

Sermons

October - Daruma Memorial (*Darumaki*) by Issho Fujita

In the Sotoshu tradition, we commemorate the Daruma Memorial on October 5th.

Daruma is a Japanese name for the famous Indian monk Bodhidharma who lived during the 5th/6th century A.D. The accounts of his life are largely legendary (see Comics "Bodhidharma" 1-12 at Sotozen-net International website) but according to *Denkoroku* (The Record of Transmitting the Light) written by Keizan Zenji, he was born as the third son of the king of *Koshi* in southern India. He became a monk and practiced under the guidance of Venerable Hannyatara (Prajnatara). He is considered to be the 28th Indian Buddhist teacher in a direct line from Gautama Buddha, and also regarded as the first master in Chinese Zen tradition.



Following the instruction of his Master to transmit Dharma to China, Bodhidharma traveled east to Southern China in 526 A.D. In *Shobogenzo Gyoji* (Continuous Practice) Part Two, Dogen Zenji wrote about his journey to China as follows.

How severe the wind and snow was throughout his three-year journey! How innumerable the waves of the ocean, under clouds and mist, as he sailed toward an unknown country! This journey is beyond the imagination of those attached to body and life. This continuous practice is due solely to his great compassionate determination to transmit dharma and to save deluded beings

I vividly remember what my grandfather master, the late Kosho Uchiyama Roshi, said to me when I visited him right before departing for the USA to live at Pioneer Valley Zendo, a small zendo in Massachusetts, as a resident teacher. I asked him for some advice and he said, "You write down the whole Bodhidharma section in *Shobogenzo Gyoji* and recite it every day. That will help you keep walking on the Way. I said exactly the same thing to all your seniors that went to the USA before you. I want you to become like Bodhidharma in the USA". He particularly emphasized the importance of deep understanding of the sentences in that section as in the following;

He was able to do it because he himself was the 'dharma-self-of-transmission' and for him the whole universe was 'the world of transmitting dharma.'

He did it because he understood that the whole-ten-direction-world is nothing but the Self and that the whole-ten-direction-world is nothing but the whole-ten-direction-world.

Wherever you are living is a palace; and there is no palace that is not an appropriate place to practice the Way. This is why Bodhidharma came from the West the way he did. He had neither doubt nor fear, because he was living in 'the world of saving deluded living beings'

Of course at that time I could not understand at all what these words meant. The only thing that I knew was that what Bodhidharma did "*to transmit dharma and to save deluded living beings*" was just sitting zazen in silence facing the wall at Shaolin temple (*Still and silent, coolly he sat at Shaolin: In silence he completely brought up the true imperative*), instead of massively publicizing the Dharma. Uchiyama Roshi told me to make sincere effort to follow the example of Bodhidharma and encouraged me to live by vow like him.

When I arrived at the Zendo, there I found out, in the drawer of a desk, the manuscript of that section handwritten by the previous resident teacher. I used it for my recitation. Looking back, I am sure that Uchiyama Roshi's advice worked very well to me.

As a follower of Bodhidharma's tradition, we try to live a life guided by vow, such as the Four Universal Vows, not a life guided by self-centered desires, such as the Five Desires. The Daruma Memorial Statement which is read aloud by a rector (Ino) in the ceremony, is closed with a prayer like below;

May the great vow have power, and the Zen tradition spread vast and wide. We shall revere his benevolent virtue for inexhaustible ages yet to come.

May [Bodhidharma's] true compassion be unobstructed, and the way of the ancestors luminous. May it proclaim and spread the brilliance of our lineage for trillions of years.

The Daruma Memorial is a great opportunity to renew our commitment "*to transmit Dharma and to save deluded beings*".

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