infinite reality. These are also words that express the realization of that. To speak of this experientially, this is to cast off the dualistic viewpoint of my body-mind (the central image) and the entire surrounding world (the background) and to realize the vastness of the oneness of body-mind with the rest of the world. (Of course, this is not a result that we can see with our own eyes). “Cast off body and mind” is a depiction from another viewpoint of this same reality where the cast off body-mind is “this” (in Zen parlance “suchness”) that is functioning so vividly as the body-mind, as well as an expression of that realization. Speaking of this experientially, it is to realize with body-

mind that the infinite whole is concretely unfolding in the body-mind. In both cases, they are simultaneously descriptions of an unperceivable condition that is manifested in zazen as well as a description in words of an experience of perception opening to that. In either case, “casting off body and mind” and “body and mind cast off” are welcome words that directly capture the body-mind absorbed in the infinite whole and the way in which zazen functions within such body-mind.



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

### Lecture (6)

Rev. Shohaku Okumura

Director, Soto Zen Buddhism International Center  
(edited by Rev. Shoryu Bradley)

#### [Loving Speech]

*Loving speech means, first of all, to arouse a compassionate mind when meeting beings, and to offer loving, caring words. In general, we should not use any violent or harmful words when we speak.*

*Sango*, which means “the three actions” or “the source of karma”, refers to body, speech and thought (or mind). Depending upon how we use the body, speech and thought, we can create healthy and happy relationships or we can generate pain in our dealings with others. Since early in the history of Buddhism, it has been considered very important to carry out wholesome activities using these three aspects of human life. For example, in the *Mahavacchagotta Sutta* (The Great Discourse to Vacchagotta) found in *Majjhima Nikaya*, Shakyamuni Buddha **presents the Ten Unwholesome Actions when he teaches about the Path of the Ten Wholesome Actions** carried out through body, speech and thought. The followings are unwholesome actions:

- (1) killing living beings
- (2) taking what is not given (stealing)
- (3) misconduct in sensual pleasures
- (4) false speech
- (5) malicious speech (speaking words which cause enmity between two or more persons, or speaking with a “double tongue”)
- (6) harsh speech
- (7) gossip (idle talk, flowery language, or speaking defiled words)
- (8) covetousness
- (9) ill will
- (10) wrong view

Abstaining from these ten unwholesome actions is wholesome. The first three are actions of the body, the next four are actions of speech, and the final three items describe karmic results produced from thought or mind. The Buddha taught that these ten unwholesome actions arise from the three poisonous minds of greed, anger/hatred, and ignorance. The final three items of the list are thoughts that arise as direct expressions of the three poisonous minds; greed gives rise to covetousness, anger/hatred gives rise to ill will, and ignorance gives rise to wrong views. When we engage in any of the ten unwholesome actions, we create suffering within the cycle of *samsara* for ourselves and for others. Avoiding these actions is the path that leads to the cessation of suffering.

Within the ten major precepts we receive in the Soto Zen tradition, there are three precepts regarding speech:

- (4th) not speaking falsehood
- (6th) not speaking of faults of others
- (7th) not praising oneself and not slandering others

From these examples we can see that right speech, one of the items of the Noble Eightfold Path, is a very important part of Buddhist practice.

In *Shobogenzo Zuimonki* Dogen Zenji repeatedly admonished his assembly regarding speech. Here are some examples:

- [1-7] harsh words(p.35);
- [1-10] arguments (p.40);
- [1-17] defiled words (p.56);
- [4-10] avoiding careless speech (p.149),
- [4-13] speaking words which cause enmity between two or more persons (p.156);
- [5-4] straightforward speech (p.168);
- [5-7] meaningless arguments (p.171);
- [5-17] not speaking of the faults of others (p.188);
- [6-12] listening carefully to others (p.218);
- [6-17] listening to one's teacher without holding on to one's own views (p.222). (Section numbers and page numbers are from *Shobogenzo Zuimonki*, Sotoshu Shumuchō; translated by Shohaku Okumura)

In *Shishobo* (Four Embracing Actions), loving speech is the second of the four embracing actions. Here Dogen Zenji says that loving speech arises from the compassionate mind. Compassion, along with wisdom, is one of the aspects of Buddha mind. Wisdom shows us that we are living together with all other beings within the network of interdependent origination, and we see that we can exist only through the support of relationships with others. Without many different kinds of support from other beings, we could not live even for a moment. We need air to breathe, water to drink, food to eat, etc. in order to maintain our physical lives. Since human beings are born helpless, they cannot survive without being taken care of for many years until they mature. Children must receive food, shelter, and education from their parents and society, and it takes almost 20 years for them to become a mature, fully independent person. To become an independent member of society, we need much support from others.

Connections with others are not the only important relationships in our lives. On a deeper level, each individual is simply a collection of relationships. We are like a bubble. A bubble is simply a pocket of air inside some water; it is simply a relationship between some water and some air. Similarly, clouds are simply water floating in air. In reality there are no such things as bubbles and clouds that are independent and substantial entities; they are just names for certain relationships between water and air. We human beings are the same. There is no fixed independent entity named Shohaku Okumura; Shohaku is simply a collection of the five aggregates. Shohaku is a bit more complicated than a bubble or a cloud, but not at all essentially different from them. Awakening to the reality that every being is empty and totally interconnected is the source of compassion.

These relationships within and between beings are also always changing. Things are therefore always moving, arising and perishing; living beings are continually being born, growing, aging and dying. There is nothing we can hold on to. When we awaken to these realities of life, we find sympathy and compassion for others. This happens because we realize that for a time we share the same time, space, and essential life conditions with every other living being. I think awakening to this reality of life allows wisdom to guide our lives. Wisdom is the source of the

compassionate heart, and this compassionate heart is in turn the source of loving speech. So awakening to the realities of impermanence and egolessness allows us to meet both living and non-living beings with a compassionate heart and loving speech.

Ryokan (1758-1831), a Japanese Soto Zen monk famous for his poetry and calligraphy, wrote several poems about a pine tree he saw each time he practiced takuhatsu (traditional begging performed by Buddhist monks). Actually, these are not poems written *about* the pine tree; they were written *for* and dedicated *to* the pine tree. One of them is as follows:

A lone pine stands  
In the fields of Iwamuro  
And how miserably soaked  
It was in the rain  
When I looked at it today.  
Oh, Solitary Pine,  
How gladly would I have  
Protected you with my paper-umbrella  
Or with my straw-coat  
Were you only flesh and blood.  
What a pity – to see you drenched so!

(*The Zen Fool Ryokan*, translation by Misao Kodama & Hikosaku Yanagishima, Tuttle, 1999)

In this poem Ryokan reveals his compassionate heart for the pine tree with loving speech.

Ryokan was very sensitive in his manner of speech. He wrote lists of admonitions to himself and to others regarding correct speech. Eighteen of these lists remain and are included in his collected writings. Some translations of these admonitions appear in *Great Fool: Zen Master Ryokan* (translation by Ryuichi Abe and Peter Haskell, University of Hawaii Press, 1996). The following list of admonitions is from *Ryokan: Zen Monk-poet of Japan* (translated by Burton Watson. Columbia University Press, 1977, p.115):

Beware of:  
talking a great deal  
talking too fast  
volunteering information when not asked

giving gratuitous advice  
talking up your own accomplishments  
breaking in before others have finished speaking  
trying to explain to others something you don't understand yourself  
starting on a new subject before you've finished with the last one  
insisting on getting in the last word  
making glib promises  
repeating yourself, as old people will do  
talking with your hands  
speaking in an affectedly offhand manner  
reporting in detail on affairs that have nothing to do with anything  
reporting on every single thing you see or hear  
making a point of using Chinese words and expressions  
learning Kyoto speech and using it as though you'd known it all your life  
speaking Edo dialect like a country hick  
talk that smacks of the pedant  
talk that smacks of the aesthete  
talk that smacks of satori  
talk that smacks of the tea master

When we reflect our manners of speaking, we may find that we often unknowingly break the bodhisattva precepts; it is really difficult to practice loving speech. Language is a way to create connections between people through communication, but it can become a means to sever connections if used unskillfully or maliciously. Although the ability to use language makes us human beings and enabled us to develop our civilization, we have the ability to speak words that are contrary to reality. Language can be used as a sword to take life, create enmity, and cut off the sense of connection between people.

*In society, there is the courtesy of asking others if they are well. Within the Buddha-way we have the practice of speaking the words "Please treasure yourself!" There is also a disciple's filial duty to ask her teacher "How are you?" To speak with a mind that "compassionately cares for living beings as if they were our own babies" is loving-speech.*

When we speak with a kind and compassionate heart, even a daily greeting becomes loving speech. We say

"Good morning!" "How are you today?" "Are you OK?" This kind of greeting is often spoken insincerely, without an actual compassionate heart. But even so, it is better to respond to people when they greet us rather than to just stay silent. Even when we feel we cannot help someone, just asking how they are can be a support to them if we do so with deep sincerity; in this way we can help them feel they are supported as a part of the network of interdependent origination.

In Zen monasteries, on certain occasions such as New Year's Day, the beginning of the practice period, and the end of practice period, monks exchange formal greetings with their teachers, seniors and fellow monks. Dogen refers to these traditions as examples of loving speech.

"Compassionately cares for living beings as if they were our own babies" (慈念衆生、猶如赤子) is an expression from *Devatatta*, the 12th chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*. This is from the famous story of the eight-year-old dragon daughter who attained awakening instantaneously. In a passage describing her virtue we read,

She has unembarrassed powers of argument and *a compassionate mind for all the living as if they were [her] children*; her merits are complete and the thoughts of her mind and explanations of her mouth are both subtle and great. Kind and compassionate, virtuous and modest, gentle, and beautiful in her disposition, she has been able to attain Bodhi (*The Threefold Lotus Sutra*, Weatherhil/Kosei, p.212; italics added)

When I go back to Japan with my children, we sometimes visit a fast food restaurant or a family restaurant. The training for employees in the service industry in Japan is very strict and very well done. Even young people of both genders who look twenty-years-old or younger speak very politely and courteously to every customer. But often their speech is not natural; they speak like a tape-recorder. They just insincerely repeat the words that they were taught in their training. Sometimes I see their lines posted on the cash register they are using. Their speech is polite but it is obvious that their words are not spoken from the heart. Such polite language is artificial; it is not loving speech.



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*We should praise those with virtue and we should pity those without virtue. From the time we begin to delight in loving speech, loving speech is nurtured little by little. When we practice like this, loving speech, which is usually not known or seen, will manifest itself. In our present life we should practice loving speech without fail and we should continue this practice throughout many future lives.*

As Buddhist practitioners we should develop our ability to use language in a way that is encouraging to others, promoting peace and harmony and maturation in the bodhisattva way. To do this we can praise the virtuous traits we see in others and we can have compassion for them when we see their weaknesses and mistakes. This can help others to improve and nurture their virtue

I have been a very shy person since my childhood. I learned to use language primarily by reading books rather than by talking with others. When I was a boy I was frightened to speak in front of other people, but I have been making an effort to talk with others since I was a teenager. But even now, unless it is really necessary for me to speak, is easier for me to be silent. Consequently it is almost unbelievable to me that I now give lectures in English. Before a lecture I feel terribly uneasy and upset. My heart beats quickly and I want to escape, until I actually start to talk. So this kind of practice is very difficult for me; to me, to communicate using language seems almost like magic.

When we intentionally look for virtuous and praiseworthy traits in others, little by little we will find these traits and our ability to appreciate people's actions will grow. On the other hand, if we try to find fault in others, we can find many things to criticize in any person. To practice loving speech we need find a way to recognize the good points of others. Depending upon whether we try to see the virtues of others or the shortcomings of others, our way of speech and even our entire personalities can become either supportive or non-supportive to others.

*Whether subduing a deadly enemy or making peace, loving speech is fundamental. When a person hears loving speech directly, that person's face brightens and his mind becomes joyful. When a person hears of someone else's loving speech,*

*that person inscribes it in his heart and soul.*

In *Shobogenzo Zuimonki*, Dogen Zenji relates the story of a Chinese minister named Lin Xiangru (Jap., Rin Shojo) who lived in the country of Zhao. Although Xiangru was of humble birth, he was very wise and the king of Zhao therefore took him into service as an administrator of the country's affairs.

Dogen Zenji tells the story of Xiangru being sent as an envoy to the king of Qin in order to exchange a very precious piece of jade for 15 cities. When the king of Qin did not honor his part of the exchange, Xiangru took the jade and sent it back to his own country. This action made Xiangru famous, and he later became the prime minister. Since Xiangru had never fought in battle, another minister in Zhao who was a military general became envious of Xiangru's higher political position. The general tried to kill Xiangru, but Xiangru fled to various places in avoidance of the general. Since Xiangru purposely avoided any encounter with the general, even at the imperial court, it appeared that he was afraid of the general.

One of Xiangru's retainers asked, "It would be easy to kill that general. Why do you hide from him in fear?"

Xiangru said, "I am not afraid of him. With my eyes I have defeated the general of Qin, and I took back the jade from the king himself. Of course I can kill the general, but gathering troops to raise an army should be reserved for defending our country against our enemies. As ministers we are in charge of protecting the country. If the two of us quarrel and fight with each other, one of us will die and half of the country's strength will be lost. If this happens, neighboring countries will take heart and surely attack us. I therefore wish for the two of us to remain unharmed so that we may protect our country together. For this reason I will not fight him."

Upon hearing this, the general was ashamed that he had tried to kill Xiangru and called upon the prime minister in order to express his regret. The two of them then cooperated in the task of governing the country.

After relating this story, Dogen Zenji said, "Xiangru

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forgot himself and carried out the Way. Now, in maintaining the Buddha-way, we should have the same attitude. It is better to die for the Way than to live without it.”

It seems Dogen Zenji studied many stories such as this one in the Chinese classics before he became a monk at the age thirteen. In *Shobogenzo Zuimonki* he often used this kind of story from ancient China to illustrate a point from the Dharma. In this story, Dogen showed how Xiangru’s thoughtful words spoken to his retainers changed the general’s heart and fostered peace in the country.

*We should know that loving speech arises from a loving mind, and that the seed of a loving mind is a compassionate heart. We should study how loving speech has the power to transform the world. It is not merely praising someone’s ability.*

In *Gakudo-Yojinshu* (*Points to watch in Practicing the Way*), Dogen Zenji admonishes us to practice the way when truth comes to us in the form of words:

Honest advice given by a loyal minister often has the power to change the emperor’s will. There are none who fail to change their minds when the Buddhas and ancestors offer a single word.

The phrase translated as “power to change the emperor’s will” and “power to transform the world” is the same Chinese expression, *kaiten-no-chikara* (回天の力). The literal translation of this expression is “power to turn over heaven.” The word “ten (heaven)” can mean “the world under heaven” and it can refer to the Chinese emperor, who was called the “son of the heaven”. In ancient China, a change in the emperor’s will could change the entire world since the emperor had absolute power.

This expression, “power to change the emperor’s will”, came from another Chinese story. During the reign of Taizong in the Tang dynasty, the emperor wanted to have the palace repaired. Zhang Xuansu advised him not to do so, and the emperor accepted his advice. Wei Zheng, another minister, admired Xuansu and said, “When Mr. Zhang discusses matters of state, his words have the power to change the emperor’s will.”

Our minds are like the emperor’s will. We think we have absolute power to make decisions, at least in those decisions that regard our own lives. But in reality we cling to our own opinions and judgments. However, if we listen to the words of the Dharma with an open mind, our minds become changed and therefore our world becomes changed. Although it can be difficult, it is part of our bodhisattva work to try to offer kind words as Dharma, words that can have the power to transform people’s lives.

## Treasury of the Eye of the True Dharma

### Book 38

### Twining Vines

### *Shobogenzo katto*

Translated by Carl Bielefeldt

#### *Introduction*

According to its colophon, this chapter of the *Shobogenzo* was composed in the seventh month of 1243, at Koshoji, Dogen’s monastery just south of the capital (present-day Kyoto). Since during this month Dogen is thought to have left Koshoji for his new residence in Echizen (present-day Fukui), *Katto* may be the last work of the *Shobogenzo* he composed in the capital area.

The title of the chapter, translated loosely here as “twining vines,” is made up of two terms denoting climbing plants — the former, sometimes translated “arrowroot,” is regularly used for the kudzu vine; the latter is most often taken as wisteria. Together, the term *katto* has the colloquial sense, often encountered in Zen texts, of an “entanglement,” a “complexity,” “complication,” or “difficulty.” Zen texts typically treat the term as referring to (especially intellectual and linguistic) obstacles to be cut through, but Dogen prefers to see it here as the “entanglement,” or “intertwining,” of master and disciple.

Thus, while seemingly inspired by a saying about vines by Dogen’s master, Tiantong Rujing, the bulk of this short text is taken up with the question of transmission of the dharma from master to disciple—especially the famous

account of the First Zen Patriarch Bodhidharma's transmission to his disciple Huike. Here, Dogen cites the story of Bodhidharma's four disciples, from which derives the Zen expression "skin, flesh, bones, and marrow," and argues against the common notion that these four terms signify a hierarchy of understanding.

Finally, Dogen closes with a note dismissing the legend that, after transmitting the dharma to Huike, Bodhidharma returned to India.

This translation is based on the text edited by Kawamura Kodo, in *Dogen zenji zenshu* (1991), pp. 416-422. In keeping with the format of this publication, I have reduced the annotation to a minimum; additional notes will be made available on the SZTP website. For examples of other English versions of this chapter, see Nishiyama and Stevens, *Shobogenzo*, volume 2 (1977); Tanahashi, *Moon in a Dewdrop* (1985); Yokoi, *The Shobogenzo* (1986); and Nishijima and Cross, *Master Dogen's Shobogenzo*, book 3 (1997).

## Treasury of the Eye of the True Dharma

### Book 38

### Twining Vines

### *Shobogenzo katto*

#### Translation

In the congregation on Vulture Peak, only Kashapa the Great One verified and transmitted the unsurpassed bodhi of the treasury of the eye of the true dharma of the Buddha Shakyamuni. In successor after successor through twenty-eight generations of correct verification, it reached the Venerable Bodhidharma. The Venerable, conducting the ancestral rites in the land of Chinasthana [i.e., China], bequeathed the unsurpassed bodhi of the treasury of the eye of the true dharma to the Great Ancestor, the Great Master Zhengzong Pujue [i.e., Huike] and made him the Second Ancestor.

The Twenty-eighth ancestor, being the first to conduct the ancestral rites in the land of Chinasthana, is called the

First Ancestor; the Twenty-ninth Ancestor is called the Second Ancestor. This is the custom in eastern lands. The First Ancestor, under [his master,] the Venerable Prajnatarā, directly verified and transmitted the instructions of the buddha and the bones of the way; he verified the root source with the root source; he made it the root for the branches and leaves.<1>

Although the sages all devise study that severs the root source of twining vines, they do not study that "severing" means to cut the twining vines with the twining vines; they do not know that twining vines are entwined by twining vines. How much less, then, could they know that twining vines are succeeded by twining vines. Few understand that succession to the dharma is twining vines. No one has heard this. No one has ever uttered it. How could there be many who have verified it?

My former master, the Old Buddha, said, "The bottle gourd vine entwines the bottle gourd."<2>

This presentation to the assembly is something never seen or heard in any quarter past or present. My former master alone first expressed it. The bottle gourd vine entwining the bottle gourd vine is the buddhas and ancestors investigating the buddhas and ancestors, the buddhas and ancestors verifying and according with the buddhas and ancestors. It is, for example, "to transmit the mind by the mind."

The Twenty-eighth Ancestor addressed his followers, saying, "The time is coming. Why don't you say what you've attained?"

At that time, the follower Daofu said, "My present view is, without being attached to the written word or being detached from the written word, one still engages in the function of the way."

The Ancestor said, "You've got my skin."

The nun Zongchi said, "My present understanding is, it's like Ananda seeing the land of the Buddha Aksobhya: seen once, it isn't seen again."

The Ancestor said, "You've got my flesh."

Daoyu said, "The four great [elements] are originally empty; the five aggregates are nonexistent. My view is that there's not a single dharma to attain."

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The Ancestor said, "You've got my bones."

Finally, Huike, after making three bows, stood in his place.

The Ancestor said, "You've got my marrow."

Consequently, [Bodhidharma] made him the Second Ancestor, transmitting the dharma and transmitting the robe.<3>

We should study this. The saying of the First Ancestor, "You've got my skin, flesh, bones, and marrow," is the saying of an ancestor. His four followers have all got it, have all heard it. Both what they have heard and what they have got is the "skin, flesh, bones, and marrow" that springs forth from body and mind, the "skin, flesh, bones, and marrow" that sloughs off body and mind. The Ancestral Master is not to be perceived by "one move" of our opinions and understandings; he is not "ten appearances" of subject and object or this and that. Still, those without the correct transmission think that, since the understandings of the four disciples are familiar and remote, so the "skin, flesh, bones, and marrow" spoken of by the Ancestor differ from shallow to deep. They think "skin and flesh" are more remote than "bones and marrow" and say that the Second Ancestor received the seal, "you've got my marrow," because his understanding was superior. Those who talk like this have never studied the buddhas and ancestors, and lack the correct transmission of the words of the Ancestor.

We should understand that, in the words of the Ancestor, "skin, flesh, bones, and marrow," there is no shallow or deep. Even if there are superior and inferior in the understandings, the words of the Ancestor are just "got my." The point is that both the indication "got my marrow" and the indication "got my bones" have no adequacy and inadequacy in "for the person, engaging the person," "picking up grass, falling into grass." They are, for example, like "holding up a flower"; they are like "transmitting the robe."<4> What is said to the four is equal from the beginning. While the words of the Ancestor are equal, the four understandings are not necessarily equal. While the four understandings may be "in pieces," the words of the Ancestor are just the words of the Ancestor.

Utterances and understandings do not necessarily mandate each other. For example, in the Ancestral Master's instruction to his four followers, he says, "you've got my 'skin me.'"<5> If there were a hundred thousand followers after the Second Ancestor, there should be a hundred thousand explanations; they would be inexhaustable. Since there are only four followers, we have just the four sayings, "skin, flesh, bones, and marrow"; but many sayings remain that were not said and could be said.

We should realize that, even in speaking to the Second Ancestor, he could say, "you've got my skin." Even though [he were to say], "you've got my skin," he would have transmitted the treasury of the eye of the true dharma [to Huike] as the second ancestor. "Got my skin" and "got my marrow" do not depend on superiority or inferiority.

Again, in speaking to Daofu, Daoyu and Zongchi, he could have said, "You've got my marrow." Although [he said,] "my skin," he could transmit the dharma [to them]. For the body and mind of the Ancestral Master, skin, flesh, bones, and marrow are all the Ancestral Master. It is not that the marrow is intimate and the skin is remote.

Now, for one who would be equipped with the eye of study, getting the seal, "you've got my skin," is the investigation of getting the Ancestral Master. There is an Ancestral Master whose entire body is skin; there is an Ancestral Master whose entire body is flesh; there is an Ancestral Master whose entire body is bones; there is an Ancestral Master whose entire body is marrow. There is an Ancestral Master whose entire body is mind; there is an Ancestral Master whose entire body is body; there is an Ancestral Master whose entire mind is mind. There is an Ancestral Master who is the entire Ancestral Master; there is an Ancestral Master whose entire body is "got my you."<6> When these Ancestral Masters appear together and speak to their hundred thousand followers, they explain, as here, "you've got my skin." While their explanations are of "skin, flesh, bones, and marrow," onlookers will vainly make their living on explanations of "skin, flesh, bones, and marrow." If there had been six or seven followers in the Ancestral Master's community, he could have uttered, "You've got my mind"; he could have uttered, "You've got my body." He could have uttered,



"You've got my buddha"; he could have uttered, "You've got my eyes"; he could have uttered, "You've got my verification." There are occasions when the "you" here is the Ancestor and occasions when it is Huike. We should investigate in detail the principle of "got."

We should realize that there is, "you've got me"; there is, "I've got you"; there is, "got my you"; there is, "got your me." In our examination of the body and mind of the Ancestral Master, if we say that inner and outer are not one, or that the whole body is not his entire body, then we are not in the land where the buddhas and ancestors appear. To have got the "skin" is to have got the "bones, flesh, and marrow"; to have got the "bones, flesh, and marrow" is to have got the skin, flesh, and face. How could these be clearly comprehended only as the real body of all worlds in the ten directions? They are in addition the "skin, flesh, bones, and marrow." Therefore, they are "got my robe"; they are "you've got the dharma." Hence, the utterances are instances of "springing forth"; master and disciple investigate together. The hearings are instances of "springing forth"; master and disciple investigate together. Master and disciple investigating together is the "twining vines" of the buddhas and ancestors. The "twining vines" of the buddhas and ancestors are the vital artery of "skin, flesh, bones, and marrow." "Holding up a flower and blinking" is "twining vines"; "breaking into a smile" is "skin, flesh, bones, and marrow."

We should investigate further. Since the seeds of twining vines have the power to "escape the body," there are branches, leaves, flowers, and fruit that entwine twining vines; and, because they are "interacting and not entering," the buddhas and ancestors are realized, the koan is realized.<7>

The Great Master Zhenji of Zhaozhou addressed the assembly, saying, "Kashapa transmitted to Ananda. So tell me, to whom did Dharma transmit?" Thereupon, a monk asked, "Well, what about the Second Ancestor getting the marrow?" The master said, "Don't slander the Second Ancestor." The master again said, "Dharma had a saying that those on the outside get his skin, those on the inside get his

bones. So tell me, what do those still further inside get?" A monk asked, "What's the meaning of "getting the marrow?" The master said, "Just recognize the skin. This old monk is right here and doesn't set up even the marrow." The monk asked, "What's the marrow?" The master said, "If you're like this, you don't get even the skin."<8>

Given this, we should realize that, when we "don't get even the skin," we don't get even the marrow. To be able to "feel for the skin" is to get the marrow. We should work away at the meaning of "if you're like this, you don't get even the skin." When asked, "What is the meaning of getting the marrow?" [Zhaozhou] expressed the words, "Just recognize the skin. This old monk is right here and doesn't set up even the marrow." In [saying] "recognize the skin," [he] makes "doesn't set up even the marrow" the true meaning of getting the marrow. Therefore, [the monk] expresses the question, "what about the Second Ancestor getting the marrow?" In looking at the occasion when "Kashapa transmitted to Ananda," Ananda hides his body in Kashapa, Kashapa hides his body in Ananda. Nevertheless, on the occasion when they encounter each other within the transmission, they do not escape the observances of skin, flesh, bones, and marrow that "change the face."<9> Hence, [Zhaozhou] indicates, "So tell me, to whom did Dharma transmit?" Dharma was already Dharma when he "transmitted to"; the Second Ancestor was already Dharma when he "got the marrow." Because of the investigation of this principle, the buddha dharma remains the buddha dharma down to today. If it were not like this, the buddha dharma would not have reached us today. Quietly working on and investigating the meaning of this, we should express it ourselves; we should get others to express it. "Those on the outside get his skin, those on the inside get his bones. So tell me, what do those still further inside get?" The implication of this "outside" and "inside" should be straightforward. When we discuss "outside," "skin, flesh, bones, and marrow" are all "outside"; when we discuss "inside," "skin, flesh, bones, and marrow" are all "inside."

This being the case, the four Dharmas have all investigated what is beyond "skin, flesh, bones, and marrow," in each of a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand

instances. Do not think that there must be nothing beyond the “marrow”; there are three or five beyond it. <10>

This address to the assembly by the Old Buddha Zhaozhou is the saying of a buddha. It is something not reached by others like [the Zen masters] Linji, Deshan, Dagui or Yunmen, something they have never dreamt of, much less spoken about. It is something the recent illiterate elders do not even know exists, and they would be startled if we told them.

The Zen Master Xuedou Ming said, “The two Zhou, Zhao and Mu, are old buddhas.” <11>

Therefore, the saying of an old buddha [like Zhaozhou] is evidence of the buddha dharma, what one has already said. <12>

The Great Master Xuefeng Zhenjue said, “The old buddha Zhaozhou.” <13>

The prior buddha and ancestor [Xuedou] praises him with the praise, “old buddha”; the latter buddha and ancestor [Xuefeng] praises him with the praise, “old buddha.” We know that [Zhaozhou] is an old buddha transcending [those of] past or present.

Therefore, the principle that “skin, flesh, bones, and marrow” are the “twining vines” is the standard, “you’ve got me,” presented to the assembly by the old buddha. We should work at and investigate this norm.

Furthermore, [we should] learn that saying the First Ancestor returned to the west is wrong. What Song Yun saw is not necessarily the case. How could Song Yun see the departure and arrival of the Ancestral Master? To know that, after the Ancestral Master returned to tranquility, he was interred at Mt. Xiong’er is orthodox learning. <14>

Treasury of the Eye of the True Dharma  
Twining Vines, Number 38

Presented to the assembly on the seventh day of the seventh month of the first year of Kangen, mizunoto-u (1243)  
at Kannon Dori Kosho Horinji, district of Uji, Yoshu

## Notes

1. These first two paragraphs recount the legend of the transmission of Zen from the Buddha Shakyamuni and his disciple Mahakashapa, down to Bodhidharma and his disciple Huike.

2. A saying found in the recorded teachings of Dogen’s master, Tiantong Ruji (1163-1228).

3. The famous account of the occasion on which Bodhidharma is supposed to have designated the monk Huike as his successor.

4. “For the person, engaging the person, picking up grass, falling into grass”: Two common Zen expressions for the teaching techniques of the masters. “Holding up a flower” refers to the legend of the transmission from Shakyamuni to Mahakashapa, in which the Buddha held up a flower, and Mahakashapa smiled; “transmitting the robe” likely refers to accounts of the handing down of the robe of Bodhidharma through the generations to the Sixth Ancestor, Huineng.

5. A tentative rendering of a highly odd locution; generally interpreted to mean something like, “you’ve got me as I am in my skin” or “you’ve got the skin that is me.”

6. A tentative translation of another odd phrase, which might also be rendered, “got me and you”; similarly, in the next paragraph.

7. “Escape the body: A tentative translation for a term that can also mean “to extract the essence”; here, generally taken to mean that the master-disciple relationship frees the disciple to intertwine with the master. “Interacting and not interacting” (or “not interacting while interacting”) is a common Zen expression for the interdependence and independence of things.

8. From the recorded sayings of the famous Tang-dynasty monk Zhaozhou Congshen (778-897). “Kashapa transmitted to Ananda” is a reference to the tradition that Mahakashapa transmitted the dharma he had received from the Buddha to his disciple Ananda. “You don’t get even

the skin”: Literally, “you feel for but don’t touch even the skin” (a sense Dogen will play on below). The Chinese expression, “to feel (or grope) without touching,” has the idiomatic sense “can’t understand,” or, as we might say, “doesn’t get it.”

9. “They do not escape the observances of skin, flesh, bones, and marrow that change the face”: This rather obscure passage might be paraphrased somewhat as follows: although in one sense, at the moment of dharma transmission, Kashapa and Ananda are identified (“hide their bodies” in each other), their individual awakening (“change of face”) must still be expressed in the actual give and take of the transmission (exemplified by the “skin, flesh, bones, and marrow” of the Bodhidharma story).

10. “The four Dharmas”: Dogen seems here to be treating Bodhidharma’s four followers as four versions of Bodhidharma.

11. After a reference to Zhaozhou Congshen and Muzhou Daozong (Chen Zunsu, 780-877), by Xuedou Zhongtuo (980-1052).

12. “What one has already said”: A tentative translation for an ambiguous clause. It can be interpreted to mean, “what the self has already said,” or “[Zhaozhou] himself has already said,” or perhaps “[the buddha dharma] itself has already said.”

13. A saying by Xuefeng Yicun (822-908).

14. At issue here is the famous legend that, after Bodhidharma’s death, the Chinese emissary Song Yun encountered an Indian monk in the Pamirs with one sandal. Subsequent investigation of Bodhidharma’s grave revealed an empty tomb and one sandal. Mt. Xiong’er, the traditional location given for Bodhidharma’s grave, is in Shanzhou (present-day Henan).



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

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# NEWS

## **Oct. 10-Nov. 8, 2005**

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

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## **International Events**

### **European Soto Zen Conference**

Place: *La Gendronniere, Blois, France*

Date: *January 21 and 22*

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

Place: *Zenshuji, Los Angeles, California*

Date: *March 11 and 12*

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