



SOTO ZEN JOURNAL

DHARMA EYE

News of Soto Zen Buddhism: Teachings and Practice

110th Anniversary of Soto Zen Teaching Activities
in South America p1
Dosho Saikawa

Soto Zen Buddhism 2022: Aspiration,
Opportunities, and Challenges (2) p3
Duncan Ryuken Williams

Zen in Haiti p6
Jisho Siebert

Lecture on the Chapter of Shobogenzo Zenki (5) p9
Shohaku Okumura

Great Awakening (Daigo) p16
Carl Bielefeldt

My Footnotes on Zazen (5) p22
Issho Fujita

法
眼

Number

32

August 2013



110th Anniversary of Soto Zen Teaching Activities in South America

Rev. Dosho Saikawa

Director of the Soto Zen Buddhism
South America Office

Soto Zen teaching activities in South America began in 1903 when Rev. Taian Ueno was appointed by the Head Priest of Sotoshu to come to Peru. Immigration to Peru started in 1899. A Sotoshu priest with a passion to spread the teaching crossed the ocean together with immigrants of the early date.

In South America among the countries which has accepted the immigrants from Japan, except Peru, Brazil is the biggest. It has the greatest number of Japanese immigrants but immigration from Japan to Brazil started in 1908, a little bit later than Peru. Our dissemination activity in Brazil officially started about 60 years ago, due to its national policy on religion. Like in Hawaii and North America, dissemination started following after the immigration from Japan. The difficulties of living and hardship of dissemination was no easy matter at all for *Kaikyoshi* (now called *Kokusaifukyoshi*) of early days. The early stage of immigration was for agricultural immigrants. Their lives were extremely difficult. It is said that several dozens of early immigrants starved to death every year because they went the given land only to find out the desert. The word “abandoned people” was made because they were “abandoned” by the Japanese government. All the people had to struggle so hard to survive. That was why it was a long way to go

for priests to do dissemination activities. But in the midst of those difficulties, Rev. Taian Ueno founded Jionji. In addition to performing funerals and memorial services, he had sermons and zazen-kai, and taught at an elementary school. There were priests of other Buddhist schools who went to Peru with Rev. Ueno by the same ship. Their dissemination activities were not so successful. Among them Rev. Ueno could accomplish building a temple. It must be due to his amazing strength, his attractive personality and his exceedingly deep faith. He was active in dissemination for 14 years in Peru before he found his successor and returned Japan. After he left Peru, new *Kokusaifukyoshi* came to Peru but died of disease. And for some reasons of the state of affairs in the country, the resident priest of Jionji became absent. When 100th anniversary of Soto Zen teaching activities in South America was held, there was no Soto Zen resident priest in Peru. After I was assigned to be the Director of Soto Zen Buddhism South America Office, Rev. Jisen Oshiro who is a Japanese-Argentine priest came to Peru as *Kokusaifukyoshi*. Now there is a resident priest at Jionji.



Jionji, Republic of Peru

In South America, of course there are Sotoshu followers in each country. But there are official Sotoshu priests only in Brazil, Peru, Argentine, Chili, Colombia, and Paraguay. I am hoping that other South American countries such as Uruguay will have officially registered Sotoshu priests and some of them will become *Kokusai-fukyoshi*. Our teachings of “Shakyamuni Buddha and Two Founders” are now spreading all over the world beyond national boundaries. It is beyond our ability to grasp the number of the priests who are active in the name of Sotoshu without registration. It is very hard for even registered priests in South America to go to Japan to practice at the training monastery. Especially these days, like in other regions, we are facing the situation in which not only the descendants of Japanese immigrants but also the local people are interested in Buddhism, specially Zen, and join zazen-kai. Among them the number of the people who want to be ordained is increasing. It is now impossible to get a teacher qualification without staying at a training monastery in Japan. I really want it to be changed. It costs more than double to go to Japan from South America, by comparison with other regions. So I hope they can get some financial support for transportation or we establish a training monastery in South America. Otherwise we will have more and more priests who are active in the name of Sotoshu without registration.

To commemorate 110th anniversary on August in Peru, I asked you for donations to give “Bell in Honor of Japan-Peru Friendship” to “Peruvian Japanese Association” in the name of Sotoshu. As its result, so many people in Japan

sent us warm support. I really appreciate it.

Every year we invite *Tokuha-fukyoshi* (Sotoshu Specially Dispatched Teacher) and *Baika Tokuhashihan* (Sotoshu Specially Dispatched Baika Teacher) to South America in order to promote dissemination activities. As a result, it is decided to build a new temple in Paraguay. As one of Sotoshu priests who engages in teaching activities outside Japan, I wish that the true teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha and Two Founders will deeply spread further into many countries.





Soto Zen Buddhism 2022: Aspiration, Opportunities, and Challenges

Prof. Duncan Ryuken Williams

Director of the University of Southern California
Center for Japanese Religious and Culture

This article is the record of the keynote speech in the 90th Anniversary of Soto Zen Teaching Activities in North America and the Founding of Zenshuji Soto Mission, held on September 8, 2012.

(Continued from No. 31)

The second key challenge in considering how to bring together multiple perspectives and multiple ways of thinking has to do with nation, race and ethnicity. This is a taboo subject that we're not supposed to talk about, but I feel we have to address it head on. We know that the Zen tradition is from Japan, but we also know that in that long history of Buddhism when a tradition moves from one cultural context to another it takes root and acculturates. Things change. They become dynamic and relevant to the new context. Especially given that we are about a hundred years out from the founding, it's very important to think about the relationship of a temple like Zenshuji to Japan and about its relationship to Japanese America, which is not the same as Japan, and its relationship to the wider world, which is multi-ethnic. These are key critical questions. If we can hold those together in a creative way, in a hybrid way, then I think that will be a successful model for the future. If we're unsuccessful in holding that in a balanced way, I can see a lot of different problems for this community in particular. Japan is impor-

tant. It is the spiritual homeland of our masters and we know it is important in this temple. When Bishop Yamashita was a young man in the 1920s he was instrumental in founding a Japanese language school in Riverside. The transmission of language, culture, food, the *Obon* festival - all of these are terribly important. That's also distinct from the Japanese-American experience of this temple, founded by the *issei* pioneers who couldn't become American citizens. That was a time when European immigrants could naturalize and become U.S. citizens, but people from the Asia Pacific side were unable to become citizens. They were unable to own land. The anti-Asian land laws also affected this temple in its early history. Also, World War II saw the incarceration of 120,000 Japanese-Americans. These are really critical things that affect not just this temple, but all the temples here in Little Tokyo. It affects the identity of the temple - some of these things happened to parents and grandparents of temple members. This is something we need to consider. There has always been a good collaboration between Japan and Japanese America. Someone mentioned Reverend Hosen Isobe, who, like other Japanese migrants, started out in the sugar plantations of Hawaii then came to California, to Los Angeles. This temple began ninety years ago, I think it was June, on the second floor of the home of a layperson. It was a temporary temple and in November, they settled there. A year later, they got the place here on South Hewitt Street. All the history about the people, the immigrants, who struggled and gave a part of their livelihood to create this temple - we can't forget that.

At the same time, even if these temples remain primarily Japanese-American, it's becoming clear that Japanese-Americans and Japanese-Canadians are becoming a smaller and smaller community. Unlike the Chinese, Vietnamese and Koreans there have not been successive waves of migration of Japanese people, so the community of Japanese-Americans is becoming smaller and smaller. But there's another way of thinking about this. Among all Asian-Americans, Japanese-Americans have the highest out-marriage rate. Ninety percent of Japanese-Canadians are of mixed race right now. By 2020, over fifty percent of Japanese-Americans here will be of mixed race. So, if we are welcoming to those families who are racially and ethnically mixed and who are even sometimes religiously mixed – one member may not be Buddhist. Unless we welcome these people to this temple, the Japanese-American part of its identity is at stake. Actually, even if we welcome everyone who is Japanese-Americans we have to become a temple that is welcoming to a multi-ethnic community, because that is precisely what Los Angeles is. Those are my thoughts on the future with respect to connections with Japan, Japanese-Americans, multi-ethnic and multi-racial people. I can't get into these questions deeply, but I want to put them out there for us to think about.

The final thing to think about is how we do our practice. We know that on Saturday we can practice zazen in the zendo. That's a key part of the identity of this temple as well as of many Zen centers and other temples. We know that, through zazen practice, there are different ways

that people have oriented their Buddhist practice to look inward, to understand themselves, to understand and heal different parts of themselves, to develop calm, concentration and compassion and to achieve certain kinds of insights about themselves. We also know that at this temple, though, a lot of folks come as part of a family to honor a family member who has passed. It's the funeral services and memorial services - remembering our grandparents and remembering that we wouldn't exist without them, understanding how our ancestors have made us who we are. We share some of those important values of gratitude and appreciation with our family members here at this temple, to pass on values to the next generation and to engage whatever we learned in our individual practice in the context of those closest to us. And we also know that part of this temple is communal. There is the individual level, the family level and the communal level. It's about the chicken teriyaki and the *Obon* Festival, the bazaar, *taiko* and all the fun communal things we do together to celebrate our community together. This is also really important for the future. Even in the most individualistic practice, we need to have the heart-to-heart connection with others in a sangha. We need to think about the balance between individual, family and communal practice. These are the kinds of things I wanted to put out there.

I think Los Angeles at this moment is at a very interesting time for thinking in very creative ways. I invite you to write your thoughts creatively on the whiteboard outside the hall. It's a moment when I think we are able to think innovatively, creatively in this

in-between space where one kind of American story is being challenged with another. By that I mean there's a kind of story about America where people talk about "back East" and the center of America is the East Coast, where England came to New England and that civilization flowed from Europe to the United States. By "civilization" they mean not just science and the Enlightenment and European traditions, but they mean Christianity. It's a story of America wherein the narrative of Manifest Destiny, civilization, and Americanization began east and flowed west and pioneers and trailblazers moved ever westward. In our Buddhist tradition, we also have the term *bukkyo tozen* – the eastward transmission of Buddha's teachings. In Japan, they generally thought of it as the teachings coming from India, through China and Korea and ending up in Japan. Guess what? Here in Los Angeles it's made that extra hop east. It's here in Los Angeles that these two traditions have been encountering each other for about a hundred years. I think it's here in Los Angeles that something new and interesting will come up. So, I think there's a chance that if Buddhists can set the example of being great conveners of religious pluralism in a city like Los Angeles that will be a good example of the future of Zen. If Buddhists could do something like become a great model for environmental policy, drawing on our traditions and understandings about interdependence and about the Buddha nature of other sentient beings. If I were going to write something on the board I would write something crazy like "Let's make the roof completely solar." and "Let's get ahead of the curve and power this temple completely with the sun."

We are in Los Angeles. Not only that "Let's have electrical charge stations for 2025, when we'll we have more hydrogen electric cars on the road. Let's stay ahead of the curve and contribute something to American society."



Let me conclude by saying that there's a teaching in Dogen's "Tenzo Kyokun" (*Instructions to the Cook*) which some of you here have read. It has many descriptions of how to prepare food properly and so on, but it also talks about the attitude toward preparing food and serving it to the other monks that the Zen cook may want to adopt. One way of reading that text has to do with the actual preparation of food and being aware of things like taking inventory of the monastic kitchen. The message seems to be "don't waste." A lot of the kids in the temple school use the term *mottainai* – "don't waste things." This is that same kind of thought about how you can make a superior meal by taking care with the ingredients on hand. The idea is that a mediocre cook could probably create a wonderful meal with great ingredients, but a truly great cook is one who

might have some inferior ingredients and yet creates something worthwhile for other people. So, I think the message for us here in this room is that we can take inventory of ourselves. The kitchen is our own mind, heart and body and the mirror of our zazen allows us to see who we are and discover that, even with unwholesome ingredients, we can do something, if we cook them and create something not for ourselves but for the service of other people. If we can all do that together, with all of us as ingredients and all of us as cooks, helping each other reflect each other to think through what the future of Zen, of this temple Zenshuji is and write it up on the board there we will have done something worthwhile today. I think that's the invitation from the abbot here.

Let me end with "Happy Birthday!" Congratulations to Zenshuji on its ninetieth anniversary.
Thank you.



Ceremony Commemorating the 90th Anniversary of
Sotoshu Teaching Activities in North America



Zen in Haiti

Rev. Jisho Siebert

Disciple of Rev. Gengo Akiba
Kojin-an Zendo, California, U.S.A.

At the moment of enlightenment, Buddha looked up at the morning star, and said: "I and all beings wake up together."

Whichever faith or logic brings a person to work to alleviate suffering, what more helpful description can there be of the starting point for compassionate action? Our own liberation is inextricable from each other's. As a Zen priest put it once, "I am Haiti. Would I starve my finger? —it doesn't even make sense." From this perspective, compassion looks different, and allows you to leave behind the idea that you are above being helped by the people you are trying to be available to help. The cycle of giver, receiver and gift shows our inextricable interdependency.

Sleeping in a Zen temple a few weeks before coming to live in Haiti in 2010, just after their major earthquake, I had a dream that I was simultaneously walking underneath a white rock mountain that was crumbling, and at the same time I was the mountain. My rock face stretching, stark white eyebrows of dust frowning and squinting, grinding my stone teeth and watching dust fall on the head of the woman walking below, who looked so small and fragile. This is still the most accurate image I have of every moment Zen practice, in this land I have come to see as an extension of my own body. Which land isn't an extension of our own body? Yet

Haiti is unique in that it is a very strict teacher, and the moment I lose sight of the oneness of giver, receiver and gift, it all falls apart very quickly. Haitians smell the separation—being, as a culture, used to condescension and exploitation from outsiders, and also being highly aware of spirit, connection and interrelationship.

Haitian culture has always stood up for interdependency, from the time its people overthrew slavery, decades before anyone else in the world had done so. When I came here to live and work to prevent domestic and sexual violence just after the earthquake, I had the impulse many of us had—*give!* We all wished to give whatever we could, to help. Outsiders have often come to Haiti with the best intentions to give, moved by some recent crisis or other—this hurricane, that epidemic. Our compassion is a gift—but compassion isn't only about giving, it is also about receiving, and about the gift given being of value to all. Giving something you yourself don't want, or something that the person has not worked for as part of an exchange, is like making someone a beggar, and people deeply feel the indignity of it. Wouldn't you?

My friend Djalòki is an expert in helping non-Haitians find interactions with Haitians that maximize dignity. My first week here, he said in response to my need to help: "Billions of dollars for Haiti since the earthquake so far, and it is stuck in our throats. We are choking on your billions of dollars—and this is not the first time. All we want to do is give you something. Let us!"

I learn to receive, every day, in Haiti. One day, a woman who was hosting me in her home spent 3 hours in the sun hand washing my clothes as a surprise for me, so I didn't have to. Another day, her cousin ran to get the tin roof fixed where it was dripping on the bed she bought me while she slept on a mat on the floor. The next day, a man with torn pants and a bright smile bought me peanuts from the street vendor when I was hungry and had no money in my pocket. It is an honor to give a visitor the best of everything, and people do. I attempt like a novice do the same when they come to my home, inspired by their generosity.

People ask me for things every day, too but I have seen the looks on their faces when groups of beaming, well-meaning outsiders come to still-existing tent camps, months or years after the earthquake, and they receive the handouts of toothbrushes or "2 little old scratchy blankets" after standing in impossible lines. They go because they need the material object being given. For some, it is an act of deep humility—like Zen priests in our ritual begging, *Takuhatsu*. Yet even *Takuhatsu* is an exchange, in which we chant for the wellbeing of all, and receive whatever rice or vegetables or money that is offered. For many Haitians in line for handouts, there is a mask they wear, even if it's smiling—because they are ashamed that no one seems to want or care what they have to give in exchange.

Haitians deeply know our interdependence, even if not everyone can put their finger on their own depth of knowing in the face of immediate need. Practice in this case is to reaffirm interdependence in each interaction. So, when people I

don't know ask me for something, I experiment with my answers and watch their faces to see if I have hit on the thing that helps them to feel happy. I often fail. Sometimes, though, I find a way. Maybe when they ask, I say in Creole that I don't have money for their child's school fees, or that I can't pay for their medical visit. And they sometimes mysteriously light up at the 'no', said respectfully in the language they are comfortable in. Then I find something to ask them that I don't know—directions to somewhere, or a Haitian proverb I don't know the meaning of. And they become instantly rich, and beam the answer back at me. Maybe this starts a conversation, and we cement our connection as interdependent beings. Maybe for some, once we are closer, I can see, too, what I have that they may need; but that comes much later, in relationship of care and community. Haitians are very good at nurturing the treasure of community—Sangha—and trust very little that is not done communally.

For example, a proverb Haitians often use says “cooked food has no owner”. Food is a daily reminder of interdependency in a country where it is always scarce. Food is made for Sangha, and the interdependent community shifts who is the giver and who is the receiver based on who is able to provide that day. When you are hungry, you go to your neighbor and they feed you. When you have an extra plate, you send it for them. When you have a problem, you yell and everyone in your neighborhood comes running. They may give you terrible advice, but they will be there. They will be back tomorrow, too, to check on you.

Haitians also say, “With many hands, the load is not heavy”. In a zen temple, work is practice. We chop wood. We carry water. We do not waste a single drop. If I do not do my work, another person cannot do hers. Rural Haiti functions in exactly this way. Imagine a morning in the planting season in the mountains, with early sun already beginning to heat up the red earth and the backs of people working. The decision to plant today came collectively—we were all finally ready to scrape the money together to buy our seeds, and have gathered at your field with our hoes to turn the earth and to plant. We cannot decide on our own to do this, even if one of us had our seeds a month ago. If you plant alone, the chickens and birds will eat your crop and then mine. If we plant together, we share the loss. And we begin to sing—songs of prayer to the spirits of the land—and it helps our hoes to fall in unison into the ground of your field. A train of young girls comes over carrying buckets of heavy water perfectly balanced on their heads, not spilling a single drop, as they lift the buckets to the ground and offer the workers a drink.

I did not bring Zen to Haiti, yet here it is. And we wake up together.



Courtesy of Ben Depp



The 22nd Chapter of Shobogenzo: Zenki (Total Function) Lecture (5)

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

Connectedness and separateness

[text]

(4) しづかに思量すべし、いまこの生、および生と同生せるところの衆法は、生にともなりとやせん、生にともならずとやせん。

We should quietly think whether this present life and all beings that are co-arising with this life are together with life or are not together with life.

一時・一法として、生にともならざることなし。

Any single moment and any single being are not apart from life.

一事・一心としても、生にともならざることなし。

Any single piece of matter or any single mind is not apart from life.

In paragraph (3) of Zenki, Dogen says our life is a manifestation of the total function and our death is manifestation of the total function, and we should know that among the numberless dharmas in the self, there is life and there is death. Life is a part of the numberless dharmas, as is death. In paragraph (4) he says our life here and now is co-arising together with all of these dharmas within and without us.

We usually think our life is restricted within a certain time and space, conditioned within certain causes and conditions, and we therefore are separate from all other things. However,

from another perspective, we can say that our life is connected with everything, including time, space, and causes and conditions. Even with our restrictions and conditioning we are one with everything. Restrictions and conditioning are the ways we are connected with all beings. That which separates us from others is that which connects us with others. It is like the walls and the gate that separate our property from the rest of the world. The wall and the gate also connect our house with the outside world. Oceans separate continents and at the same time connect all of the continents.

We are born and die together with the world

In his book, *How to Cook Your Life: From the Zen Kitchen to Enlightenment*, Kosho Uchiyama Roshi quotes his teacher, Kodo Sawaki Roshi, with the expression, “You cannot exchange even a fart with another person; you have to live your own life.”¹ Uchiyama Roshi considered this saying to be pointing to the absolute nature of our life in which we cannot compare, compete, exchange, or trade anything with other people. But, he said, in these modern times, not many people recognize this truth because we are so accustomed to the world of giving and taking that we assume it is only normal to trade with others, and we lose sight of that life wherein trading has no bearing. It seems he was saying humans are totally separate from all other people and things, are completely alone, and have with no way to connect with, help, and support one another.

Later in the same chapter of the book, Uchiyama Roshi says, “The true Self has nothing to do with “others”; it is a Self that lives totally

within itself. The world as experienced is the world which the Self alone, you alone, can experience.-----When you are born, your world is born with you, and when you die, so dies your entire world. Your true Self includes the entire world you live in, and in this world there is no possibility of exchange.”²

He concludes, “The ‘world,’ is not some entity which exists apart from us; the ‘world’ is where we function. Likewise, the life of the true Self is not some entity apart from our functioning and working. Everything we encounter is our life.”³

Is the world like a hotel in which we are visitors?

I think this insight of Uchiyama Roshi is based on the teaching of Dogen Zenji as written in Zenki and some other fascicles of Shobogenzo. Some people who read what Uchiyama Roshi wrote in this section of *How to Cook Your Life* were confused and asked me questions about the separateness and connectedness between the self and other things. They particularly asked about the saying, “When you are born, your world is born with you, and when you die, so dies your entire world.”

As Uchiyama Roshi mentioned in his book, we usually think this world is like a stage upon which a play is taking place. When we are born, we think, we appear on the stage. While we are alive, we play a certain role in the play and when we die, we leave the stage. And to us it seems the play on the stage has been going on since before we were born and it will continue even after we pass away.

Another analogy is often used in Buddhism. It says this world is like a hotel and we are like its visitors. The hotel exists continuously. We visit the hotel, stay for a while, and then leave the hotel.

On the level of thought or knowledge, this might be correct. When we study human history, we know how human beings appeared within the process of the evolution of life on this planet Earth. We also know about how many years ago human beings separated from other anthropoid apes. And we know that since that time human beings have been working to develop civilization, little by little, for thousands of years. We particularly have a relatively detailed knowledge of the development of human civilization and world history during the last two thousand years.

When I visited Rome, a person very knowledgeable in the history of the city acted as my tour guide and explained everything we saw. Some of the information I received might not have really been true, but I basically don’t doubt that what he told me did actually happen in past centuries. I don’t doubt that people in Rome established a great civilization more than two thousand years ago. So I do believe this world existed even before I was born.

Also, my mother died when I was twenty-nine years old. I was living in Massachusetts at the time. I went back to Japan but when I arrived, her funeral was over and I missed the viewing of her body. So it was hard for me to believe that my mother had really died, but I had to accept the fact. And now, even after her death,

I am still alive. So I am pretty sure this world will continue to exist after my death and that other people will continue to live.

The view Uchiyama Roshi criticized seems correct as a conventional perspective. What is the point of his criticism?

Mountains are born with us

Before I examine this question, I would like to mention that Uchiyama Roshi's comments are not based simply on his personal ideas. Dogen Zenji wrote something very similar in *Shobogenzo Yuibutsuyobutsu* (Only a Buddha together with a Buddha).

Dogen quotes an ancient worthy in the fascicle saying, "Mountains, rivers, the Great Earth, and human beings are born together. The buddhas of the three times and human beings have always been practicing together." And Dogen continues:

However, even if we look at the mountains, rivers, and Great Earth when a person is born, it does not seem that another [mountain, river, or Great Earth] is born on top of the mountains, rivers, and great Earth that exist. However, the saying of the ancient was not made in vain. How should we understand this?⁴

Dogen is asking the same question that we have asked about Uchiyama Roshi's saying, "The world is born with us and it also dies with us." Then he requests that we inquire into this statement and come to an understanding of it.

Because we should not put this aside even if we don't understand it, without fail, we should understand this; we should inquire into this. Since this has already been uttered [by the ancient], we should listen to it. When we listen [to this saying], we also should understand it.

Here is Dogen's answer to the question:

The way we understand this is [as follows]: when we inquire into the nature of this life from the perspective of this person who was born, who has ever has clarified the nature of the beginning and the end of this life? Although we know neither the end nor the beginning, we have been born. This is simply the same as the fact that even though we don't know the edge of the mountains, rivers, and the Great Earth, we nevertheless see where we are and we walk our present location. Do not be sorry, thinking that the mountains, rivers, and the Great Earth are not [born together with] our births. We should clearly understand that [the ancient] said mountains, rivers, and the Great Earth are all equally our lives.

We must inquire into what Dogen is saying here in order to consider our question for Uchiyama Roshi.

One-water; four-views

In *Shobogenzo* Genjokoan, Dogen writes,

When the Dharma has not yet fully penetrated into body and mind, one thinks

one is already filled with it. When the dharma fills body and mind, one thinks something is [still] lacking. For example, when we sail a boat into the ocean beyond sight of land and our eyes scan [the horizon in] the four directions, it simply looks like a circle. No other shape appears. This great ocean, however, is neither round nor square. It has inexhaustible characteristics. [To a fish], it looks like a palace; [to a heavenly being] a jeweled necklace. [To us] as far as our eyes can see, it looks like a circle. All the myriad things are like this. Within the dusty world and beyond, there are innumerable aspects and characteristics; we only see or grasp as far as the power of our eye of study and practice can see. When we listen to the reality of myriad things, we must know that there are inexhaustible characteristics in both ocean and mountains, and there are many other worlds in the four directions. This is true not only in the external world, but also right under our feet or within a single drop of water.⁵

Here Dogen Zenji says the natures of the ocean, water, and the entire world are not simply as they appear to us from the limited, conditioned views that arise based upon our karmic attributes. Fish, dragons, hungry ghosts, heavenly beings etc. see the water in the very different ways. There are innumerable ways of viewing things. We need to know our views are ours alone. Other beings might view the things we see in very different ways. Different forms of life have their own worlds and we cannot compare and evaluate these views

against our own. Even human beings, depending upon the culture they are born in, their education, and their experiences, live in slightly or even greatly differing worlds.

In Shobogenzo Sansuikyo (Mountains and Waters Sutra) Dogen Zenji writes about this point in even more detail,

In general, then, the way of seeing mountains and waters differs according to the type of being [that sees them]. In seeing water, there are beings who see it as a jeweled necklace. This does not mean, however, that they see a jeweled necklace as water. How, then, do we see what they consider water? Their jeweled necklace is what we see as water. Some see water as miraculous flowers, though it does not follow that they use flowers as water. Hungry ghosts see water as raging flames or as pus and blood. Dragons and fish see it as a palace or a tower, or as the seven treasures or the *mani* gem. [Others] see it as woods and walls, or as the dharma nature of immaculate liberation, or as the true human body, or as the physical form and mental nature. Humans see these as water. And these [different ways of seeing] are the conditions under which [water] is killed or given life.

Given that what different types of beings see is different, we should have some doubts about this. Is it that there are various ways of seeing one object? Or is it that we have mistaken various images for one object? At the peak of our concen-

trated effort on this, we should concentrate still more. Therefore, our practice and verification, our pursuit of the way, must also be not merely of one or two kinds, and the ultimate realm must also have a thousand types and ten thousand kinds.⁶

This analogy called “one-water, four-views” is used in a Yogacara text as an illustration of consciousness-only theory. To me, it seems Dogen is asking if there is really one true form of water that is the “one object” existing before various “mistaken” or distorted views arise in different karmically conditioned beings. How can we know “the true reality of water” beyond our limited, conditioned, and distorted views of the water? Can such a true reality be seen? Whenever we see anything, we only create another layer of our own karmic view.

Three verses on Mt. Lu

I often refer to three famous verses about Mt. Lu when I consider or discuss this question.

The first verse is by the famous Song dynasty Chinese poet Su Shi (1037-1101):

Regarded from one side, an entire range;
from another, a single peak.
Far, near high, low, all its parts
different from the others.
If the true face of Mt. Lu
cannot be known,
It is because the one looking at it,
is standing in its midst.⁷

In *Eihei Koroku* (Dogen's *Extensive Record*)

vol. 9, Dogen quotes a verse Hongzhi Zhengjue (Wanshi Shokaku) wrote on the topic, based on Su Shih's verse. Hongzhi's verse is as follows;

With coming and going, a person in the mountains
Understands that blue mountains are his body.
The blue mountains are the body, and the body
is the self,
So, where can one place the senses and their
objects?

Dogen's also wrote a verse that followed Hongzhi's rhyme pattern;

A person in the mountains should love the
mountains.
With going and coming, the mountains are his
body.
The mountains are the body, but the body is
not the self.
So, where can one find any senses or their
objects?

In my commentary on *Shobogenzo* Sansuikyo (Mountains and Waters Sutra) I discuss these three verses in detail, so here I will make just a few points. In these verses, the true face of Mt. Lu is the same as the “one-water” existing prior to any conditioned and distorted views. Su Shih says it is not possible to see the true face of Mt. Lu because the observer of the mountain is within the mountains. I don't think Su Shih regreted his inability to see the true face of Mt. Lu. Rather, this poem is an expression of his awakening to the reality of each and every being existing within the network of interdependent origination.

According to Hongzhi's verse, the fact that the true face cannot be seen is the reality of our life. This is so because the person viewing the mountains needs to take a position within the mountains. We are moving about the mountains, and depending upon our standpoint, our view of Mt. Lu is different. But Hongzhi points out that rather than seeing the true face of Mt. Lu as an object of eye consciousness, the important issue is to understand that we are one with Mt. Lu, that the entirety of the mountains is the body and the self. He says there is no separation between the mountains and the person within the mountains. There is therefore no separation between subject (the person in the mountains) and object (Mt. Lu). Living (coming and going) one's own life as the life of all beings that exist together in the network of interdependent origination is our practice.

Dogen basically agrees with Hongzhi, except on one point. Dogen says the mountains are the body but there is no self existing as a fixed entity. This is so because, as Gary Snyder said, mountains and waters are without end.⁸ Dogen also tells us that a person in the mountains is a person who loves the mountains. In the Mountains and Waters Sutra he writes, "Although we say that mountains belong to the country, actually they belong to those who love them."

We cannot see the true face of Mt. Lu because we are connected with everything in the mountains and the mountains are our body. My view, other people's views, and other beings' views of the mountains are all different. It is not possible for us to see and experience the same mountain that other people are seeing. We can

talk about our views and feelings, but when I hear another person's view, what I hear becomes a part of my mountain.

Interpenetration of connectedness and separateness

Now I think we are ready to discuss the saying of Uchiyama Roshi. Are we completely separate from other people and living in a world that is different from their worlds? First Uchiyama Roshi says each of us is completely alone and any exchange between us, even trading a fart, is impossible. However, at the end of his statement he says, "Everything we encounter is our life." This means we are everyone and everything we encounter. There are no others and there is no separation between either self and other, subject and object, or sense organs and objects of the sense organs. It seems that the beginning and the end of Uchiyama Roshi's statement are completely opposite and contradictory. I think it is important to clearly see this contradiction.

We are all conditioned by our karmic attributes and therefore each of us has different experiences and views. And since our worlds are completely one with ourselves, each and every one of us has a different world.

What we learn of events that happened before we were born are merely knowledge. In our process of studying we collect that knowledge, and putting what we have learned together as if we were laying bricks, we construct a building that becomes our picture of the world. In terms of knowledge, what we have learned may be correct or incorrect. But even if it is correct, that knowledge is not the reality we experience.

The past has already gone and it is no longer reality. The future has not come yet, so everything we think concerning the future is also not reality. And how we understand things of the past and future are influenced by our karma. The past is our current memory or knowledge and the future is our hope or plan at this present moment. Reality is only this present life, even just this present moment. Our world is born with us and all dharmas in the world are one with us. And when we die, our world and all things in the world die with us.

While Uchiyama Roshi was alive, Shohaku was part of his world as one of his disciples. When he passed away, Shohaku as the disciple in his world died with him and his world. However, Uchiyama Roshi is still alive in my world as my teacher. Oneness and separation completely interpenetrate each other.

While I lived in San Francisco, I went to see an exhibition of Ansel Adams' photography entitled "The World of Ansel Adams." He took many photographs, expressing through his art the beauty and dignity of beings in his world. I cannot be in his world, but when I saw his works, the photos became a part of my world. Through appreciating his art, I had some knowledge about him and the world in which he lived, but I cannot really be in his world. We live in completely separate worlds yet he is a part of my world. Ansel Adams said, "I hope that my work will encourage self expression in others and stimulate the search for beauty and creative excitement in the great world around us." His world and my world are completely separate worlds, and yet by seeing his photographs and

studying his life, he became a part of my world.

Many people visited Uchiyama Roshi or wrote to him when they had problems in their lives and wanted some guidance. He never rejected these people, and he responded to them wholeheartedly. In his commentary on Dogen Zenji's Genjokoan, he wrote the following about the sentence, "to study the Buddha Way is to study the self":

Concretely speaking, we should accept everything as the contents of our "self." We should meet everything as part of ourselves. "To study the self" means to awaken to such a self. For instance, many people visit my house or write me letters. Many of these people talk or write about their troubles and anguish and ask for my advice. I never feel troubled by such requests. As soon as I am asked about such troubles, they become my own. I meet people and problems in such a way. As long as I have such an attitude, these problems are my own. And they enrich my life. If I reject other people's problems saying, "That's not my business," my life becomes poorer and poorer. Therefore, to meet everything, without exception, as part of my life is most essential in the Buddha Way. This is what Dogen Zenji meant by saying, "To study the Buddha Way is to study the self."⁹

[text]

Any single moment and any single being are not apart from life. Any single piece of matter or any single mind is not apart from life.

Each and every moment, all of the myriad things, and everything coming and going in our minds are co-arising with our life. Other than time and things coming and going within and without us, there is nothing we can call the life of “the self.”

¹ *How to Cook Yourlife: From Zen Kitchen to Enlightenment* (Dogen and Uchiyama, Weatherhill, New York, 1983), p. 39.

² Ibid.,

³ Ibid.,

⁴ Quotes from Yuibutsuyobutsu are from Okumura’s unpublished translation. Another translation can be found in Gudo Nishijima’s *Master Dogen’s Shobogenzo Book 4*, (Windbell Publications, London, 1999) p.217

⁵ This is Okumura’s translation from *Realizing Genjokoan* (Wisdom Publications, Boston, 2010) p.3

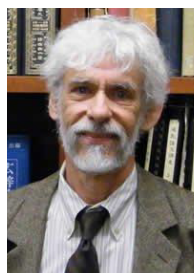
⁶ This translation is by Carl Bielfeldt from http://scbs.stanford.edu/sztp3/translations/shobogenzo/sbgz_contents.html.

⁷ Translation by Beata Grant in *Mount Lu Revisited: Buddhism in the Life and Writings of Su Shih* (University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1994) p.127

⁸ *Mountains and Rivers Without End* (Gary Snyder, Counterpoint, Washington, D.C., 1996)

⁹ *Dogen’s Genjokoan: Three Commentaries* (Counterpoint, Berkeley, 2011).

Treasury of the True Dharma Eye Book 10



Great Awakening
Daigo

Translated by
Carl Bielefeldt

INTRODUCTION

This relatively short essay represents book 10 of the traditional 60- and 75-fascicle redactions of the *Shōbōgenzō*; it occurs as book 26 in the modern vulgate edition. It was composed in the early spring of 1242, when its author was living at Kōshōji, just south of the capital of Heian-kyō (present-day Kyoto). The months surrounding its composition were a very productive period for Dōgen, during which he wrote some of his most important works.

The title, *daigo*, is a word found throughout Buddhist literature for deep insight into, or profound understanding of, the Buddhist teachings. Often the word is associated with a transformative spiritual experience that overcomes delusion and reveals a truth; thus, many Zen stories end with the student experiencing a “great awakening” to the point of the master’s teaching. But, as is so often the case, Dōgen has his own sense of the word — a sense in which, as he says in his opening lines, great awakening “springs beyond the buddhas and ancestors.”

For Dōgen here, “great awakening” is not merely a state of knowledge that overcomes delusion, let alone a momentary leap of insight; it seems rather to be a basic condition, or funda-

mental way of being, that is shared, not only by buddhas and deluded beings, but by all things — by “earth, water, fire, wind, and space,” by “columns and lanterns,” by the “Snowy Mountains,” by “the trees and rocks.” Such great awakening, he says, “is without origin”; it “fills the ditches and clogs the gullies” of our world.

This translation is based on the edition of the text in Kawamura Kōdō, ed., *Dōgen zenji zenshū*, vol. 1 (1991), pp. 92-99. A fully annotated version will appear in the forthcoming Soto Zen Text Project's translation of the *Shōbōgenzō*. Other English renderings of this essay can be found in Kōsen Nishiyama and John Stevens, *Shōbōgenzō*, volume 1 (1975), pp. 34-39; Yuho Yokoi, *The Shobo-genzo* (1986), pp. 121-128; Thomas Cook, *Sounds of Valley Streams* (1989), pp. 117-123; Thomas Cleary, *Rational Zen: The Mind of Dōgen Zenji* (1992), pp. 108-115; Gudo Nishijima and Chodo Cross, *Master Dogen's Shobogenzo*, Book 2 (1996), pp. 83-90; Hubert Nearman, *The Treasure House of the Eye of the True Teaching* (2007), pp. 327-334; and Kazuaki Tanahashi, *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye: Zen Master Dogen's Shobo Genzo*, vol. 1 (2010), pp. 296-302.

TRANSLATION

The great way of the buddhas is handed down meticulously; the meritorious deeds of the ancestors are manifested openly. Therefore, realizing great awakening, arriving at the way without awakening, observing awakening and playing with awakening, losing awakening and letting it go — these are everyday matters of the buddhas and ancestors. They have [as Zhaozhou

would say] the “making use of the twelve times” that they take up; they have the “being used by the twelve times” that they throw away. And, going further, they also have [what the Zen masters call] “playing with the mud ball,” they have “playing with the spirit,” which spring off from this pivot. From great awakening, the buddhas and ancestors always perfect the study that appears in this way; however, it is not the case that the full awakening of the great awakening represents the buddhas and ancestors; nor is it the case that the full buddhas and ancestors of the buddhas and ancestors represent the full great awakening: the buddhas and ancestors spring off from the boundaries of great awakening; great awakening is a face that springs beyond the buddhas and ancestors.

Still, human faculties are of many types. There are [what Confucius calls] “those who know at birth.” These, being born, are liberated from birth; that is, theirs is the physical investigation of the beginning, middle, and end of birth. There are [what Confucius calls] “those who know from study.” These study and exhaustively investigate themselves; that is, they physically investigate “the skin, flesh, bones, and marrow” of study. There are those with buddha knowledge. This is not knowledge at birth or knowledge from learning. Transcending the boundaries of self and other, it is here without reason; it is unconcerned with the knowledge of self and other. There are those who know without a teacher. Without relying on a good friend, without relying on the rolls of scripture, without relying on the nature, without relying on the characteristics, though they do not turn themselves about or interact with the other, they are exposed and imposing. It is not that, of these several sorts,

one is recognized as sharp and another is recognized as dull: the many sorts all manifest many sorts of meritorious deeds.

Therefore, we should study which sentient or insentient being is not one of “those who know at birth.” If they have knowledge at birth, they have awakening at birth; they have verification at birth; they have practice at birth. Therefore, since the buddhas and ancestors are [known as] “tamers of persons,” they have been called “awakened at birth.” This is so because theirs is a birth that has taken up awakening; it is an “awakening at birth” that studies its fill and greatly awakens. This is so because it is a study that takes up awakening.

Therefore, they take up the three realms and greatly awaken; they take up the hundred grasses and greatly awaken; they take up the four primary elements and greatly awaken; they take up the buddhas and ancestors and greatly awaken; they take up a kōan and greatly awaken. The very time that they do so is the present.

* * * * *

The Great Master Huizhao of the Linji cloister [i.e., Linji Yixuan] said, “In the Land of the Great Tang, it’s hard to find a single person who isn’t awakened.”

What the Great Master Huizhao says here is “the skin, flesh, bones, and marrow” passed down through the main artery [of the Zen lineage]; it could not be false. “In the Land of the Great Tang” means “in one’s own eye”: it is not concerned with all the realms; it is not confined to lands numerous as dust motes. Here, it

is hard to find a single person who is not awakened. Yesterday’s self of one’s own is not one “who is not awakened”; today’s self of another is not one “who is not awakened.” Searching through the past and present of the people of the mountains and the people of the waters, the unawakened cannot be found. Students who study Linji’s saying in this way will not [as Shitou’s *Can tong qi* says] “pass their days and nights in vain.”

While this may be so, we should nevertheless go on to study the inner deeds of the ancestral lineage. That is, we should question Linji for a bit. To know only that “it’s hard to find someone who isn’t awakened,” without knowing that it is hard to find someone who is awakened, is not enough to be right. It is hard to say that you have fully investigated even [your own statement that] “it’s hard to find someone who isn’t awakened.” Although it may be hard to find a single person who is not awakened, there is half a person who is not awakened, his countenance calm, his bearing majestic — have you ever seen him? Do not think that your difficulty in finding a single person who is not awakened in “the Land of the Great Tang” is the final word. You should try to find two or three Lands of the Great Tang within a single person or half a person. Are they hard to find or not hard to find? When you are equipped with this eye, I will accept you as a buddha and ancestor who has studied his fill.

* * * * *

The Great Master Baozhi of the Huayan monastery in Jingzhao (descended from Dongshan, called Xiujing) [i.e., Huayan

Xiujing] was once asked by a monk, “What about when the person of great awakening reverts to delusion?”

The master said,

“The broken mirror doesn’t reflect again; the fallen flower can’t climb the tree.”

This question may be a question, but it is like instruction to the assembly. It could only be expounded in the assembly of Huayen; it could only be bestowed by a legitimate heir of Dongshan. Truly this must be the proper seat of a buddha and ancestor who has studied his fill.

“The person of great awakening” does not mean someone with great awakening from the beginning; it is not someone who stores up a great awakening from somewhere else. Great awakening is not something that, though present in the public realm, one only encounters at last in old age. It is not something one forcibly pulls out of oneself. Nevertheless, [the person of great awakening] invariably greatly awakens. It is not that great awakening is not being deluded: we need not suppose that, in order to be the seedling for great awakening, we ought first become deluded. The person of great awakening goes on greatly to awaken; the person of great delusion goes on greatly to awaken. Just as there is the person of great awakening, there is the buddha of great awakening; there are the earth, water, fire, wind, and space of great awakening, there are the columns and lanterns of great awakening. Here they are being questioned as “the person of great awakening.” The question “What about when the person of great awakening reverts to delusion?” is truly asking what should be asked. Huayan does not reject it: he “emulates the ancients” in

the monastic seat. His is the meritorious deed of a buddha and ancestor.

We should work at this a bit. Is the “reversion to delusion” of “the person of great awakening” the equivalent of a person without awakening? When the person of great awakening reverts to delusion, does he take up his great awakening and construct delusion? Does she revert to delusion by taking up delusion from somewhere else and covering over her great awakening? Again, does the person of great awakening, although remaining himself without destroying his great awakening, go on to study “reverting to delusion”? Or does the “reverting to delusion” of the person of great awakening refer to taking up a further great awakening as “reverting to delusion”? We should study it in these various ways. Again, is great awakening one hand and reverting to delusion the other hand? However we take them, we should recognize that hearing that the person of great awakening reverts to delusion is the complete mastery of our study. We should recognize that there is a great awakening that makes reverting to delusion a personal experience.

Therefore, “seeing a thief as your child” [as the sutra says] does not represent “reverting to delusion”; “seeing your child as a thief” does not represent “reverting to delusion.” Great awakening is to see the thief as a thief; reverting to delusion is to see the child as your child. “Adding a bit where there is a lot” [as the Zen masters say] is great awakening; “reducing a bit where there is little” is reverting to delusion. Therefore, when you grope for the one who reverts to delusion and have got him firmly in your clutches, you will encounter “the person

of great awakening.” Is the self at this time reverting to delusion? Is it undeluded? You should examine this and bring it forward. This is to meet with a buddha and ancestor.

The master said, “The broken mirror doesn’t reflect again; the fallen flower can’t climb the tree.” This instruction to the assembly speaks of precisely the moment of “the broken mirror.” Thus, to study the words “broken mirror” while having in mind the time when the mirror was not yet broken is not right. The meaning of this saying by Huayan — “the broken mirror doesn’t reflect again; the fallen flower can’t climb the tree” — has likely been understood as saying, “the person of great awakening doesn’t reflect again,” saying “the person of great awakening can’t climb the tree,” saying that the person of great awakening does not once again revert to delusion. However, it is not such a study. If it were as people have thought, he would be asking something like, “How about the everyday life of the person of great awakening?” And in answering, one would say something like, “There are times when he reverts to delusion.” The present case is not like this. Since he asks, “What about when the person of great awakening reverts to delusion?” he is “still uncertain” about precisely the moment of “reverting to delusion.” The saying that appears at such a time is, “the broken mirror doesn’t reflect again”; “the fallen flower can’t climb the tree.” When the fallen flower is truly a fallen flower, even if [as the Zen masters say] it climbs beyond “a hundred-foot pole,” it is still “the fallen flower.” Since a broken mirror is precisely a broken mirror, however many ways of life it expresses, they will all be reflections that “don’t reflect again.”

Taking up the meaning of his saying “broken mirror” and saying “fallen flower,” we should inquire into the time “when the person of great awakening reverts to delusion.”

It is not that we should study this as if “great awakening” were like becoming a buddha, “reverting to delusion” were like living beings, and it is saying [as it is sometimes put] “again becoming a living being,” or saying something like [the formula] “leaving traces [in the phenomenal world] from the original [ground].” That talks as if he destroys his great enlightenment to become a living being; this is not saying that he destroys great awakening, is not saying that he loses great awakening, is not saying that delusion has come. We should not identify it with those. Truly, great awakening is without origin; reverting to delusion is without origin. There is no delusion that obstructs great awakening; taking up three pieces of great awakening, we make a half piece of slight delusion. With this, there are Snowy Mountains [in which the Buddha is said to have practiced] having the great awakening because of the Snowy Mountains; the trees and rocks have the great awakening by dint of trees and rocks. The great awakening of the buddhas has the great awakening because of living beings; the great awakening of living beings has the great awakening to the great awakening of the buddhas. This has nothing to do with before or after. The present great awakening is not self, is not other. It has not come; yet [as they say] “it fills the ditches and clogs the gullies.” It has not gone; yet [Dongshan says] “seeking it from another is strictly prohibited.” Why is this so? As it is said [by Suishan Fazhen], “It goes along with it [when the universe is destroyed].”

The Reverend Mihi of Jingzhao had a monk ask Yangshan [Huiji],

“People of the present time, do they still avail themselves of awakening?”

Yangshan said,

“It’s not that they don’t have awakening, but they can’t help falling into the second rate.”

The monk returned and presented this to Mihi. Mihi deeply assented to it.

The “present time” spoken of here is every person’s present moment. The pasts, futures, and presents that “you remind me of” [as Ananda said to the Buddha] may be thousands, myriads, but they are “the present time,” the present moment. A person’s status is invariably “the present time.” Or we could take their eyeballs as “the present time”; or we could take their nose as “the present time.”

“Do they still avail themselves of awakening?” Quietly studying these words, you should switch them for your breast; you should switch them for the crown of your head. Recently, shavelings in the Land of the Great Song say, “Awakening to the way is the basic expectation.” So saying, they vainly await awakening. Nevertheless, they seem not to be illumined by the radiance of the buddhas and ancestors. Given over to laziness, they miss the fact that they should just study with a true good friend. Even during the advent of the old buddhas, they would probably not have been liberated.

The words “do they still avail themselves of awakening?” do not say that they do not have awakening; they do not say that they have awakening; they do not say that awakening

comes: they say “do they avail themselves of it?” It is like asking, “How has the awakening of people nowadays been awakened?” For example, if we say that they “get awakening,” we wonder whether for some time they did not have it. If we say that “awakening has come,” we wonder where it was until now. If we say they have “become awakening,” we imagine that awakening was already there. He does not say it like this; he is not like this. Yet, when he speaks of how awakening is, he says, “do they avail themselves of it?”

Nevertheless, we can speak of awakening. However, since he has said, “what about their falling into the second rate?” he is saying that the second rate is also awakening. “The second rate” is like saying, “became awakening,” or “get awakening,” or “awakening has come.” He is saying that “became” or “has come” are also awakening. Therefore, while lamenting the fall into the second rate, it seems he eliminates the second rate. One may also think that the second rate that awakening becomes is the real second rate. Therefore, though it be second rate, though it be a hundred or a thousand rate, it should still be awakening. It is not that, since there is a second rate, it exists where some prior first rate is left behind. This would be, for example, like saying that, while we take ourselves yesterday to be ourselves, yesterday’s [self] takes today’s as a second-rate person. The present awakening, we do not say is not yesterday’s; it has not begun now. This is how we study it. Therefore, [to borrow from Mazu] “great awakening’s head is black; great awakening’s head is white.”

Presented to the assembly while residing at
Kannon Dōri Kōshō Hōrinji,
on the twenty-eighth day of the first
month, spring of *mizunoe-tora*, the third year
of Ninji [1 March 1242].

Written and presented to the great assembly of
humans and gods while resting my staff at the
old monastery of Kippō, in the realm of Etsu,
On this the twenty-seventh day of the first
month, spring of *kinoe-tatsu*, the second year of
Kangen [7 March 1244].

Copied this while attending at the interior of
the hall of the Kippō shōja in the realm of Etsu,
on the twentieth day of the third month,
spring of *kinoe-tatsu*, the second year of the
same era [28 April 1244]. Ejō



My Footnotes on Zazen (5) The Buddha's Sitting Under a Tree 1

Rev. Issho Fujita
Director of Soto Zen Buddhism
International Center

When we trace back the root of zazen (*shikantaza*), we find the Buddha's sitting under a tree. That is what I think for now. This is because I take literally what Dogen Zenji wrote in *Eiheikoroku* vol. 4: "The true Dharma correctly transmitted by buddhas and ancestors is simply just sitting." The first sitting in the line of that tradition was the Buddha's under a tree right after he gave up self-mortification practice. Here I would like to discuss the significance of the Buddha's sitting under a tree. First of all, we need to know about the process through which he came to sit under a tree. What brought him there? For an answer, I looked in one of the Pali scriptures, the "Maha-Saccaka Sutta" (*Majjhima Nikaya* 36). This scripture offers us very useful information about this matter.

According to "Maha-Saccaka Sutta," the Buddha said, "when I was still young, black-haired, endowed with the blessings of youth in the first stage of life, having shaved off my hair & beard — though my parents wished otherwise and were grieving with tears on their faces — I put on the ochre robe and went forth from the home life into homelessness." Right after this Great Renunciation, he headed south to Vaisali, a flourishing commercial city. There he studied under a meditation teacher named Alara Kalama, who taught a form of medita-

tion leading to the “attainment of the state of nothingness.” Gautama practiced the method and quickly attained the goal. Kalama then set him up as his equal and co-teacher, but Gautama — concluding that “this Dhamma leads not to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to stilling, to direct knowledge, to Awakening, nor to Unbinding, but only to reappearance in the dimension of nothingness” — left his teacher, dissatisfied with that Dhamma.

He moved further south to Rajagriha. He studied under another meditation teacher, Uddaka Ramaputta, who taught the way to a higher state, the “attainment of neither perception nor non-perception.” Gautama again quickly mastered this state and was proclaimed a teacher. But, concluding that “this Dhamma leads not to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to stilling, to direct knowledge, to Awakening, nor to Unbinding, but only to reappearance in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception,” he left this teacher, too, dissatisfied with that Dhamma.

Thus the Buddha-to-be was dissatisfied with what he attained under these two famous meditation masters and he rejected it. Why so? Had he been satisfied with what he had mastered — in other words, with what the mainstream religious tradition of Brahmanism offered in those days — Buddhism as a brand-new and revolutionary path would never have been created by him. Therefore, we, as his descendants, should thoroughly investigate this question of why Gautama rejected what he had been taught. This investigation illuminates an important topic — the difference between

concentration-oriented meditation and zazen. It is also related to Dogen Zenji’s statement, “zazen is not *shuzen*.”

Following this, the Buddha went further south and arrived at the village of Sena in Uruvela in the suburbs of religious city, Gaya. There he launched a practice of severe self-mortification, which, in addition to meditation, was another mainstream religious practice. According to the “Maha-Saccaka Sutta,” his austerities were extreme. He practiced holding his breath to induce a trance. It was excruciating to his body. He also practiced fasting, taking only a little bean or lentil soup each day. His body became emaciated, his spine became bent like an old man’s. He fell forward when trying to stand up, fell backward when trying to sit down. He later recalled what he did at that time, saying, “Whatever brahmins or contemplatives in the past have felt painful, racking, piercing feelings due to their striving, this is the utmost. None have been greater than this. Whatever brahmins or contemplatives in the future will feel painful, racking, piercing feelings due to their striving, this is the utmost. None will be greater than this. Whatever brahmins or contemplatives in the present are feeling painful, racking, piercing feelings due to their striving, this is the utmost. None is greater than this.” But he gave up this practice of self-mortification, concluding, “with this racking practice of austerities I haven’t attained any superior human state, any distinction in knowledge or vision worthy of the noble ones.”

We should also investigate the question of why he abandoned self-mortification. We must deeply explore it as a serious question, not

being satisfied with a perfunctory answer found in a textbook. Even though we can never attain the degree of severity the Buddha endured, we often tend to fall into the mindset of asceticism and make zazen “the gate of ease and joy” to self-mortification before we know it.

Gautama tried to thoroughly practice the two standard spiritual methods, self-absorption meditation and self-mortification, popular in India in his days, but he could not get what he wanted. This means that he did not attain his goal by applying existing methods. At that moment his spiritual inquiry was a total failure. Facing these setbacks and this impasse, Gautama had two options in front of him. One was to totally give up his inquiry. The other was to open up a truly new path where no one has gone before, which was neither self-absorption meditation nor self-mortification.

He chose the latter. With a faint hope that “there could be another path to awakening,” he recalled an event which happened in his childhood. He said, “I thought: ‘I recall once, when my father the Sakyan was working, and I was sitting in the cool shade of a rose-apple tree, then — quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful mental qualities — I entered and remained in the first *jhana* : rapture and pleasure born from seclusion, accompanied by directed thought and evaluation.’” This recollection pushed him to sit down under a tree near the river bank with the conviction that “that is the path to awakening” after taking a bowl of rice and milk offered by a woman named Sujata to recover his strength and bathing in the Neranjara River to cleanse his body.

Now we have finally come to Gautama’s sitting under a tree. Here we need to ask: What kind of sitting was it? I think that his sitting under the tree was completely and fundamentally different in quality from meditative practice and self-mortification he had practiced before. A quite radical and revolutionary kind of sitting emerged under the tree for the first time in human history. Out of that sitting, totally fresh path, later called Buddhism, was born as a path of happiness in this world. When he shifted from meditation/self-mortification to sitting under a tree, what really happened there? How should we understand it? How should we think about the radical and revolutionary nature of his sitting under a tree? Those are questions directly related to how we understand and practice *shikantaza*.

Every time we do zazen, we should re-enact the qualitative shift the Buddha made and fully embody the revolutionary quality of his sitting under a tree 2,500 years ago. Otherwise our zazen transmitted from the Buddha would be practiced not as it should be but as something else, such as the meditation or self-mortification he gave up before he sat under the tree.

We can discuss the uniqueness of the Buddha’s sitting under a tree from various angles. Here, I would like to discuss it based on my own assumption that the uniqueness of his sitting lies in the fact that he deeply and minutely observed the natural workings of his own body-mind, without consciously controlling them.

Before the Buddha sat down under the tree, he experienced two types of being or living.

First, he lived a worldly life in his palace. This is a way of living in which one is almost unconsciously performing three karmas of body, speech and mind. One is acting with one's body, speaking with one's mouth, thinking with one's mind according to habits acquired before we were able to understand. We take these actions, thoughts and words for granted, without questioning. We are like a robot which repeatedly performs the same programs installed by others outside ourselves without our understanding. It is "auto pilot," in which there is no awareness, no mindfulness. In Buddhism it is called a state of "fundamental ignorance."

The Buddha was dissatisfied with this type of life and decided to renounce it. He chose the second type of life, the practitioner's life. To deny the worldly life (or to live a sacred life), one tries to consciously, one-sidedly manage and control all three karmas of body, speech and mind from outside. Here, from the very beginning an ideal state is already clearly set up as a goal - for instance, extinction of all defilements, or deliverance. There are effective and sophisticated methods to realize the ideal. By strictly following those methods, practitioners seek to control body and mind. It is as if they were taming wild body and mind by dominating them.

Let me use breath as an example to explain these two types of being or living in a tangible way. We are usually not aware of our own breath. We believe we are breathing normally, but for various reasons our "normal" breath is pretty often far away from "natural breath." From the viewpoint of a person who rediscovers natural breath through training in breath-

ing methods, our "normal" breath is very imperfect, shallow, and irregular. It is a very low-level breath. We do not die immediately due to this imperfect breath but actually we are suffering many minor symptoms caused by "normally" breathing in an "unnatural" way for a long time. Because we are not conscious of this fact, it is unlikely that we improve our breath. This is "fundamental ignorance" in terms of breath.

Some people feel that the way we usually breathe does not bring good health and they try to learn a useful breathing method or technique to improve their breathing. They look for the best, ultimate breathing method which teaches an ideal way of breathing. They do their best to master that method. In their effort, the priority is to precisely follow the method and govern their breath by the method. When they can perfectly breathe in the way described by the method, they feel successful. However, such breathing is not "natural" but "artificial." The reality is that our breath is maintained by a very complicated and refined mechanism spread through the whole body. Therefore, our consciousness can control only a tiny part of that vast breathing mechanism. It is an arrogant fantasy to think we can change our breath consciously. It is impossible to transform our breath at a deep level in this way. This is an artificial approach to breath.

(To be continued)

NEWS

May 17-19, 2013

Europe Soto Zen Conference was held at Temple Zen de la Gendronnière, France

July 4, 2013

South America Soto Zen Conference was held at Busshinji, Brazil

SOTO ZEN JOURNAL is published semiannually by the Soto Zen Buddhism International Center
Issho Fujita, Editor

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