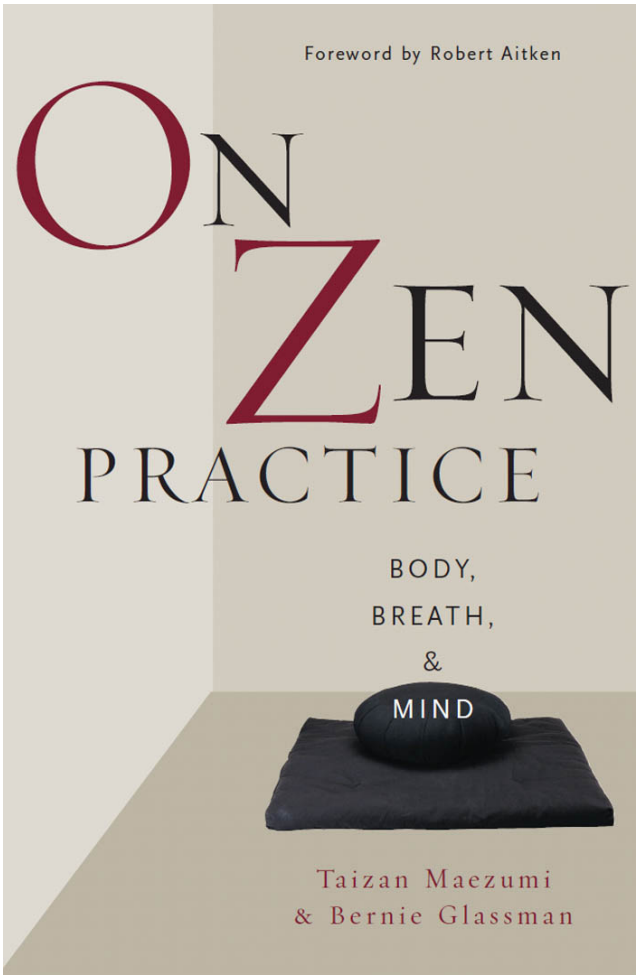
Foreword by Robert Aitken

On Zen Practice

Body, Breath, & Mind

Taizan Maezumi
& Bernie Glassman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BODY, BREATH, & MIND

EDITED BY
TAIZAN MAEZUMI AND BERNIE GLASSMAN

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AND JOHN DAISHIN BUKSBAZEN

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"Mu," by Taizan Maezumi

Ascending to the high seat, Dogen Zenji said:

> "Zen Master Hogen studied with Keishin Zenji. Once Keishin Zenji asked him, 'Joza, where do you go?'
> "Hogen said, 'I am making pilgrimage aimlessly.'
> "Keishin said, 'What is the matter of your pilgrimage?'
> "Hogen said, 'I don't know.'
> "Keishin said, 'Not knowing is the most intimate.'
> "Hogen suddenly attained great enlightenment."

Master Dogen said:

> "If I were there, I would have said to Priest Jizo, 'Not knowing is the most intimate. Knowing is also the most intimate. Let's leave intimacy for the most intimate. Then tell me: with what are you the most intimate?'"

—Eihei Dogen, *Eihei Koroku*

Preface

In 1976, the Zen Center of Los Angeles published its first book, *On Zen Practice*. This was followed the next year by a companion volume, *On Zen Practice II,* and in 1978, by a more polished work, *The Way of Everyday Life,* a translation Dogen Zenji's masterwork, *Shobogenzo Genjokoan*, and a commentary on it.

On Zen Practice I and *II* were essentially a collection of Dharma talks and commentaries on classic Zen texts, which introduced to American Zen students the foundational themes of sitting, sesshin, the Precepts, koan study, and the writings of the great master Dogen Zenji.

In their original form, the talks were homespun transcriptions, couched in the idiom of the time and addressed to a population of new Dharma students who were encountering the Dharma in America for the first time.

Taizan Maezumi Roshi arrived in the United States in 1956, serving for more than ten years as a Soto Zen missionary to the Japanese-American community in Los Angeles. In 1967, he and a few American students started the Los Angeles Zendo, later to become ZCLA, in a house in the Wilshire District. For another ten years, he patiently sat zazen, completing his own koan study with both Hakuun Yasutani Roshi and Koryu Osaka Roshi in a series of visits between Japan and the United States.

By this point, becoming Dharma successor to these two teachers, as well as his father, the Soto master Baian Hakujun Kuroda Roshi, he was ready to focus his energies on teaching American Zen practitioners.

Maezumi Roshi's teaching style reflected the profound influence of each of these three masters. Often he would comment that with Yasutani Roshi he had trained in the meticulous examination of koans, while from

Koryu Roshi, he inherited the dynamic exposition of the Dharma as his legacy.

From his father (the lineage now transmitted by him and his successors), Maezumi Roshi learned and embodied the everyday functioning of the Dharma in its most ordinary and yet most profound expression. Always quietly reflective, Maezumi Roshi is remembered by his students for his refined yet vigorous personal style, laced with self-effacing humor and extraordinary depth of subtlety.

This book is a compilation of the teachings of all of these masters, as well as of Dharma brother Ko'un Yamada Roshi, another successor of Yasutani Roshi, and the teacher of Robert Aitken Roshi as well as numerous Christian clerics. Also included in this edition is an article by Bernie Glassman, Maezumi Roshi's senior Dharma disciple.

Maezumi Roshi was fond of telling how his mother, Mrs. Yoshi Maezumi Kuroda, shaped his character from his earliest years. She would often exhort her sons to "do something for the Dharma" long before any of them had any idea what that meant. In this fashion, however, a seed was planted and that seed came to full fruition for Maezumi Roshi in the years that followed.

In preparing this formidable body of seminal texts for publication, we found the task to be one not only of preserving the original nuance and flavor, but also of rendering more accessible what were often spontaneous commentaries. Maezumi Roshi's use of language was both inimitable and idiosyncratic and, to those not accustomed to his voice, perhaps at times somewhat opaque. It is with this in mind, therefore, that we undertook to at once convey the subtleties of his style and spirit, while rendering them meaningful to readers encountering him for the first time.

As editors of this volume and the beneficiaries of many years of his teaching, we offer our efforts with profound gratitude to him. May the merits of these teachings reflect his wisdom and compassion, and whatever shortcomings our renderings may have be attributed solely to us.

We wish to gratefully acknowledge the White Plum Asanga (Dharma successors in Maezumi Roshi's lineage), all members of the White Plum Asanga, and especially the sangha of ZCLA Buddha Essence Temple, for their encouragement and support of this project.

Our deep appreciation also to our editor and collaborator at Wisdom Publications, Josh Bartok, whose skillful work and creative understanding greatly helped in bringing these writings to their present form.

Wendy Egyoku Nakao
John Daishin Buksbazen
Zen Center of Los Angeles
Buddha Essence Temple
February 21, 2002

Foreword
to the original edition of *On Zen Practice,* volume 1

Once, many years ago, I heard a Buddhist priest speak at a Bodhi Day ceremony to an assembly of congregations from all Buddhist temples in Honolulu. His subject was the dual nature of the Buddhadharma: wisdom and compassion. To my great disappointment, however, he could not bring these two themes together. They remained separate, and a wonderful opportunity to present the essence of deep realization was lost.

Truly, compassion and wisdom are the same thing. When Bodhidharma came from India to China, Zhigong, the advisor to Emperor Wu of Liang, rightly identified him as the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. The archetypes of Bodhidharma, embodying fierce discipline and consummate wisdom, and Avalokiteshvara, embodying love and compassion, have reflected the two aspects of the same human being, wise compassion and loving wisdom. In these pages of *On Zen Practice*, the timeless nature of the Dharma as wisdom-compassion is vividly presented.

Ummon Bun'en Zenji (Yunmen Wenyan, d. 949 c.e.) taught this by the model of a box and its lid. There must be a perfect fit. Reading the record of his instruction, we find a wide variety of styles. Each of his responses, however, like each of the responses of every authentic master, is cued to the time, the place, and the circumstances of the encounter. Included in the latter would be the exact nature of the student's need. You don't feed a baby a hot pepper, no matter how hungry the child may be. Such is the wisdom of compassion and the compassion of wisdom. It is hard to meet an authentic master of Zen Buddhism, but here we have one in Taizan Maezumi Roshi. He is a dharma successor in all important streams of Zen,

and has established an exemplary Zen center and gathered about him many talented disciples. There is no need to look further for a master of wisdom-compassion.

True mastery is many things. It is breadth of mind and spirit and the avoidance of division. Implicit in *On Zen Practice* is acknowledgement that multiple themes, even disparate views, form the tapestry of correct Zen teaching. It is not shikantaza alone, but also koan study. It is not the Soto or the Rinzai or the Harada stream of teaching, but all of them as a coherent and dynamic whole. It is not simply roshi, or even roshi and senior disciples, but roshi and all his students. It is not priest or lay person or scholar, but a community. Truly there are no barriers.

I have heard many teachers speak warmly of their own masters, quoting them continually. But in *On Zen Practice*, we find a remarkable spectrum of Zen teachers, and we can sense the gratitude of Maezumi Roshi and his disciples to them all.

It is not a random selection, however. Beginning with Maezumi Roshi himself, these are talented and unique maestros of their art. Yasutani Roshi, one of Maezumi Roshi's principal teachers, sacrificed all social prestige and devoted himself solely to teaching and writing, living in the lowliest of circumstances. His fiery spirit still burns fiercely in his successors and on the pages of his many books.

Koryu Osaka Roshi is an equally splendid teacher who was never ordained a priest. Like Yasutani Roshi, he devoted himself to lay disciples, many of them college students. Maezumi Roshi studied with Koryu Roshi also, first in his college days, and much later as a conclusion of his formal training. I didn't get to know Koryu Roshi as well as I did Yasutani Roshi, but I remember him vividly from his one visit to the Maui Zendo, when a mild little man with the uncertainties of one almost blind suddenly became Mt. Fuji itself thundering the Dharma in a teisho.

Ko'un Yamada Roshi, Dharma brother of Maezumi Roshi in Yasutani Roshi's line, was my own Zen master. I knew him to be an exacting teacher whose breadth of spirit matches Maezumi Roshi's own and attracted crowds of Christians as well as Buddhists to his modest dojo in Kamakura.

Finally, students at the Zen Center of Los Angeles are represented here in a Dharma talk by Maezumi Roshi's senior Dharma successor, Tetsugen Glassman Sensei, and in the splendid production of this publication, in

which John Daishin Buksbazen had a key role. We gain a vivid sense of enlightened Sangha spirit from them all.

We learn in Zen practice the infinitely precious nature of each particular entity, person, animal, plant, thing, and their complete equality. It is not an easy path. It is not easy to brush away the delusions that cloud emancipating truth. Without religious devotion, Zen becomes a kind of hobby. Without the Great Death and Great Rebirth, it becomes a kind of self-improvement exercise. It is not a subject to be mastered with a certain form or a certain curriculum, but a lifetime training. Yet with the devotion and rebirth so clearly manifest here, how easy it all is!

Robert Aitken
Honolulu, Hawai'i, 1976

I. Introduction

Why Practice?

Taizan Maezumi

> *This Dharma, the subtle Dharma that has been transmitted by all Buddha-Tathagatas, is abundantly inherent in each individual; yet without practice it will not be manifested, and without enlightenment it will not be perceived. ...Since it is the practice of enlightenment, that practice has no beginning and since it is enlightenment within the practice, that realization has no end.*
>
> Eihei Dogen, from "Bendowa" in *Shobogenzo*

People practice Zen for many reasons. For some, it is a means to establish better physical and emotional health; for others, it leads into deeper realization of their own non-Buddhist religion or philosophy, and for yet others, Zen practice is the direct, living experience of what Shakyamuni Buddha realized over 2,500 years ago.

People who come to Zen practice are looking for more than mere words or concepts. Words and concepts by themselves are inadequate to help us most fully with the greatest possible awareness, and to enable us to grow spiritually.

In one sense, Zen practice is like regular exercise: if done regularly, it builds strength, gracefulness, and self-confidence, and helps us more effectively respond to the situations we all face every day. And Zen practice is also like a laboratory: Through practice we can continuously test our understanding to see if it is adequate or not. If we never test our

beliefs through actual practice, we cannot find out whether they are true or false.

When Shakyamuni Buddha first realized his true nature—and, in so doing, realized the true nature of all beings—he said that from the beginning, all beings are intrinsically perfect, sharing the virtues and wisdom of the awakened Buddha. But, he said, we remain unaware of this simply because our understanding is topsy-turvy. The Buddha spent the remainder of his life after his awakening enlarging upon this statement, and teaching how each of us can realize this truth for ourselves through practice.

But before we have realized it for ourselves, this truth is like an uncut diamond. We could not really say that it is worthless, nor could we say it is something other than a diamond. But until it is skillfully cut and meticulously polished, its sparkling diamond-nature might not be visible. The beautiful color and clarity that make it so highly prized would remain only in the realm of potential.

Of course, we might sincerely believe it to be a diamond. We might even tell others, "This is a diamond and is therefore worth a great deal." Yet it would seem peculiar to say, "I don't need to cut and polish this diamond; I know that it is a diamond, and that's good enough for me." Rather, we must cut that diamond and polish its many facets carefully so that its lovely nature can be shared and enjoyed by all who see it.

And so it is with our practice. We don't wish to make diamonds out of mud—we wish to properly appreciate what we already have, what is inherent in us.

So Zen practice must be done physically—not just through belief. Our whole practice rests upon a physical base, just as our lives begin physically. First we learn to bring our bodies into harmony—we learn how to physically sit in the proper fashion. Then, sitting properly, our breathing settles into a harmonious cycle on its own—we stop panting and gasping and start to breathe easily, smoothly, and naturally. And as body and breath begin to settle down and no longer create disturbances for us, we find that the mind too is given the opportunity to settle into its own smooth and natural functioning. The racket and babble of our noisy minds give way to the clarity and naturalness of our true selves. In this way we come to know who we really are, and we come to understand the true nature of our life and death.

Finally, once we begin to establish this direct physical harmony between body, breath, and mind, we have a chance to extend the benefits of our practice to one another. We can learn to live together in a way that leads to the realization of everyone's true nature not only on an individual level but also as a community, as a Sangha.

This kind of group practice, such as takes place at a Zen center, can be of real benefit to our world—a world in which harmony is scarcer even than diamonds, and in which the realization of Truth is often regarded as an impossible dream.

In fact, we can say that the Three Treasures of Buddhism—Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha—are altogether nothing more or less than practice. The Buddha is the one who realizes. The Dharma is what is realized. And the Sangha is the harmony of realization and practice, both communal and individual, in accord with the Buddha Way. Hence, all relationships teach us even as we appreciate and polish each other, endlessly.

Can Everyone Realize True Nature?

Taizan Maezumi

CAN EVERYONE realize true nature? Before we say yes or no to this question, let us think about what "realizing one's true nature" means. "True nature" is a synonym of Buddha nature; and Buddha nature is in turn also known as the original self, one's original face, Mind, Mu, thusness, reality, or even "the cypress tree in the garden"—according to the situation.

It will clarify our understanding to examine Buddha nature from three different standpoints. The first is *shoin bussho,* the Buddha nature inherent in all beings, whether enlightened or not. The next is *ryoin bussho,* the Buddha nature manifested when one begins to practice the Dharma. And the last is *enin bussho,* the Buddha nature of one who has attained enlightenment.

Shoin bussho is like unmined gold. Regardless of whether or not people realize it, the gold is there in the earth. The second, *ryoin bussho,* is like knowing how to extract the gold. The third, *enin bussho,* is like mining the gold and having it in your hands. This is a very simple analogy, of course, but it may be useful to you.

In reality, all of us are nothing *but* Buddha nature. And yet, to draw upon our analogy, if we are not aware that what we have in our hands is in fact gold, we won't feel wealthy, and we will not be satisfied until we realize what we have. So in order to realize the gold in our hands, our Buddha nature, we have to exert ourselves. We all know that in some places in the ground there is gold, and in other places there is not. If we

dig in the wrong place, regardless of how diligently we try, it is in vain. So in order to realize Buddha nature, we have to employ the right means in the right way to actually find the gold.

And so, what, then, is the right means?

Let's reflect upon the words of Dogen Zenji: "It is not a matter of being smart or dull, well-learned or foolish, but that when one practices wholeheartedly to find the Way, that is nothing but the accomplishment of the Way." Straightforward wholeheartedness is the essence. The famous words of Dogen Zenji *isshiki no bendo* mean "to practice the Way with wholeheartedness," or "to become one with whatever you do." This becoming one is the key. When you really become one with whatever you do, that is the realization of the Way; yet whether you realize your true nature or not depends on you.

Even being lazy and not practicing is still nothing but manifesting being-lazy-and-not-practicing Buddha nature. This unrealized Buddha nature is like having gold but believing oneself poor. The Buddha offers us this story: An impoverished man had a very rich friend. One time they met, enjoyed a few drinks, and eventually the impoverished man fell asleep. The rich man felt sorry for him and secretly slipped a precious jewel into his garment. After they parted, this poor man returned again to his life as a beggar without knowing he had that precious jewel. After some time they met again and the rich friend was surprised to see his friend still begging, and asked him: "I gave you a jewel; why did you not use it to make your life comfortable?" The beggar protested, "You never gave me anything!" So the rich friend reached into the garment where he had put the jewel, took it out, and showed it to him. Buddha nature is like this.

To discover this jewel, this gold, our true nature, we must have faith. Faith is fundamental, a very important matter. Strengthening our faith is synonymous with strengthening our practice. But we must have faith in the right things. What are the right things?

We must put our faith firmly in the teachings of the Buddha and the ancestral teachers. Having faith in the right things means we put ourselves wholeheartedly into practice and practice diligently. Furthermore, one should have strong faith in oneself, in the fact that one's life is itself nothing but Buddha nature. This kind of strong faith leads us to better practice. We strengthen our practice, and this further

strengthens our faith, and this faith, again, strengthens our practice. It is like a circle.

Dogen Zenji said that our practice is like a spiral comprising four strands: raising the bodhi mind, practicing, attaining realization, and attaining liberation. In the state of liberation lies the bodhi mind, the mind that aspires to enlightenment, which leads again to practice, then attainment, then liberation, spiraling ever upward.

II. On Form

"Zen," by Koryu Osaka

Fukanzazengi: "Principles of Seated Meditation"

Eihei Dogen

Translated by Carl Bielefeldt

FUNDAMENTALLY SPEAKING, the basis of the Way is perfectly pervasive; how could it be contingent on practice and verification? The vehicle of the ancestors is naturally unrestricted; why should we expend sustained effort? Surely the whole being is far beyond defilement; who could believe in a method to polish it? Never is it apart from this very place; what is the use of a pilgrimage to practice it? And yet, if a hair's breadth of distinction exists, the gap is like that between heaven and earth; once the slightest like or dislike arises, all is confused and the mind is lost.

Though you are proud of your understanding and replete with insight, getting hold of the wisdom that knows at a glance, though you attain the Way and clarify the mind, giving rise to the spirit that assaults the heavens, you may loiter in the precincts of the entrance and still lack something of the vital path of liberation. Even in the case of the one of Jetavana, innately wise though he was, we can see the traces of his six years sitting erect; and in the case of the one of Shaolin, though he succeeded to the mind seal, we still hear of the fame of his nine years facing the wall. When even the ancient sages were like this, how could men today dispense with pursuing [the Way]? Therefore, stop the intellectual practice of investigating words and chasing after talk; study the backward step of turning the light and shining it back. Body and mind

will drop away of themselves, and your original face will appear. If you want such a state, urgently work at such a state.

For studying Zen, one should have quiet quarters. Be moderate in food and drink. Cast aside all involvements and discontinue all affairs. Do not think of good or evil; do not deal with right or wrong. Halt the revolutions of mind, intellect, and consciousness; stop the calculations of thoughts, ideas, and perceptions. Do not intend to make a Buddha, much less be attached to sitting still.

In the place where you regularly sit, spread a thick mat and use a cushion on top of it. Sit in either the full cross-legged or half cross-legged position. For the full position, first place your right foot on your left thigh; then place your left foot on your right thigh. For the half position, simply rest your left foot on your right thigh.

Loosen your robe and belt, and arrange them properly. Next, place your right hand on your left foot, and your left hand on your right palm. Press the tips of your thumbs together. Then straighten your body and sit erect. Do not lean to the left or right, forward or backward.

Your ears should be in line with your shoulders, and your nose in line with your navel. Press your tongue against the front of your palate and close your lips and teeth. The eyes should always remain open. Breathe gently through the nose.

Once you have regulated your posture, take a breath and exhale fully. Swing to the left and right. Sitting fixedly, think of not thinking. How do you think of not thinking? Nonthinking. This is the essential art of zazen. Zazen is not the practice of dhyana: it is just the Dharma gate of ease and joy. It is the practice and verification of ultimate bodhi. The koan realized, baskets and cages cannot get to it.

If you grasp the point of this [practice], you are like the dragon gaining the water or the tiger taking to the mountains. You should realize that when right thought is present, dullness and agitation are, from the start, struck aside.

When you arise from sitting, move slowly and arise calmly; do not be hasty or rough.

Considering the past, we see that transcending the profane and surpassing the holy, shedding [this body] while seated and fleeing [this life] while standing are totally subject to this power. Surely, then, to grasp the turning of the opportunity through a finger, a pole, a needle, or a

mallet, and to present the verification of the accord with a whisk, a fist, a staff, or a shout—these are not to be understood through the discriminations of thinking; much less can they be known through the practice and verification of supernormal powers. They must represent conduct beyond sound and form; how could they fail to provide a standard before knowledge and understanding?

Therefore, it does not matter whether one is very smart or very stupid; there is no distinction between those of sharp and dull faculties. Singleminded exertion is itself pursuit of the Way. Practice and verification are by nature undefiled. Advancement [to enlightenment] is just an everyday affair. In our world and the other quarters, from the Western Heaven to the Eastern Earth, all equally maintain the Buddha seal, while each enjoys its own style of teaching. They devote themselves only to sitting; they are obstructed by fixedness. Though they speak of ten thousand distinctions and a thousand differences, they only study Zen and pursue the Way.

Why abandon the seat in your own home to wander in vain through the dusty regions of another land? If you make one false step, you miss what is right before you. Since you have already attained the functioning essence of a human body, do not pass your days in vain; when one takes care of the essential function of the Way of the Buddha, who can carelessly enjoy the spark from a flint? Verily form and substance are like the dew on the grass, and the fortunes of life like the lightning flash: in an instant they are emptied, in a moment they are lost.

Eminent students [of the Dharma], long accustomed to groping for the elephant, pray do not doubt the true dragon. Apply yourselves to the way that points directly at reality; honor the man who is through with learning and free from action. Accord with the bodhi of all the Buddhas; succeed to the samadhi of all the Patriarchs. If you act this way for a long time, you will be this way. Your treasure store will open of itself, and you will use it as you will.

"Gotsu," by Taizan Maezumi.
"Gotsu" is the shape of a rocky mountain
as in the expression *"gotsugotsu chi"*
("sit as a big, rocky mountain, sit fixedly")
used by Eihei Dogen in the *Fukanzazengi*
to describe zazen.

Commentary on Dogen Zenji's *Fukanzazengi*

Taizan Maezumi

Dogen Zenji wrote the *Fukanzazengi* between October and December of the year 1227 C.E., at the age of twenty-eight, just after he had returned from China. He had previously done koan study under Master Eisai for a year until Master Eisai passed away, then studied under Eisai Zenji's first successor, Priest Myozen, for about nine years. Following this, Dogen Zenji went to China with Myozen and stayed there for about four years.

Now this is a very important point: even though Dogen Zenji doesn't emphasize koan study very much in his writings, he nonetheless studied koans himself for nine years. Then, going further, he attained a more thorough enlightenment under Tendo Nyojo in China, with whom he remained for a couple of years more. When Master Dogen returned to Japan, he wrote this work, the *Fukanzazengi*, which may well have been his very first work. It was after this that he wrote the *Shobogenzo*.

But Dogen Zenji actually wrote two *Shobogenzos:* the one to which we usually refer, which he wrote in Japanese, and another, which he wrote in Chinese. The Chinese *Shobogenzo* was actually a compilation of some three hundred classical koans, which he may have studied under Myozen, as well as under Master Eisai. But somehow or other, until only very recently, the Soto School has managed to overlook this collection of three hundred koans.

Nonetheless, Dogen Zenji used koans quite commonly, not to mention using numerous passages from the sutras which he quoted in a koan-like

manner. Strictly speaking, you cannot really appreciate either *Shobogenzo* without an understanding of koans.

Of course, you can interpret koans intellectually, but such mere interpretation is not so good. You should have your own realization.

The title of this essay by Dogen Zenji, *Fukanzazengi*, could be translated in a number of ways. Some translators have used "The Universal Promotion of the Principles of Zazen." Here it is translated as "The Principles of Seated Meditation." The thing to understand about this title is that, first of all, Dogen Zenji isn't just giving a lecture on how to do zazen; he is, in fact, really urging everybody to do it. Furthermore, he uses the word *fukan* in the title to convey the universality of these principles, applying them without exception to all beings. Of course, when we talk about how to sit, we may say "just sit." But merely putting your body in a sitting position isn't quite enough. Zazen literally means, "sitting Zen." And that raises the question of what is Zen. Our practice should be real zazen, and we must clarify what this is for ourselves. And yet, zazen can be done by anybody and everybody. In order to do zazen, we don't need to have anything more than this body. That much is quite sufficient.

When Dogen Zenji returned from China, he wasn't quite satisfied with the kind of Zen practice then prevalent in Japan. He felt that it was somehow less precise, less vital than it should be. For example, Eisai Zenji himself combined the principles of Zen and the teachings of the Tendai and Shingon Schools. So it wasn't really Zen alone that was being taught and practiced.

But Dogen Zenji, after his great realization under Master Tendo Nyojo, was strongly convinced that just zazen alone should be practiced. In writing this piece, Dogen Zenji wanted not only to promote the practice of zazen as such, but to encourage people to do the kind of genuine zazen that he had himself experienced and come to understand deeply.

It is characteristic of Dogen Zenji's writing style that he says the most important thing immediately, in the first couple of lines or in the first paragraph. Yasutani Roshi once told me that Harada Roshi used to stress the significance of the opening words of the *Fukanzazengi*. *"Tazunuru ni sore...,"* which I would translate roughly as "After searching exhaustively..." And yet in many English translations, this introductory phrase is not translated at all, being regarded as an untranslatable formal

opening. But that may not be quite correct in this instance, for it greatly affects the meaning of the first paragraph.

Let us examine *Fukanzazengi* thoroughly.

"Fundamentally speaking, the basis of the Way is perfectly pervasive..." The sense of this opening passage, along with the introduction I just mentioned, is something like this: "After a thorough search for the truth, Dogen Zenji came to the realization that the very essence of the Way is basically perfect and all-pervading." The character *moto,* translated here as "the essence" is translated as a noun: the "essence of the Way." Or we could read it as "the fundamental Way." It is fundamental because it is universal; it is all-pervading; it is complete. It is *shunyata,* emptiness, Buddha nature. It is our life!

We may speak of the Way as perfectly pervasive, but perhaps "free" might be clearer. But the Japanese word that means "perfectly pervasive" can also mean "unhindered functioning," and this functioning is active and positive. Before we go further, let me explain the two aspects of our practice and our life: the intrinsic, or absolute; and the experiential, or relative. The intrinsic refers to an ultimate reality, the way things really are, whether or not we are aware of it. The experiential or relative level refers to what we directly and consciously experience as "real."

Looking at this passage from the experiential perspective, if we don't practice zazen and the Way correctly, then we miss the point. And thus we create a gap between ourselves and externals, and we cannot recognize the Way.

But when we examine it from the intrinsic perspective, just being as we are is perfect. Perhaps the word "perfect" is not quite adequate; let me add the word "complete." Nothing is lacking; nothing is in excess. No two things are identical. Each of us is distinctly different, perfect, and complete.

All of us enter into Zen to find our true self, the real implication of life and death. But here it says "Fundamentally speaking, the basis of the Way is perfectly pervasive..." What is the Way? In technical terms, it's *anuttara samyak sambodhi,* unsurpassable supreme enlightenment. This Sanskrit phrase can also translated as the "Supreme Way," the "very best Way," the "unsurpassable Way," or as "Perfect Wisdom," which is what enlightenment actually is. Enlightenment is synonymous with the Way. The Supreme Way, complete realization, is perfect in itself, by itself.

And again, we may ask, "What is wisdom? What is *anuttara samyak sambodhi*?" It is our life itself. We not only have that wisdom; we are constantly using it. When it's cold, we put on more clothing. When it's hot, we take some clothes off. When hungry, we eat. When sad, we cry. Being happy, we laugh. That's perfect wisdom.

And this perfect wisdom doesn't only pertain to humans, but to anything and everything. Birds chirp, dogs run, mountains are high, valleys low. It's all perfect wisdom! The seasons change, the stars shine in the heavens; it's perfect wisdom. Regardless of whether we realize it or not, we are always in the midst of the Way. Or, more strictly speaking, we are nothing but the Way itself.

Of course, there are always reasons and causes for our being the way we are. The Law of Causation applies to everybody; no one escapes from it. In a sense, that law is everything. So the key is actually how clearly we realize the Way, which is, after all, nothing but ourselves. And realizing that the Way is all-pervading, perfect, and complete, what have we to worry about?

In the Soto School, the emphasis is more on this original realization or fundamental enlightenment, which is nothing but our life itself. Then, what we should do is take care of it and not stain or defile it. Whatever we do then becomes the act of the Buddha. That's what the first line refers to when it says, *"Fundamentally speaking, the basis of the Way is perfectly pervasive; how could it be contingent on practice and verification?"*

"The vehicle of the ancestors is naturally unrestricted; why should we expend sustained effort?" The vehicle that is this very essence of life is totally free, without bondage or restriction. That vehicle is nothing but our life, and thus our life is also originally free, unrestricted. Of course, as long as we are alive we have to live under certain conditions, which, in a sense, is a limitation. But within limitation, there is always freedom. Regardless of where you go or what you do, in one way or another your life is restricted. Don't look to circumstances or environment for your freedom. You won't find it. You can always find freedom within limitation.

Surely the whole being is far beyond defilement; who could believe in a method to polish it?

We have all sorts of defilements, but altogether it's far beyond defilements. This alone is a nice koan!

"The whole being." What is the whole being? Again, it's nothing but the body of each of us. Each one of us must go beyond all sorts of defilements. It's unnecessary to wipe off the dust of defilement as such. Isn't it wonderful?

There is a famous passage from the *Platform Sutra*, quoting poems by the Sixth Ancestor Huineng and the monk Shenxiu. Shenxiu's verse was:

Our body is the Bodhi tree,
Our mind a mirror bright.
Take care to wipe them hour by hour,
And let no dust alight.

And the Sixth Ancestor responded:

There is in fact no Bodhi tree,
Nor stand of mirror bright.
Since all is emptiness itself,
Where can dust alight?

Do you see? It's not a matter of dusting off, or of shining or polishing. Our original self, our original nature, Buddha nature—*that is the Way.* The Way, the whole being, is complete, perfect, free, all-pervading.

"Never is it apart from this very place; what is the use of a pilgrimage to practice it?" This is very important: The Way is always here; always right here and right now. Always, wherever you go, wherever you are, it's right here and right now, complete, free, all-pervading. Isn't it wonderful? That is our life. Just be so, be so. Don't defile it or stain this moment, right here and right now.

"And yet if a hair's breadth of distinction exists, the gap is like that between heaven and earth..." That means our individual existence or being is absolute and obvious as the nose on your face. Each of us is perfect and free. This is a very strong affirmation of our life.

The point of our practice is not to become something other than what we already are, such as a buddha or enlightened person, but to realize or become aware of the fact that we are intrinsically, originally, the Way

itself, free and complete. If we practice to become something else, we simply put another head on top of our own, making ourselves ghosts. One head is enough!

So then, how do we realize that our life is complete and free? Or, if we realize it, how *clearly* do we realize that point? Clarifying this matter is why we practice.

In *Shobogenzo Genjokoan*, Dogen Zenji says, "To study the Enlightened Way is to study the self. And to study the self is to forget the self." To forget the self is not to create any distance between oneself and the Way. Then what creates our experience of separateness?

What creates the separation is always limited, self-centered consciousness. With consciousness per se, there is nothing at all wrong. Consciousness is a plain, pure function of the body-mind, and not a matter of right or wrong, problematical or not problematical. But our trouble is that we give too much value, too much authority, to our conscious functioning. We think that we can figure out everything by our intelligence, by our thinking, by our ideas and thoughts and concepts. That's how we get into trouble.

So, in practicing zazen, set aside those ideas and preconceived notions. Just stop that entire process of analysis and idea formation.

Once the slightest like or dislike arises, all is confused and the mind is lost.

When you start having ideas of liking or disliking, right or wrong, good or bad, enlightened or deluded, then you lose the Mind. Again, this Mind is synonymous with the Way.

Though you are proud of your understanding and replete with insight, getting hold of the wisdom that knows at a glance, though you attain the Way and clarify the mind, giving rise to the spirit that assaults the heavens, you may loiter in the precincts of the entrance and still lack something of the vital path of liberation.

Even attaining very clear enlightenment, still such attainment is just a beginning. There is a saying in Zen, "The head is through, but the body is still sticking out." Attaining enlightenment, clear vision, wisdom, seeing that the whole world is nothing but myself, such understanding is nothing

but the beginning. And as long as you are stuck at that level, then you have fallen into the ocean of poison and can never liberate yourself.

Consider the story of Hakuin Zenji, who at the age of twenty-four years, attained very clear enlightenment upon hearing the temple gong at dawn. He was caught by a terrific sensation of delight and the thought that nobody in the last hundred years had had such a clear enlightenment as he. Much later, reflecting upon his youth, he wrote of this experience that "conceit and arrogance came up just like the ocean tide." Later on, he met Shoju Roshi, who deflated him thoroughly and helped him attain a still clearer realization.

We must be careful about how we proceed in our practice. Dogen Zenji warns against attaining a little bit of realization and getting prematurely satisfied and conceited. To the extent that we do so, we tie ourselves up instead of becoming liberated.

Even in the case of the one of Jetavana, innately wise though he was, we can see the traces of his six years sitting erect.

The Buddha, who was born in the grove of Jetavana, was born a prince. Even prior to becoming a monk, he was the finest youth in his country, excelling in all kinds of learning, literature, and sports. Yet even having such extraordinary talents and such a fine character, he still had to struggle for six years. Actually, it was more than that, because for six years prior to beginning his meditation under the bodhi tree, he practiced the most severe asceticism. Finally he realized that asceticism was not the best way to practice, and started to sit by himself. Despite his tremendous capacity and extraordinary character, Shakyamuni still had to struggle greatly. So no wonder we need to practice hard.

In a way it seems contradictory, for Dogen Zenji has written that it's not really a matter of practice or enlightenment. If this is true, then why do we have to practice? But again that goes back to the two aspects of our practice: Speaking from the intrinsic perspective, of course, we say that fundamentally we are all buddhas and there is no need for anything such as practice or enlightenment since that is our true nature anyway. But the problem is that we may only believe that theoretically; we don't know it firsthand. To become directly aware of it and know it fully is why we practice.

And in the case of the one of Shaolin, though he succeeded to the mind seal, we still hear of the fame of his nine years facing the wall. When even the ancient sages were like this, how could men today dispense with pursuing [the Way]?

What is the mind-seal? Again it is a synonym for the Way and also for the mind-to-mind transmission of the Dharma. In a sense, there is nothing to be transmitted. Realization is itself the transmission; a teacher just approves the realization. That is to say, you transmit yourself to yourself—by realizing that this very body, this very mind, this very place where we stand is nothing but the Buddha. What more could there be?

Generation after generation, the ancestral teachers did this. And, after their self-transmitted mind-seal is approved, it is handed down to the next generation, who transmit it to themselves. Self-styled understanding is insufficient. For this reason, we emphasize the importance of the transmission by a teacher who really knows what it is, and how it should be taken care of.

Therefore, stop the intellectual practice of investigating words and chasing after talk; study the backward step of turning the light and shining it back. Body and mind will drop away of themselves, and your original face will appear. If you want such a state, urgently work at such a state.

Don't waste your time intellectualizing instead of really practicing, lest your intellectual activities become a kind of obstacle.

Dogen Zenji refers to the "the backward step." This is the key. In our everyday lives, our impulse is to go forward. However, instead of going forward, what if we step back and carefully consider practice in that very moment? How do we defile ourselves? We create gaps. These gaps, created by our self-centered habitual consciousness, divide us from so-called externals, or others. It is this kind of consciousness that discriminates.

Of course, the recognition of differences is a very important matter, too. Especially in koan study, you deal with the relationship between oneness and differences in a very special way—but only after having realized oneness. Without this ground of realization, we create all kinds of value judgments that divide ourselves from ourselves or set ourselves apart from externals. Value judgments are, in a way, necessary, and yet

because of them we create problems. So the thing to do is step backward and not rush forward. Then examine and reflect upon yourself carefully.

"Body and mind will drop away of themselves." You don't need to concern yourself about body and mind dropping away—when you practice as Dogen Zenji describes, it will happen. First you sit, and develop your samadhi. In samadhi the limited self-centered consciousness disappears. Then you recognize that you and the universe are one. It just happens automatically.

"Body and mind will drop away of themselves, and your original face will appear." "Original face" means enlightenment. *"If you want such a state, urgently work at such a state."* "Such a state" also refers to enlightenment. If you want to attain enlightenment, you should practice enlightenment without delay. And the practice of enlightenment is zazen.

For studying Zen, one should have quiet quarters. Be moderate in food and drink. Cast aside all involvements and discontinue all affairs. Do not think of good or evil; do not deal with right or wrong. Halt the revolutions of mind, intellect, and consciousness; stop the calculations of thoughts, ideas, and perceptions. Do not intend to make a Buddha, much less be attached to sitting still.

In the place where you regularly sit, spread a thick mat and use a cushion on top of it. Sit in either the full cross-legged or half cross-legged position. For the full position, first place your right foot on your left thigh; then place your left foot on your right thigh. For the half position, simply rest your left foot on your right thigh.

Loosen your robe and belt, and arrange them properly. Next, place your right hand on your left foot, and your left hand on your right palm. Press the tips of your thumbs together. Then straighten your body and sit erect. Do not lean to the left or right, forward or backward.

Your ears should be in line with your shoulders, and your nose in line with your navel. Press your tongue against the front of your palate and close your lips and teeth. The eyes should always remain open. Breathe gently through the nose.

"Studying Zen" is one translation of the Japanese word, *sanzen*. *Sanzen* usually refers to the private face-to-face interview with a teacher, which can also be called *nishitsu*. *Nishitsu* literally means "entering the room," and refers to entering the teacher's room for private Dharma combat and Dharma dialogue. But Dogen Zenji also says that zazen itself is *sanzen*. It's

that important! Zazen itself is as important as private teachings from a master. In the word *sanzen*, *san* means "penetration"—you should really penetrate yourself, really become yourself, which is equal to everything. That's *sanzen,* and that's zazen.

"One should have quiet quarters." When we really get used to sitting, sound doesn't bother us much, but if our zazen is still getting established, it may. Although a quiet room is preferable, just do your best wherever you are.

"Be moderate in food and drink." Moderation is important. And it's better to avoid sitting right after eating. Rest, digest your meal for at least an hour, then start sitting.

"Cast aside all involvements and discontinue all affairs." How, you might ask, can we live our lives with all the responsibilities we have to take care of, if we "cast aside all involvements"? At least when sitting, put aside all considerations of work, household duties, and family responsibilities.

Sitting and just thinking about all sorts of things, one after another, is not zazen; in fact, it's daydreaming! So when sitting, cast aside all these involvements and affairs; just try to sit well.

Occasionally I say "just sit," but you may find that a little hard to do. So you can do it gradually: First, empty yourself. How to do that? If you are working on koans or on breathing, totally put yourself into your koan or into your breathing. Let it occupy you completely.

If you are practicing shikantaza, it's especially hard to do this. In all probability, you are not "just sitting," but "just thinking," "just imagining," or just something else. So in order to get past all that and truly just sit, you must try to cut off clinging to the senses.

When you hear a sound, instead of remaining outside of it, and thereby fighting it, just become the sound yourself. Really being the sound yourself, the sound won't disturb you anymore. The "me" that perceives the sound becomes one with the sound, leaving only the sound itself. This is emptying yourself.

With a koan it's the same process. Really put yourself into the koan, then you'll forget about yourself. That's what we call *ninku*, "person emptied" or "subject emptied." But still there remains the dharma, the object. So next, empty that too! Again, by really being *thus,* you become unaware of even being *thus*. This is a state of samadhi: both person and dharma are empty; subject and object are both empty. This is called the

Great Death. In describing the Great Death, Dogen Zenji says "body and mind drop away." When body and mind spontaneously drop away, you transcend the bondage of limited consciousness.

However, this is not necessarily an easy thing to do. So your sitting should be stable, yet without tensing up or straining.

Do not think of good or evil; do not deal with right or wrong. Halt the revolutions of mind, intellect, and consciousness; stop the calculations of thoughts, ideas, and perceptions.

When sitting, put thoughts aside. But this doesn't imply that we deny the value of consciousness; Dogen Zenji isn't urging us merely to become like logs or stones. Without any thoughts or views, we can still function clearly, like a bright mirror. The mirror is there and simply reflects whatever is before it. When the object vanishes, so does the reflection; not a trace remains behind, but the mirror is still there. That's the state of mind to maintain during the practice of zazen. It's hard, but encourage yourself to sit like this.

I often compare the mind to a pond. When the water is clear and undisturbed, the reflection of the moon is perfectly clear. But if the water is stirred up by winds, the surface of the pond is disturbed, and then waves arise and and distort the reflections. The wind of thoughts, opinions, and ideas causes waves in the mind. If a pond only had a few ripples, at least we could still recognize the moon and tell where it is. But when it's really choppy, we cannot locate the moon, even though the pond is still, of course, reflecting. Although we ourselves are nothing but Buddha nature, nothing but Mu, nothing but Mind, we cannot recognize this because of the choppy condition of our minds. But nonetheless, the pond is still always reflecting—and so are we.

Only when we are calm will we see the reflection of the moon clearly on the surface of the water. Then we'll recognize it for what it is. That recognition is always instantaneous; sudden, not gradual. But once this recognition comes, if we don't continue to sit, it may fade away—unless it's *extremely* clear to begin with. And when you have that kind of clarity, then you simply cannot stop practicing.

Practicing in this fashion you realize the true nature, or as Dogen Zenji says, "Your original face will manifest." This process occurs automatically.

"Do not intend to make a Buddha...." If you have any expectations, right there you have created a split. Right there is where duality comes into being. So when you do zazen, you don't need to expect anything, just do so, just be so. *"...much less be attached to sitting still."* We can appreciate this in two ways. On the one hand, zazen is not simply sitting still; on the other, you must really be constantly practicing from morning to night. Whatever you do must be zazen.

That kind of solid, powerful practice has nothing to do with physical posture; rather it is the practice of zazen in each activity throughout the day.

In the place where you regularly sit, spread a thick mat and use a cushion on top of it. Sit in either the full cross-legged or half cross-legged position. For the full position, first place your right foot on your left thigh; then place your left foot on your right thigh. For the half position, simply rest your left foot on your right thigh.

Loosen your robe and belt, and arrange them properly. Next, place your right hand on your left foot, and your left hand on your right palm. Press the tips of your thumbs together. Then straighten your body and sit erect. Do not lean to the left or right, forward or backward.

Your ears should be in line with your shoulders, and your nose in line with your navel. Press your tongue against the front of your palate and close your lips and teeth. The eyes should always remain open. Breathe gently through the nose.

This last sentence is interesting. Some teachers place great emphasis on breathing technique, but see how little Dogen Zenji says about breathing: "Breathe gently through your nose." Those who find themselves having difficulty in zazen, straining to breathe deeply or slowly, should just breathe, as Dogen Zenji says, "gently through the nose." By carefully balancing the body without overemphasizing breathing technique, you can sit quite well.

Regarding the disposition of the eyes, just gaze downward at a point about four feet in front of you. Let your gaze move toward the tip of your nose, and then let it rest upon the floor at a distance of three or four feet.

This is a good eye position, and when you maintain it, the eyelids usually will shut halfway. Thus without any special effort, you can have proper eye position. But if you are facing a wall and it is very close, or if

your eyelids are naturally droopy, you can even close your eyes—but watch out for the tendency to become drowsy or to drift into thinking or daydreaming. Of course, it's better to keep the eyes half-opened, but even so, once you've established your practice fairly regularly, you'll not find closed eyes much of a problem. Make whatever adjustments of this sort you find most helpful in your sitting.

Dogen Zenji also speaks about the position of the mouth and tongue. Place the tip of your tongue against the roof of your mouth, leaving less room for air in the mouth. Close your lips, so that your teeth are touching lightly. By doing this, you can decrease your rate of salivation without any special effort—because when you become conscious of your saliva, you tend to produce more of it! But by leaving your mouth like this, you can forget about your salivation and strengthen your sitting.

Now, let me discuss posture briefly. The body should be perpendicular and not lean or incline in any direction. Sit up straight, carefully balanced. If you sit with poor posture, your body will ache. But over time, good posture will allow your body to adjust and you will sit more comfortably.

Even though Dogen Zenji doesn't mention the arm position, it is still important. Let your hands rest naturally on either your legs or feet, forming a circle with your arms. Be careful not to position your hands too high up on your abdomen. Your shoulder muscles should not be used to support your arms and hands; they should just rest naturally. Let the thumb-tips be about level with the navel, and, if you are sitting in half- or full-lotus, rest the hands on the soles or heels; otherwise just let your hands rest on your thighs.

Notice the lower back, the lower abdomen, the joints of the legs, the soles of the feet, and the hands—all these are in the same general area, and this area forms the very center of your sitting. Each of us has slight differences in bone and muscle structure, but we can adjust our posture accordingly. So please sit strongly—but sit without any tension. By being tense, you can strain yourself to the point of exhaustion To sit strongly requires that your body be free of tension. When you really sit strongly, it's almost as though you are generating electricity; if anybody were to accidentally touch you, sparks would leap out!

When you do shikantaza, sit as if your very life depended on it, as if you were in a duel to the death. What kind of intense concentration would you have? You would need to be physically relaxed, and yet in a state of

greatly heightened alertness. When we sit, two major types of hindrances may occur: a scattered, busy mind, and a dull, drowsy mind. And the way to eliminate both these hindrances while we sit is to concentrate in zazen as though engaged in the fight for our very lives.

When you really concentrate, it involves the entire body-mind. The power you generate with strong concentration can keep you warm, even in the coldest winter weather. So when you sit, please be attentive.

Once you have regulated your posture, take a breath and exhale fully. Swing to the left and right. Sitting fixedly, think of not thinking. How do you think of not thinking? Nonthinking. This is the essential art of zazen.

"Think of not-thinking. How do you think of not-thinking? Nonthinking." Dogen Zenji is quoting the famous words of Master Yakusan Igen. A phrase like this could be certainly elaborated quite a bit—for our purposes, we can plainly take it to mean that we should stop grasping at thoughts and just sit. The unconditioned state is a state of nonthinking. So what is the unconditioned state? Don't develop or cling to *any* thoughts.

It is very important not to hold on to your ideas, opinions, emotions, all the forms of thinking. That very unconditioned, unadorned state of mind, that's the state of non-thinking. Sit in that state. Don't even think of becoming Buddha. Trying to become Buddha or trying to become enlightened becomes a hindrance.

This kind of preconception is a hindrance because we don't know what enlightenment is until we experience it firsthand. Thus, whatever we think of as enlightenment merely becomes an idea, and enlightenment is not an idea. As soon as we form an idea, right there a gap opens. By sitting we empty ourselves of ourselves and of our objects. Thus the subject-object relationship is eliminated altogether and you are one. Zazen itself manifests ultimate reality. That's shikantaza.

Please understand that it is not denying the functioning of our mind when we say, think non-thinking. Consciousness is vividly functioning, alive with ideas or thoughts. But that functioning is conditioned, and if we don't let go of the conditioned functioning of consciousness—the thoughts and ideas that arise—then we falsely find ourselves in those thoughts and ideas, and to the extent we do that, we restrict ourselves.

When we don't see this fact clearly, we imagine problems have origins outside ourselves. But this is not so: If there is any difficulty or problem, it's a problem of our own making.

And this is always the case! It may not seem so but it is. In a narrower sense it is so, and in a broader sense it is so too. We can blame others, and yet if we look at it from a larger perspective, they too are also part of ourselves. Ultimately, there is no one at all to blame.

When we really see into the nature of the self, then "my" becomes identical with "your" and "their" and even "its." That is the state of non-thinking. So again, we make ourselves as plain as possible, then just be as we are—and then our being becomes an absolute thing.

Zazen is not the practice of dhyana: it is just the Dharma gate of ease and joy. It is the practice and verification of ultimate bodhi.

The term used here is *practice and verification:* Practice *is* realization itself—we are practicing realization, or realizing our practice. That is our zazen.

This is to have deep faith in the fact that you are nothing but the Three Treasures. And having that faith, then sit, work, study. So whatever you do is nothing but the Buddha's action, expounding and manifesting the Dharma yourselves. And that is nothing but perfect unity and harmony altogether. Where's the problem? Even difficulties are nothing but the Dharma itself. What is there to complain about? What to be frustrated by? What to be annoyed about? "The practice and verification of absolute bodhi" is the manifestation of absolute reality. In a way it's zazen; and in a way it's yourself. Your zazen is absolute, and being so, you are also absolute.

The koan realized, baskets and cages cannot get to it. If you grasp the point of this [practice], you are like the dragon gaining the water or the tiger taking to the mountains. You should realize that when right thought is present, dullness and agitation are, from the start, struck aside.

"The koan realized, baskets and cages cannot get to it." Our own ideas, our own thoughts, these are the traps and snares and that very plain, mirror-

like state is the state that traps and snares can never reach. We snare ourselves with our fixed ideas.

Regardless of how fine a teacher you have or where you got your fine ideas, if you cling to any of them, then you're trapped! The monks who followed the Buddha knew this: At the beginning of the *Lotus Sutra*, as Buddha prepares to expound it on Mount Grdhakuta, it says that five hundred monks just stood up and left.

When you arise from sitting, move slowly and arise calmly; do not be hasty or rough. Considering the past, we see that transcending the profane and surpassing the holy, shedding [this body] while seated and fleeing [this life] while standing are totally subject to this power.

Now actually, this kind of thing happens—you would be amazed how much we can train ourselves. The Third Ancestor, Kanchi Sosan Daishi, died standing. Many monks died sitting. Some even died amid fire in a sitting position. One monk who died in this way composed as his final words the line "Emancipating the mind, even fire becomes cool." This shows the potential strength of zazen.

Surely, then, to grasp the turning of the opportunity through a finger, a pole, a needle or a mallet, and to present the verification of the accord with a whisk, a fist, a staff or shout—these are not to be understood through the discriminations of thinking; much less can they be known through the practice and verification of supernormal powers. They must represent conduct beyond sound and form; how could they fail to provide a standard before knowledge and understanding?

This is the place we get stuck. We try to understand enlightenment by our discriminative mind; yet, our discriminative, our discursive thought, is the very thing that binds us. The question really is how to go beyond, how to transcend that dichotomy. But we all have to start with that discriminative mind.

All of us want to liberate ourselves, to become free and peaceful. But that is not quite enough. That's just the *shravaka* spirit, the spirit of simply wanting one's own salvation. The bodhisattva spirit is simply to care more about others than about oneself. Since we are altogether one to begin with, regardless of how fully we realize it, it works out beautifully. To

think of others first, we do something for them; then, in one way or another, sooner or later it benefits ourselves. Dogen Zenji said that only the foolish think that concern for others is at one's own expense. It is not so; benefiting others and oneself is altogether one thing.

I really want you to have strong, inclusive aspiration and vows to accomplish the Buddha Way together with all beings. Then with such deep aspiration we encourage our practice. We just keep on going, and deep enlightened experiences will take place in one way or another. Here Dogen Zenji enumerates examples of such cases.

"Surely, then, to grasp the turning of the opportunity through a finger." The finger referred to is, of course, that of Gutei—that famous koan "Gutei's Finger"—which appears in *The Gateless Gate* and also in *The Book of Equanimity*. Whatever Gutei was asked, he just held up his finger. And when he was dying, he told his disciples, "I got this onefinger Zen from Master Tenryu, and I've used it all my life and have never exhausted it." Then, holding his finger up, he died.

Each of these objects Dogen Zenji mentions relates to famous cases of enlightenment: Ananda and the banner in front of the temple; Sekiso taking a step from the top of a hundred-foot-high pole; Kanadaiba's needle; Manjushri and the mallet; Hyakujo and the fly whisk; Baso's shout; Tokusan's staff. All these are instances of ancestors and bodhisattvas whose enlightenment experiences involved certain objects. In each of these instances there is no room for dichotomy or dualism, no room for thinking. For example, if you burn your finger or you get hurt, there's no room for thinking; you just shriek, "AAARRGGGHH!" That's all. That totalness, that absoluteness, that's what you should experience by yourself. How? Again the same principle of forgetting yourself, really becoming a total being.

"Indeed, it cannot be fully known by the practicing or realizing of supernatural powers either." Some people are attracted by supernatural powers. I've heard that even these days a number of people have certain occult powers. By increasing your samadhi power you can train yourself in that path if you wish to. But the point is that even acquiring such supernatural powers won't give us the wisdom by which we liberate ourselves and others from the tie of birth and death. The *gatha* we chant every evening says, "Life and death are of grave importance." To really take care of this

grave matter, to take care of our life thoroughly, is the aim of our practice.

...much less can they be known through the practice and verification of supernormal powers.

Regardless of being intelligent or dull, female or male, we have the same opportunity, the same chance to realize ourselves, and it all depends on each of us. It's not a matter of any distinction whatsoever.

Single-minded exertion is itself pursuit of the Way. Practice and verification are by nature undefiled. Advancement [to enlightenment] is just an everyday affair.

What makes defilement is self-centered, ego-centered ideas. When the time comes, we get up; when the time comes, we eat. Everything goes smoothly; that is the functioning of our wisdom. Ideally, whatever comes along, day after day, we just put ourselves into it.

"*Practice and verification are by nature undefiled. Advancement [to enlightenment] is just an everyday affair.*" This is one of the most important statements in the *Fukanzazengi*: "Going forward is a matter of ordinariness." Going forward no matter how much we accomplish is an everyday affair—it's ordinary. The word "ordinary" is etymologically related to "orderliness," and orderliness is extremely important. Orderliness of mind, orderliness of body, orderliness of daily life, orderliness of surroundings, orderliness of groups, orderliness of society, country, even of the moon—everything. No matter how far we go, we are just whatever we are. So we don't need to lose our heads, or put an extra head on top of ours. We just need to be ordinary. If we can live everyday like that, then there is no problem. Then practice and verification are naturally undefiled.

In our world and the other quarters, from the Western Heaven to the Eastern Earth, all equally maintain the Buddha seal, while each enjoys its own style of teaching. They devote themselves only to sitting; they are obstructed by fixedness. Though they speak of ten thousand distinctions and a thousand differences, they only study Zen and pursue the Way. Why abandon the seat in your own home to

wander in vain through the dusty regions of another land? If you make one false step, you miss what is right before you.

Here again we see Dogen Zenji's strong emphasis on zazen. "In our world" is the world where Shakyamuni resides, the Western Heaven is the world of Amida Buddha, and the Eastern Earth is the Medicine Buddha's realm. Each direction of the compass is governed by different tathagathas. Thousands of Buddhas are living, taking care of us and of everything. How do we relate to them?

What is the Buddha seal? It is understanding our lives as awareness and wisdom. Everything depends on our devoting ourselves to zazen.

If all of us were to sit like that, attaining enlightenment would be as simple as eating three meals a day. But since we don't sit like that, it won't happen that easily. So at least when we sit, we try to really sit well, like immovable mountains.

Though they speak of ten thousand distinctions and a thousand differences, they only study Zen and pursue the Way.

Although each of us is different, we should all practice, penetrating into zazen and accomplishing the Way.

Why abandon the seat in your own home to wander in vain through the dusty regions of another land?

When we read this line, we think that Dogen Zenji is talking about going abroad to practice. But there is another implication. Sometimes the objects of our senses are called the "six dusts." When we are conditioned by what we see, hear, smell, taste, think, and feel, it's like dust. So instead of being in the conditioned state, adjust.

The seat Dogen Zenji mentions is the diamond seat, where the Buddha sits. That's our zazen. The very zafu on which we sit is the diamond seat, the seat of the Buddha; so we don't need to go anyplace. The seat of the Tathagatha is always right here now.

If you make one false step, you miss what is right before you.

There is a story in the *Lotus Sutra* of the beggar who is the longlost son of a millionaire. Wandering around all his life thinking himself a beggar, he finally ends up at his father's house. His father recognizes him immediately, but only when the son becomes comfortable in his father's house does his father reveal himself and leave him his possessions. In the same way, we mistakenly believe ourselves to be impoverished, and our practice is to return home and and know who we really are.

Since you have already attained the functioning essence of a human body, do not pass your days in vain; when one takes care of the essential function of the Way of the Buddha, who can carelessly enjoy the spark from a flint? Verily form and substance are like the dew on the grass, and the fortunes of life like the lightning flash: in an instant they are emptied, in a moment they are lost.

How precious and how rare it is to be born as a human! To be human is truly precious. As humans, we are able to be Tathagathas.

The concluding passage of the *Diamond Sutra* says, "All composite things are like a dream, a fantasy, a bubble and a shadow; like a dewdrop and a flash of lightning—they are thus to be regarded." In a way, life is long, between seventy and a hundred years, but when we compare it to infinite time, it's short. The time we can put into our practice is also very limited. So the time we have right now is really precious time. Let us reflect upon ourselves, how we can have a stronger, better practice together. And not only make ourselves happy and content, but share such understanding, freedom, and peace with other people.

Eminent students [of the Dharma], long accustomed to groping for the elephant, pray do not doubt the true dragon. Apply yourselves to the way that points directly at reality; honor the man who is through with learning and free from action. Accord with the bodhi of all the Buddhas; succeed to the samadhi of all the Patriarchs. If you act this way for a long time, you will be this way. Your treasure store will open of itself, and you will use it as you will.

In this last paragraph Dogen Zenji sums up again what zazen is and what it does for us. The line "long accustomed to groping..." refers to the parable of the blind men and the elephant, in which a group of blind men try to find out what an elephant is like, using only their sense of touch.

One, feeling the trunk, says that elephants are shaped like snakes; another, feeling the legs, says that elephants are like trees; each blind man clings to his own limited perception, and so jumps to a false conclusion.

In the same way we have our own self-styled ideas, understandings, and concepts, and we stick to them and regard them as measurements, and to that extent, we can't accept anything else. A larger container can contain more, but our practice is to be bottomless. We do this by forgetting the self. To study the Buddha Way, to transmit the samadhi of the ancestors, we've got to be bottomless. Otherwise the Dharma won't fit.

"Do not doubt the true dragon." The true dragon represents freedom. We are bound by whatever we cling to, even enlightenment. We can be bound by enlightenment, freedom, even peace, in which case there is actually no enlightenment, freedom, or peace. Similarly, if, like the blind men, we get attached to our limited perceptions of the elephant, of reality, we miss the true dragon, which is life as it really is.

This "true dragon," by the way, is a reference to still another story. There was a man by the name of Shoko, who loved dragons. And all over his room, there were pictures, sculptures, and paintings of dragons. A true dragon up in heaven was very impressed and appreciated Shoko's love of dragons. One day he wanted to visit Shoko and show him a true dragon. So one night this dragon came down to visit Shoko and stuck his face in through one window and his tail through the other window. Shoko was so shocked, he fainted. Long accustomed to imitations, do not be suspicious of what is true. "Apply yourselves to the Way that points directly at reality." That is zazen. This is what we are doing.

"Honor the man who is through with learning and free from action." Honor the man who has, in Japanese, *zetsu gaku mui*. This is an idiomatic expression, and the translation here doesn't capture all of the aspects of it. *Zetsu gaku* means "stopped learning" or "no-learning." There are the "ten no-learnings": adding two to the Eightfold Path, a ninth one, "right wisdom," and the last one, "right liberation," we get ten "no-learnings." That's *zetsu gaku*—being liberated. And *mui* means "non-doing, doing nothing." Not physically doing nothing, though: doing anything, everything, whatever's necessary, yet not doing it. In other words, be totally absorbed by whatever you are doing.

Dogen Zenji says that when you meet the person who expounds the Dharma, don't think of the caste that person came from, don't think of the

appearance, don't think of conduct or behavior—but paying reverence to the prajna wisdom, every day, day after day, make three bows to him three times daily. Don't raise any frustrations or complications, agitations within yourself. Making yourself empty and unconditioned as much as possible, listen carefully. Then whatever he says comes in without any friction. "Revere the man of complete attainment who is beyond all human agency." The man of complete attainment is always in the midst of all human agency and goes with it without disturbance or friction. Otherwise, what is the use?

Accord with the bodhi of all the Buddhas; succeed to the samadhi of all the Patriarchs.

Perhaps better than "gain accord" we should say "become one." In becoming one with the enlightenment of the Buddhas, we become the Buddha ourselves. "Succeed to the samadhi of all the Patriarchs." Really sit and become zazen yourself. But it is not *you* doing zazen, but *zazen* doing zazen. That's what samadhi is. And when you get into that samadhi, right there the lineage of the Ancestors is manifested, is succeeded.

If you act this way for a long time, you will be this way. Your treasure store will open of itself, and you will use it as you will.

When we read it as "if you act this way for a long time," it becomes a kind of conditional, "if you do such-and-such, then such-and-such." That's the way it's usually translated. But instead of reading "if you do such and such," we can read it "since it is this suchness." "Since it is already this, just do it in that way, or just be that." And when we really do that, the treasure-house opens by itself and then we can use that treasure freely. It's not a matter of something happening in the future, but it's always right now, right here.

Let's share this treasure together.

Breathing in Zazen

Koryu Osaka

Breathing in zazen is natural and based on your own breathing cycle. Generally speaking, the normal frequency of our breaths is roughly seventeen breaths per minute. For those who are more experienced in sitting the frequency of breaths per minute decreases, to perhaps five or six times per minute, or for those who have been sitting many years, two to three times per minute, or even less.

However, if you try force your breath to slow, then your breathing becomes awkward and your sitting becomes very uncomfortable. So in order to improve your breathing, try to narrow your breathing.

By narrowing your breathing I mean that when you exhale, exhale less than you usually do. Do not try to lengthen the time of your exhalation immediately, but just try to exhale a slightly smaller amount. Narrow the stream of air, then breathe with your natural frequency.

When you inhale, do not inhale too much air at one time, but try to inhale a slightly smaller amount. Again, do not lengthen the span of breathing right away. By breathing like this, more air is saved in the lungs, making it easier for you to breathe. As a quite natural consequence of this, your breathing will slow down of its own accord.

Breathing in this way will make you more comfortable; being comfortable, you can sit better; and sitting better, your breathing becomes slower. As your breathing becomes slower, it also becomes deeper. Breathing in this way, eventually you start to experience the very subtle taste of breathing.

When you breathe longer and deeper, the transition from inhalation to exhalation will become smoother. The path of the breath circulating in and out becomes somewhat like the shape of an egg; your breath circulates very smoothly along an oval course, in and out. When you practice this kind of breathing, you will find an almost immeasurable pleasure simply breathing in zazen.

The breath must come from the lower abdomen, the *hara*. But don't push the breath *down;* that is the wrong way. Instead of trying to push air down, push your lower abdomen *forward* slightly as you inhale, and then, as you exhale, allow the lower abdomen to sink in. When you inhale, it goes out; when you exhale it goes in. If you try to push the air down, then you compress the diaphragm and the abdominal muscles, which may cause pain or unpleasant tension and strain in that area. There should be no tension and no strain in your stomach as you breath. Practicing in this way, eventually you will experience deep, quiet, natural breathing in your lower abdomen.

When you sit, your body, breath, and mind become harmonized, and when your breath slows down, the mind also calms down. When this happens, a unified, comfortable feeling is quite natural. Please do not be hasty; take your time and diligently practice this breathing.

You must acquire this experience by yourself by practicing this breathing.

From individual to individual the process of unifying body, breath, and mind won't happen in exactly the same way. Breathing in, be one with your breath. Breathing out, be one with your breath. Each of you has to find your own way to achieve this integration. This is the fundamental condition of zazen.

What Is Sesshin?

Taizan Maezumi

SESSHIN IS THE HEART of Zen training. Focusing primarily on intensive zazen, it consists of from three to seven days of practice. With this in mind, let's examine what, in general, sesshin means. What is the purpose of having sesshin? What good does it do us in our everyday life?

The word *sesshin* consists of two Chinese ideograms, *setsu* and *shin*. *Shin* is the "mind," and *setsu* literally means "to join or to fix together." Thus, sesshin means "To fix the mind together." But *setsu* also means "to touch," "to connect," as well as "to receive," "to transmit," and "to continue." *Setsu* and *shin:* to join or connect the mind, or to receive, transmit, or maintain the mind. That is what sesshin means.

But what is the mind? *Mind* is one of the most ambiguous terms we use. We can talk about it in common sense terms; we can talk about it with philosophical concepts; we can talk about it in metaphysical terms or psychological terms—but what is it really? We talk about my mind, your mind, the Universal Mind, the Cosmic Mind. To join the mind or to connect the mind; to transmit or to receive the mind; to maintain the mind—this is what sesshin means. The practice of sesshin is to really become one with the mind.

There is a beautiful passage by Dogen Zenji about the mind, in which he says: "The mind is the mountains, river, trees, and grass, and the mind is the sun, the moon, and the stars." That is to say, the whole universe is the mind itself—and we aren't excluded from that whole universe!

What is the mind that Dogen Zenji talks about? What is the Universal Mind? What is our mind? To join these minds together, to connect our mind and the mind of the universe, is what sesshin means. In zazen, we realize the oneness of such a mind. We identify ourselves with the Universal Mind, the Buddha Mind. We transmit, we receive, we become really aware of this state of identity of our mind, of our existence itself, and the existence of everything. This, too, is what sesshin means.

Another meaning of *setsu* is "to control," "to adjust," or "to assimilate." Usually our conscious mind is very busy, continuously running around like an excited monkey. Someone says something, we lean toward it, and we say: "That's a very good idea." And then someone else says something else, and we say: "Oh! That's better! Let's do that!" Thus we struggle to make even a small decision about what to do. Our conscious mind is very unstable, and so to control and adjust it, to make it function properly—this is another meaning of sesshin.

The first meaning, to connect our mind and the mind of the universe, may be more active, and the second one, to control and assimilate our conscious mind, may be more passive. The former is identifying with the capital-*M* Mind, that is to say Buddha nature or Dharma-nature, or whatever you may want to call it, while the latter tends to be more quiet, more calming and settling. Either way is quite all right. Regardless of what kind of conscious state we have as our mind, actually that mind is already united with everything; it is already joined with everything, already one with everything. Thus we say: "All sentient beings are originally buddhas." And since we are originally buddhas, we are in the state of the Buddha mind already. What we should do is to just let it be.

What keeps the Buddha mind from functioning as Buddha mind is our ego-centered consciousness. Because of ego-consciousness—which is a very partial, limited, uncontrolled, unadjusted mind—we have trouble. And to try to calm this wild unadjusted mind, to let go of ego-consciousness—that, too is what sesshin means. That is, to see our true mind—although it is a peculiar expression to say "true mind" or "false mind," because our real life, our real being, is itself the Truth.

The Buddha mind can be compared with the full moon shining brightly above; and the discriminative, discursive, self-conscious, self-centered thoughts that we *think* are our mind are like waves on the surface of a pond. When the water is very calm and still, the moon is clearly reflected

upon the water. If we do not have self-oriented ideas, the surface of our mind—our life—is calm and clear. And then we see the moon, which is our true mind, our true being, our true life, very clearly.

All of us, without exception, are in the midst of the Buddha mind. In fact, simply speaking, we are the Buddha mind itself; it is a plain fact. This fact is exactly what Buddha realized when he attained enlightenment. But somehow, we cannot perceive it as a fact. If we could truly take it as a simple fact, nothing could be better than that! Then we could just live life like that, we could live this simple fact. You will have no trouble and you'll make no trouble for others, either. But unfortunately because of our self-oriented ideas, we cannot perceive this very fact as it is.

Somehow we believe this "I" exists, that it is different from other things, from other people. "I" want to do such and such—"I" don't like such and such—"I" think such and such—and then, right there, the problems start. In other words, the surface of our mind becomes wavy, and even though the moon is still reflected, it is distorted by the rippling surface of the water.

In practicing sesshin, what we try to do is to see through all these troublesome illusions and delusions arising from the idea of ego, from "I" consciousness. We try to realize that ego-consciousness is a false state. We should endeavor to truly recognize the fact of existence. That is what sesshin means.

In sesshin, we concentrate in certain ways, and try to settle our mind to make the surface of our consciousness very calm and let the facts reflect upon it clearly. In doing this, we find our life gets better, easier, more comfortable, more pleasant. When we're not practicing in this way, what we tend to do is not only mix ourselves up but also create trouble for other people, and that is really a pitiful shame.

Let's go back to the first meaning of sesshin: "to join, to unite, or to connect the mind." It's important to realize that, in one sense, everything is mind, and mind itself is Buddha nature. We can even say mind is Buddha itself. But nothing can exist by itself, everything is joined.

For example, our lives are defined by human interrelations. It is nonsensical to think that someone can exist all by him- or herself. Even if you crawl into a deep mountain cave and remain there for the rest of your life, you still have connections with others. You have connections to your parents, your relatives, and all the other people you've ever encountered

in your life. You have all kinds of connections with others, regardless of how or where you live.

This interrelationship is like the mesh of a net. A net consists of many nexuses existing not independently, but only in the context of the other nexuses linked with it. Each nexus is formed by the coming together of several strands, and only in reference to those other strands can that nexus exist. Our life is the same way. Each individual life is supported by myriad others, and when one nexus of connection is broken, the entire net is weakened.

However, although each of us is like a nexus in a vast net, each one of us is also the very core of the universe. You are the very center of the universe—the very, very center of life itself. And so if you yourself do not live right, if you do not realize what this life really is, everything is spoiled—as quickly as a pinprick deflates a balloon.

In practicing sesshin, we try to realize what our life is.

All these different words describing sesshin indicate slightly different approaches to it. But the point is always the same: Realize and actualize the ideal state of mind.

But don't think that means ignoring the body! Actually mind and body are the same thing. To practice sesshin is to have the chance to really concentrate, to realize who we really are.

WHAT SESSHIN INVOLVES

Now let us examine, practically speaking, what kinds of activities in addition to sitting meditation are involved in sesshin, what kind of schedule is followed, and what we need to understand in order to make a sesshin more effective.

The most important thing, the fundamental principle of sesshin, is the realization and actualization of harmony. But harmony cannot exist without a state of balance. And to maintain balance necessarily involves two or more things: On the individual level, we must establish harmony by balancing body and mind. On the collective level, when many people practice together to balance body and mind, group harmony is established. In practicing sesshin, we emphasize doing all things together; that is one way to help each other realize a harmonious condition. This

attitude of realizing harmony must pervade all the daily activities, even extending into the hours of sleep.

SERVICES

Sesshin involves services—liturgical forms and rituals. Occasionally people question the need for rituals, for chanting, and the other liturgical forms, and so it is very important to understand clearly the significance of this kind of practice.

There are two ways of looking at rituals. On the one hand, rituals are an external expression of our inner state. And on the other hand, we strengthen and reinforce our inner state by these external actions. Of course, in reality there are not two things, but rather a unified whole. As we practice together sincerely, we become increasingly aware that such notions as internal and external cannot be separated. This awareness is actually the growing realization of the real harmony that underlies everything. We are in the zendo together, and we see the altar together, and we hear each other chanting, and we move together in bowing and in kinhin; this is our harmonious environment. And because we are doing these things in a harmonious environment and concentrating on what we are doing, this itself is our harmonious consciousness. Our environment and our consciousness are inseparable. The two are one.

From this perspective, we can see that even such details as the clothes we wear in the zendo are significant in achieving this harmonious practice. What we are doing is important enough that we must consider our appearance. If there is too much informality in dress, then the group practice may be somewhat disturbed. Such clothing as shorts or sleeveless shirts seems out of place in the zendo. Bright colors or strong perfumes, jewelry that jingles—all these may in themselves be quite all right, even attractive, but because our practice in the zendo is one of group harmony, they may prove to be distractions and not helpful to the other people present.

Some people comment that they don’t like to chant. Such a comment indicates nothing but disharmony within oneself. The body cannot participate fully in what is taking place because the small mind, the discursive, ego-conscious mind, does not “want” to. This is not the way to

practice. When we have services, we simply have services. We must be in harmony within the individual, within the group, and within the atmosphere. The secret, the key to this harmony, is simply to be selfless. It always comes back to this point: If you are self-centered, you spoil everything, but if you are selfless everything goes smoothly. In accord with the schedule and character of these services, things happen in certain ways. All that is necessary is just to fit in with the way in which the service takes place; just follow and be harmonious.

CHANTING

Chanting is an effective means of harmonizing body and mind. Chant with your ears, not with your mouth. When chanting, be aware of the others who are also chanting. Blend your voice with their voices. Make one voice, all together. Chant not too high, not too low; not too fast, not too slow. Take your pace from the senior practitioners, who will take the initiative. Chanting should not be shouting, as if you were alone. Persons who chant like that behave as if only they exist and no one else, which is not so. Always adjust yourself to the others, rather than expecting them to adjust to you. Then there is harmony. Chant as though each syllable were a drop of rain in a steady shower—very mild, consistent, and sustained.

Chanting functions the same as all of our practices in Zen. On one level, we can see that the sutras we chant have their own content; they mean something. Some, like the *Heart Sutra*, are especially concise and packed with deep meaning. But again, apart from the texts, the act of chanting is in itself an absolute practice, simultaneously expressing and creating an inner state of consciousness. And as we chant together and hear each other chanting, we are helped further in joining our minds. This is harmony. This is practice together.

KINHIN

When the sitting period ends and we begin to do *kinhin,* walking meditation, we should try to avoid making the transition from sitting to walking too abrupt. Kinhin is simply another way to do zazen; so it should

be as smooth and harmonious as our breathing. Just as the transition from inhaling to exhaling must be very easy and continuous, so it is with kinhin.

Sitting, standing, bowing, walking, whatever we do, if we are careful to maintain mindfulness, we can always be practicing, always be in harmony. But if we hear the bell signaling the end of zazen and suddenly break our concentration, we make our practice loose and weak.

Sometimes after the sitting period ends, some people wish to continue to sit on their cushions during kinhin. But if you hear the bell ring, it is better to do kinhin with everyone else.

KITCHEN PRACTICE

Sesshin also includes a period of silent work practice, or caretaking. Sometimes work practice during sesshin will take place in the kitchen. It would be a mistake to think that the purpose of the kitchen and its staff is simply to prepare meals. Of course, that is one part of kitchen practice, the most obvious part perhaps, but there is far more to it than that.

Since each of us is the Buddha, those working in the kitchen are supporting the very life of the Buddha. That is one way to see kitchen practice. But also, as with sutras and chanting, kitchen work is an absolute practice in and of itself. The kitchen is a continuous testing-ground. From moment to moment there is so much to be done; conditions are always changing. And everything can be done in so many ways! How do we slice the vegetables? How do we scrub the utensils? At every turn we express our inner state: by being sloppy, by being meticulous, by avoiding work or seeking it, concentrating or daydreaming, being calm or tense, and so on. It is not an easy matter to remain mindful and unconditioned under the pressure of a busy kitchen. This is a challenging practice, but it is also potentially a very rewarding one.

Arising out of the individual's own inner state is the collective harmony of the kitchen staff, or the lack of it. Harmony in the kitchen leads to harmony in the zendo. But even to say kitchen and zendo is misleading; they are not really two entities even if they are physically separate. Certainly a loosely operating kitchen, with unnecessary chatter and sloppiness, has a very definite impact on the rest of the zendo. As the

servers move between kitchen and zendo, the proper concentration and silence as well as the overall continuity of mood express a oneness, a harmony that is also sesshin.

ORYOKI

During sesshin, we eat breakfast and lunch in the zendo, in a formal meal called *oryoki*. We use a set of nested bowls, the largest of which is called the Buddha bowl. But oryoki is not just a special bowl provided by the zendo. The Buddha Tathagata's eating bowl is your bowl. You are the Buddha, eating from the Buddha's bowl. Realize this fact.

In the original Chinese version of the meal sutra, it does not quite say "eating bowls." *Oryoki* literally means a container that holds just the necessary amount. That is what oryoki means, no more, no less—just like our life itself.

But we need not think that we are speaking only of eating bowls when we mention oryoki. More fundamentally, oryoki is just the Tathagata's container. We can appreciate everything as the container of the Buddha. We ourselves are oryoki. Not only us, but everything we see in the zendo—Buddha's image, candleholders, vase, bowing mat, floor, ceiling—each contains everything completely. It is all oryoki. The whole universe itself is the container of the Buddha Tathagata.

This is our bowl. And this is the bowl from which we eat and maintain our life. The more we become aware of this fact, the more we appreciate life. We eat food. But what is our food? It is the Buddha too. That is to say, it is life, giving life to life. Again here is total harmony, and that is the way of existence. When we eat, we had better be aware of at least these facts.

Realizing how significant our life is, how significant our actions are—this is a very important part of sesshin, too. Even when we go to the restroom we should be very careful. In using our oryoki bowls, we look into the Buddha. When you become aware of yourself—or rather, simply when you become aware—you become meticulous. The more your awareness grows, the more careful you grow. It is a very natural thing. If your actions are sloppy, your understanding is sloppy, your life is sloppy, and everything is sloppy.

But in sesshin, we try to be careful and not sloppy; and we try to realize the very significant, subtle meaning of our life. In studying ourselves, we find the harmony that is our total existence. We do not *make* harmony; we do not achieve or gain it. Harmony is there all the time. Here we are, in the midst of this perfect way, and our practice is simply to realize it and then actualize it in our everyday life.

SLEEP

Sesshin practice is a twenty-four hour practice; it does not end at the end of the day. Thus, when we go to bed at night, we try to do even that harmoniously. This simply means that when the day is over and the lights are out, everyone just goes to bed. It is not necessary to stay up to chat or read or take walks; we simply harmonize with whatever activity is scheduled and do it together. It is the same when morning comes. Those whose duties require it may have to get up a little early, but everybody else should simply remain in bed and rest quietly until the person in charge rings the wake-up bell. When the bell rings, just get up and straighten your sleeping area, and be ready to begin the day's sitting. It is very simple; no one need debate sleeping maybe just a few minutes more. We just do what is to be done. This is the way of harmony.

All day long, we are living the life of the Buddha. Functioning in every way, we are in the midst of the operation of the Dharma. It is all us. We are all it. And this inseparable unity is the Sangha, is harmony, is sesshin.

On Gassho and Bowing

Taizan Maezumi
with John Daishin Buksbazen

People new to a Zen center often ask about the palm-to-palm gesture called *gassho* and about the practice of bowing. What is the meaning of these gestures and why is it necessary to do them so precisely and uniformly? The gassho and the bow are common to all traditions and sects of Buddhism. These two gestures were present in India even before the earliest days of Buddhism. These gestures have moved from India throughout the Asia, to the Western world.

After Shakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment, he encountered five of his former companions with whom he had previously practiced various austerities and spiritual disciplines. These five ascetics had felt that Shakyamuni had gone astray when he abandoned their ascetic practices. "Come," they said to each other on Shakyamuni's departure, "Let's not pay any attention to him, he no longer is one of us."

These ascetics were dismayed to find that he had seemingly abandoned his spiritual practice—going so far as to even drink milk and take a bath (two forbidden acts, according to their tradition). They could not understand why he seemed only to sit motionless, doing nothing.

But when the Buddha approached them after his enlightenment, it is said that these five ascetics were so struck by the transformation of their former companion, by his serenity and the radiance of his personality, that they spontaneously placed their palms together and greeted him with deep bows. Perhaps it is a little misleading to say that they greeted

him; more accurately, they were bowing not to their old friend Siddhartha, but to the Buddha—the Awakened One.

What the Buddha had experienced was the supreme perfect enlightenment (in Sanskrit, *anuttara samyak sambodhi*): the direct and conscious realization of the oneness of the whole universe, and of one's own unity with all things. This very realization is actually in itself the act of being the Buddha. And it was to this enlightened state that the five ascetics bowed.

When the Buddha realized his enlightened nature, the first thing he said was: "Wonder of wonders! All sentient beings have this same nature!" And thus, in bowing to the Buddha, the five yogis were bowing to themselves and to all beings. They were expressing their recognition of the great unity that their former companion had directly and profoundly experienced.

Let us examine the gassho and the bow more closely.

GASSHO

The word *gassho* literally means "to place the two palms together." Of all the mudras, the symbolic hand gestures we use, gassho is perhaps the most fundamental, for it arises directly from the depths of enlightenment. It is used to express respect, to prevent scattering of the mind, to unify all polarities (such as left and right, passive and dominant, and so on) and to express the One Mind—the total unity of being.

Although there are many types of gassho, let us examine the four most common ones in the Soto Zen sect:

The Firm Gassho

The most formal of the gasshos, this is the one most commonly used in our daily practice. It is the gassho we use upon entering the zendo and upon taking our seats. We also use it at least sixteen times in the course of a formal meal, and during all services. This gesture is made by placing the hands together, palm to palm in front of the face. The fingers and thumbs are placed together and are straight rather than bent, while the palms are

slightly pressed together so that they meet. The elbows are held somewhat out from the body, although the forearms are not quite parallel with the floor. There is about one fist's distance between the tip of the nose and the hands. Fingertips are level with the tip of the nose. This gassho helps establish an alert and respectful state of mind.

The Gassho of No-Mind

Used in greeting one another, this is a less formal gassho. In this position, the hands are held together a little more loosely, with a slight space between the palms, and the fingers still touching. The elevation of the elbows from the floor is not so great as in the firm gassho; forearms should be at approximately a 45-degree angle to the floor. This gassho has the effect of deepening one's state of samadhi.

The Lotus Gassho

This gassho is used primarily by officiating priests on special ceremonial occasions. It is made like the gassho of no-mind, except that the tips of the middle fingers are held one inch apart. Its name derives from the resemblance of this hand position to the shape of a just-opening lotus bud.

The Diamond Gassho

This gassho is also known as the gassho of being one with life. Like the lotus gassho, it is used by officiants in certain services. Although the hands and arms are in basically the same position as in the gassho of no-mind, the diamond gassho is made with the fingers of each hand extended and interlaced, and with the right thumb on top of the left.

In each of these gasshos, we keep the eyes focused on the tips of our middle fingers. But regardless of the style or variety of the gassho, and in whatever setting it is used, the fundamental point of the gassho is to be one with the Three Treasures: Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

Of course, we can look at the Three Treasures from many perspectives, and we can look with varying degrees of depth and clarity. At perhaps the most immediate level, the Three Treasures are seen as external objects of supreme veneration for all Buddhists. Unfortunately, in this view, the Three Treasures tend to be perceived as something other than oneself. But as our vision opens up, we experience that each of us is, in fact, the Buddha. We see clearly that everything we encounter in the world is the Dharma—the functioning of underlying enlightenment. And, realizing the oneness of all beings, we come to realize that the Sangha is simply harmony of all composite things, including each of us. Having this awareness, we realize that we *are*—the Three Treasures.

So, joining our hands palm to palm, we simultaneously create and express the oneness of the absolute and relative, beyond all dualities. It is from this perspective that we make the gassho, and with this awareness that we bow.

It is not just some person who bows and not just some person who makes the gassho; it is the Three Treasures recognizing itself as all things. If anyone thinks in terms of "just another person," this is, in effect, defaming the Three Treasures. And as we place our palms together, we unite wisdom and compassion, knowledge and truth, enlightenment and delusion.

BOWING

Dogen Zenji once said: "As long as there is true bowing, the Buddha Way will not deteriorate." In bowing, we completely pay respect to the all-pervading virtue of wisdom, which itself is the Buddha.

In bowing, we should move neither hastily nor with exaggerated slowness, but simply maintain a reverent and humble attitude. When we bow too fast, the bow is then too casual; perhaps we are even hurrying to get it over and done with. This conveys a lack of respect.

On the other hand, if our bow is too slow, then it becomes a rather pompous display; we may have gotten too attached to the feeling of bowing, or our own (real or imagined) gracefulness of movement. We have lost the humble attitude that a true bow requires.

Our bow is always accompanied by gassho, although the gassho itself may not always be accompanied by bowing. As with the gassho, there are several varieties and styles of bowing. Here we will deal only with two kinds of bows.

The Standing Bow

This bow is used upon entering the zendo, and in greeting each other. The bow begins with the body erect, and the weight distributed evenly on the feet, which are parallel to each other. The head is not tilted on the neck. With hands in gassho the body bends at the waist, so that the torso forms an angle with the legs of approximately 45 degrees. The head remains aligned with the spine and does not leave the plane of the shoulders. The hands do not move relative to the face, but remain in position and move only with the whole body.

The seated bow is made in the same way, except that one remains in a seated position.

The Deep Bow (Full Prostration)

This bow is most often used at the beginning and end of services, and upon entering and leaving formal interview with a teacher. The full prostration is somewhat more formal than the standing bow, which also requires continuous concentration during its execution. The bow itself begins in the same way as the standing bow, but once the body is bent slightly from the waist, the knees bend and touch the floor. If necessary, the hands may be used for support. The movement of the torso continues, until the forehead touches the floor. At this point the hands are placed on the floor, palms upward, on either side of the head. At this point, the body touches the floor in seven places: the knees, elbows, hands, and forehead. The buttocks should be tucked in. The hands are then slowly raised, palms upward, to a point just above the ears, and then slowly returned to the floor. This action of the hands is symbolic of placing the Buddha's feet above one's head as an act of reverence and humility. There should be no sharp, abrupt movements of the hands or arms, and no bending of the wrists or curling of the fingers while executing this gesture. When the

hands have been raised and lowered, stand up, using your hands for support as necessary. Once on your feet, place your hands in gassho. In kneeling, the knees do not touch the ground simultaneously, but in sequence; first the right and then the left knee touches the floor. The same is true for the right and left hands and right and left elbows, in that sequence. In practice, however, the interval between right and left sides touching the ground may be so minute as to be unnoticeable. In bowing, movement should not be jerky or disjointed, but should flow smoothly and continuously without disruption or arrested motion.

Master Obaku, the teacher of Master Rinzai, was famous for his frequent admonition to his students: "Don't expect anything from the Three Treasures." Time after time he was heard to say this. One day, however, Master Obaku was observed in the act of bowing and was challenged about his practice. "You always tell your students not to expect anything from the Three Treasures," said his questioner, "and yet you have been making deep bows." And in fact, Master Obaku had been bowing so frequently and for so long that a large callous had formed on his forehead at the point where it touched the hard floor. When asked how he explained this, Master Obaku replied, "I don't expect. I just bow."

This is the state of being one with the Three Treasures. Let us just gassho. Let us just bow.

On Sitting
Koryu Osaka

LET ME SAY a few words about the act of sitting and the pain that you will almost certainly experience. Some have more trouble or pain than others. Regardless of how much pain you have, I want you to sit well. If the pain is very bad, sitting on a chair is quite all right. Our practice is not asceticism! As Dogen Zenji said, zazen is supposed to be very comfortable and peaceful. So I want you to sit comfortably. But being comfortable is not enough. You must do zazen.

Just physically sitting on the cushion is not sitting. Let the body sit, let the breath sit, let the mind sit. In a sense, body and mind are not two but one. If you really make your body sit, mind sits, too. Making effort to really sit is zazen. Just sitting on the cushion, letting your mind wander around, is not zazen.

For convenience, we can conceptualize the process of doing zazen this way. First we have to physically sit; it's almost like catching a wild horse and tying it to a post. Then gradually we tame the horse—but it's straining against the post, trying to get away. The first stage, to catch the horse and tie it, is like *za,* the "sitting" part of *zazen*. At the beginning, this part can be really painful, physically and mentally, especially during sesshin. Then, taming the horse—that's the *zen* in zazen.

Originally, the word *zen*, as you know, derived from the Sanskrit term *dhyana,* which means "quiet thinking." Instead of letting our conscious mind go wild, we think quietly. We let the body calm down first, then we let the mind calm down. And in order to accomplish this, we use

techniques such as breathing. We concentrate on breathing by counting breaths or following breaths. After we have settled, we enter samadhi, we focus on one single thing and become one with it.

So if your practice is Mu, become one with Mu. If you are counting the breath, become one with the counting. If you do shikantaza, become zazen yourself. By doing this, you enter samadhi. Then, when you really get immersed in samadhi, eventually you forget yourself, and dichotomy is transcended.

Forgetting yourself is sometimes referred to as "Man is forgotten; man is empty." But at the beginning stages of forgetting yourself, there is still the object on which you're concentrating. So you go further into samadhi, and that object is also eliminated. That is called "Dharma is empty." Then when that samadhi ripens, we say, "Both man and Dharma are empty." This state is called "Great Death," the ideal condition of samadhi.

But this ideal condition of samadhi is static, so remaining there endlessly is no good. In this state, there is no activity, no functioning. Ultimately, samadhi must function. The functioning of samadhi is wisdom. Once you really reach Great Death, then Great Rebirth takes place in realization. This is the fundamental process, the fundamental principal of zazen.

If, after the first opening-up or the first breaking-through, you have not completely emptied yourself, the process is not complete. When it's not complete, what you see, what you realize, is limited and partial.

In other words, before samadhi really ripens fully, you can still have an experience of breaking through. We call that experience kensho. Strictly speaking, until you come to the point where you have eliminated subjects and objects altogether, you can't really say that you attain enlightenment as such. In the experience of kensho, each individual differs one from the other. The clarity is different. No two people experience kensho in exactly the same way, because realization and samadhi are still partial.

In order to get into that samadhi, your sitting, your posture must be right—otherwise, your mind gets busy and you can't get into deep concentration. Just making your back straight is not quite enough. Place the weight of the body in the proper place. The center of gravity of the body is supposed to fall in the center of the triangle formed by the two knees and the base of the spine. In order to bring this about, shift the gravity of your upper body slightly forward, almost like pushing in

between your two hip joints. By doing this, the point of gravity of the upper body is shifted.

Make sure your lower back is not curved out—a slouching lower back is a very weak position and doesn't create strength in your lower abdomen. But straightening your back by itself is not enough; shift it forward. Don't arch your lower back too much, otherwise you'll start having back pain. This disposition of the upper body allows the center of gravity to fall down into the middle of that triangle formed by your knees and cushion. When you sit, when you do zazen, please remember this and try to let your body really sit well.

When you sit like this, you will naturally start feeling slight tension in your lower abdomen, even without putting any artificial effort or strain on it. I want to remind you not to strain. People working on Mu especially have the tendency to strain. Those concentrating on breathing become too self-conscious about it and unconsciously tighten up that stomach area trying to breathe deeply. Please avoid that. Tightening the muscles around the stomach, the stomach can't function. Just wait until that strength in the abdomen comes naturally and try to sit properly.

In sitting properly, you must concentrate on the lower abdomen, the area known as the *hara*. Then, when you sit, you can imagine all of the energy of all parts of the body flowing back into that area, and at the same time feel that energy permeate all parts of your body. Going into and out from the center, these two energies are balanced. There is no conflict of any power or energy within the body. Having that center of gravity placed in the lower portion of the abdomen, you are sitting in a very solid state, and the posture starts generating the energy by itself. That's what we call *joriki*, "power of stability." It's almost physical power. That's what I want you to acquire first; that's what will let you enter deeply into samadhi.

The Practice of Effort

Taizan Maezumi

WHATEVER WE DO, little can be accomplished without effort. Right effort is mentioned in virtually all of Buddha's major teachings. In English also there is even a common proverb: "Where there's a will, there's a way."

The Buddha teaches: If you really try, there is nothing that you cannot accomplish, and he draws this analogy: When you try to start a fire, if you stop before the wood starts to burn, you will never see a flame. We can also draw an analogy to water: If water runs continuously over stone, even if only a small amount, eventually it will wear it away. Buddha counsels us to be diligent in our efforts. But toward what? And how?

The Buddha teaches that we should try to build upon the good that we have done in the past, and also try to do good in the future—this is called creating the karma of good deeds. If we have done undesirable or bad deeds in the past, we should try to eliminate their effects and also try not to repeat them. This is called not creating the karma of bad deeds.

But what is good and what is bad? Right or wrong can sometimes seem very similar. According to the situation good and bad may differ. Even dealing with similar situations at different times, good and bad may differ. As the elements (i.e. time, place, and person) of a situation change, values change. Harada Roshi adds amount, or degree, to these three elements. The time, the place, the person involved, and how much—these all must be considered in determining what is good and what is bad in a particular situation. What is most appropriate for the particular circumstances?

Yet still, it's often difficult to judge. If ten people get together, there may be ten different opinions. Nevertheless, we must evaluate according to our own experiences and assess the appropriateness of our response in a given situation. According to our conditioning, we can carefully think about what is good and what is bad. Then we try to do our best. It is hard to judge or evaluate what is right, what is wrong, what is good, what is bad. I can't do it for you. I leave this part up to you.

Now let us focus upon our own practice. What is the best practice? It is to realize anuttara samyak sambodhi—complete, unsurpassed, supreme enlightenment. How well we can achieve it is secondary; it is most important to be pointed in that direction. So in order to realize the Supreme Way or Supreme Wisdom, as we are trying to do, we practice. Dogen Zenji says: "To raise the mind of enlightenment, the bodhi mind, before one attains enlightenment oneself, intend to save other people first." Try to accomplish this vow.

Some people say that if we don't become enlightened, we can't help other people. That is not necessarily true. It is true in one sense, but if we say this, when can we accomplish good actions? If we wait until we attain perfect enlightenment, when will that be? It may well never come to pass. So the way we practice is wherever we are, wherever we stand, we make the vow to save all beings—that's enough. In each moment, we renew the Four Great Bodhisattva Vows and do our best. And doing our best itself is encouraging to other people, helping other people to realize *anuttara samyak sambodhi* together.

A fundamental teaching of the Buddha is called *shi sho bo,* the four bodhisattva practices. The first of these practices is giving. The second is loving words. In order to give an encouraging or kind word, we don't need to have anything. Isn't that wonderful? Saying loving words becomes wonderful giving, too. In fact, it's more than giving. The third practice is to do good things for the benefit of other people. Dogen Zenji also talks about this practice. He says that foolish people might think that if you put other people first, you don't get any benefit but that is not true at all. Putting other people first benefits both parties. Everyone benefits. The fourth practice is perhaps the hardest. It's called sameness. Do nothing to others that you would not wish for yourself. Jesus says the same thing the other way around: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. And Dogen Zenji tell us to have a heart like the ocean, which holds

everything and never complains. It swallows everything—muddy water, clean water, even refuse and dead things.

Let us be diligent in our practice. Let the four bodhisattva practices become our practice of right effort.

After a period of zazen, when it's time for walking meditation, you may find standing up difficult and your legs may even be numb. I know it's painful when you first begin to practice zazen. When I first started sitting, I had an awful, awful time. My left knee was up from the cushion about four or five inches—no matter how I tried, it wouldn't go down! For the nearly two years that I was at Koryu Roshi's place, nobody told me anything about how to sit. They didn't have beginner's instruction for people new to practice. But this pain in the legs is an interesting thing. Sometimes people say that having pain helps them concentrate better. I don't know whether that's true or not, but when you fight pain, sometimes it increases. Then when it gets to a certain intensity, it disappears. Perhaps you might have experienced that, too. Furthermore your psychological condition influences your body a great deal. So for those who have pain while sitting, I have no definite suggestion about what to do. It would be good to deal with it, though, to not fight it but try to take care of it nicely. But practice right effort.

Master Gensha was a fisherman until he was about thirty years old, when he became a monk. He went to Seppo's monastery and stayed only two years. Then he decided to leave the monastery. While he was walking on the road, which was very rocky and hard, he bumped into a rock and injured his toe badly. He screamed with pain. But he reflected deeply on his pain: Where does this pain come from? Through that question, he attained very clear enlightenment. So he returned to Master Seppo's monastery. Seppo, seeing Gensha, asked, "What are you doing here? You were supposed to have left. What, have you been fooling around?" Gensha's now-famous reply was: "Bodhidharma never came to China; the Second Ancestor has never left India. Needless to say, Bodhidharma and all other ancestors are right here with me." I can imagine how happy Seppo must have been. So, if you have pain, use it and become awakened. This is the practice of effort.

Receiving the Precepts

Taizan Maezumi

THE WORD *jukai* literally means to "receive the precepts," and it is also used for giving the precepts. (In the latter case, the Chinese ideographs are different even though the pronunciation is the same.) That is to say, from the teacher's side, *jukai* means to give the precepts, and from the student's side, jukai means to receive them. In Japanese we speak of giving and receiving the *bosatsu kai,* the "bodhisattva precepts."

In the Soto School the precepts for lay persons, monks or nuns, and priests are fundamentally the same. All receive the sixteen bodhisattva precepts consisting of the Three Treasures, the Three Pure Precepts, and the Ten Grave Precepts. The only difference is that the lay person maintains the precepts as a lay person, the monastic as a monastic, and the priest as a priest. Monastics devote their time fully to accomplishing the Way while lay persons accomplish the Buddha Way in secular life.

The Soto School uses two terms: *shukke tokudo* and *zaike tokudo*. *Zaike tokudo* refers to the layman's taking the precepts, and literally means "to stay home" or "to remain in the family home." *Shukke tokudo,* the ordination for monastics and priests, means "to go out from home, to cut off relations to the family as such." At the beginning of this ordination, the head is shaved. This symbolically represents cutting off all attachments.

In the ceremony, we chant the head-shaving *gatha* in which we say that while we are in this world, it is very difficult to extinguish attachments, so we vow to do this as the way to appreciate life. However, since modern

Zen priests often marry and may even have a family, people who make this commitment have to maintain and accomplish the Way as much as possible in the midst of this. So, even though, strictly speaking, we are not to be called "monks" or "nuns"—because we are married—we fully dedicate our lives to the Dharma. We are perhaps half lay person, half monastic.

The important thing is to become unattached and make oneself free, to accomplish oneself, and also to be beneficial and helpful to others. Just receiving *shukke tokudo* does not necessarily mean that one has reached an accomplished state. Being a monastic or priest, one could be much less accomplished than a lay person. and being a lay person. one could accomplish far more than the average monastic or priest. Regardless of lay, monastic, or priest standing, all can accomplish as the Ancestors did. What makes the difference is freedom from attachment.

Shaving the head means casting off attachments, abandoning worldly desires. But truly, cutting off the hair means not only to shave the hair on the outside of the head but rather to shave the hair of the mind, to detach from the three poisons of greed, anger, and ignorance.

Before receiving the precepts, we must make atonement, which is extremely important. To atone, in the sense we use it, is not only to repent of the bad things you have done or are doing, but rather, to make yourself one with the Three Treasures. What this term literally means is to identify yourself with reality through atonement. We chant the Gatha of Atonement:

All evil karma ever committed by me since of old,
On account of my beginningless greed, anger, and ignorance,
Born of my body, speech, and thought—
Now I atone for it all.

Actually that itself is the state of Zen. It is said that when you truly atone, you make yourself one with all reality, and right there, the precepts are all maintained. Having made yourself pure and unconditioned by sincerely reciting the Verse of Atonement, you are ready to receive the precepts.

The first group of precepts is being one with the Three Treasures of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. This is the very state of reality itself. Being

one with the Three Treasures is identifying yourself with reality. After the Three Treasures comes the second group of precepts, the Three Pure Precepts: not doing evil, doing good, and doing good for others. In other words, simply being one with reality, life as it is.

With regard to the first Pure Precept, we say "not doing evil"—but it is not only a matter of prohibition, but rather a reminder that one simply cannot live this precept when one loses sight of one's unity with life as it is. In this sense, evil means being out of harmony or seeing oneself as separate from life as it is.

Each individual has certain roles, and these roles change in accord with environment or circumstances. One person from time to time could be a parent, worker, friend, son or daughter, according to circumstances—namely the different times, places, positions, and degrees of relationship. One's role and how one responds in accord with life as it is, are constantly changing. That is what the first Pure Precept means.

The second and third Pure Precepts, doing good and doing good for others, follow from the first. The third Pure Precept, doing good not only for yourself but for others as well, is the fundamental functioning of the Three Treasures, and this in turn is reality, the totality of life as it is.

Following the Three Pure Precepts are the Ten Grave Precepts, which define the practical functioning of this reality. The Ten Grave Precepts are specific views of harmonious living.

The first of these is the precept of non-killing. These Ten Precepts could all be reduced to this first precept. If one maintains this precept, the other precepts are maintained as well. Dogen Zenji comments that non-killing is maintaining the life of the Buddha.

Clearly, in order to survive we have to take some forms of life. We eat fruits and vegetables, fish, and even, from time to time, meat. Life feeds on life in order to maintain life. That's life as it is, and also, we ultimately offer our own life to other beings. Thus, maintaining this precept is not a matter of killing or of sacrifice as such, but rather of living this Buddha life.

We can look further at what it means to maintain the life of the Buddha. Everything is the Buddha; time itself is the life of the Buddha. Do not kill time; when you are killing time, you are killing the Buddha. Even a scrap of paper, if you carelessly discard it, then you kill the Buddha, too. And the more your awareness increases, you become more careful in

maintaining these precepts. By doing so, all things go smoothly simply because there is no friction with life as it is.

The sixteen precepts—the Three Treasures, the Three Pure Precepts, and the Ten Grave Precepts—have been handed down generation after generation to the one who is receiving jukai.

To receive the precepts means to actually confirm oneself as a member of the Buddha's family. At the very end of the Precepts ceremony, we quote the verse from the *Bonmokyo Sutra:* "When beings receive the precepts, they enter into the realm of the Buddhas which is the Buddha Treasure, *anuttara samyak sambodhi*. Truly they are the children of the Buddha."

Some people wonder about the necessity for a formal ceremony in receiving the precepts. I see it like this: A couple may live together informally for quite some time. But once the relationship has been established, it is quite natural to want to publicly affirm it, to make it not only a private matter but to extend this relationship into its place in society. The formal marriage is thus significant, since it clearly marks the formation of a family, and allows society to recognize a lineage for the children of such a couple. And further, such a public declaration of their union may serve to encourage and strengthen the couple in their life together.

Of course, if the marriage is hasty or ill-founded, then all the ceremonies in the world cannot give it life. But if a truly serious and clear-minded commitment is there, then the act of getting married is a natural expression of the couple's inner state, and arises from it quite appropriately.

To receive the precepts is, for the follower of the Buddha Way, similarly important, natural, and significant.

When a couple gets married, they wear rings as a symbol of their union. Similarly, when a person receives the precepts, one receives a *rakusu,* which is the Buddha's robe. Since you have become a member of the Buddha's family, you wear the robe of the Buddha. Also, in the jukai ceremony a person also receives a Buddhist name and the chart showing blood lineage. The blood lineage chart represents the transmission of the teachings from past Buddhas through Shakyamuni Buddha through generations of teachers to the teacher giving the precepts and the student who receives them.

Receiving the precepts and maintaining them is not easy. Even when we reflect upon ourselves and our practice we may see that in the very living itself, we are almost constantly violating the precepts. That means constant atonement is necessary. By atoning in each moment, you renew your vows and precepts, and your determination to genuinely maintain them. The more you do this, the better.

Certainly, maintaining precepts is impossible. We look at this in two distinct ways. As we live, we defile the precepts, but that does not mean we are breaking the precepts. But what would it mean to break the precepts? If you cannot put your faith in the Three Treasures anymore, then you are breaking the precepts, and in that case, you are no longer Buddhist. But on the other hand, even though you may have faith in the Three Treasures, yet you may have trouble maintaining the precepts. This is defiling the precepts, though not breaking them. Once they are defiled, wash them off; then they become clear and clean again. That is the functioning of atonement.

Is Zazen a Religion?
Ko'un Yamada

I AM OFTEN ASKED by Christians, especially Catholics, whether they can practice zazen and still preserve the beliefs of Christianity. To this question I usually answer that Zen is not a religion in the same sense that Christianity is a religion. Therefore, there is no reason why Christianity and zazen cannot coexist. The same question, and the same answer will apply, of course, to zazen and any other religion.

Almost all Buddhist sects can be called religions. Zazen, the practice of seated Zen meditation, however, is quite different in this respect. Quite simply, it is the core of all Buddhist sects. There are many sects in Buddhism, but the essence of them all is the experience of self-realization. The theories and philosophies of all the sects are but the clothing covering this core. These outward trappings are of various shapes and colors, but what is inside remains the same. And the core, this experience, is not adorned with any thought or philosophy. The realization born of zazen is merely a fact, an experienced fact, in the same way that the taste of tea is a fact. A cup of tea has no thought, no idea, no philosophy. It tastes the same to Buddhists as it does to Christians. There is no difference at all.

You may ask what makes this experience happen. Well, quite simply, it is when certain conditions are present to the consciousness of a human being and a reaction occurs. This reaction we call the Zen experience. The reaction of this experience is always the same, regardless of the beliefs we may hold. It also could be compared to playing billiards: When we hit the

balls with the same amount of power and in the same direction, all the balls roll along the same course and at the same angles. Outward differences like the color of the ball make no difference in this regard.

Now you may ask, what is the condition that brings our consciousness to the experience of self-realization? It is to concentrate single-pointedly and to forget ourselves in this single-pointed concentration. This is achieved sometimes in breath-counting, sometimes in what we call simply following the breath, sometimes by just sitting, and sometimes through working on koans. You will notice that all these ways point inward. It is a very interesting fact, but when we concentrate on an object outside ourselves, for example as in archery where we aim at a target, no matter how strong the concentration may be, we cannot attain the Zen experience. So in Zen practice, when we want to attain satori, we have to be absorbed inwardly.

Here you must remember, that the experience attained by zazen practice is not a thought or a philosophy or a religion, but merely a fact, a happening. And strange as it may seem, the experience of that fact has the power to free us from the agonies of the pains of the world. It emancipates us from the anxiety of all worldly suffering. No one knows why that experience has such wonderful power, but it does. This is the most important point, and it's the most difficult to try to explain.

In the Zen experience, a certain unity happens; subject and object become one and we come to realize our own self-nature. This self-nature cannot be seen, it cannot be touched, it cannot be heard. Because of these characteristics, we refer to it as empty (in Japanese, *ku*), but its activities are infinite. So, we say the Zen experience is the realization of the empty-infinite of our self-nature or our essential-nature, as it is often called.

When this happens, it is accompanied by a great peace of mind. At that moment we feel as though the heavy burdens we have been carrying in our head or on our shoulders, indeed all over our body and soul, suddenly disappear as if thrown away. The joy and happiness at that time is beyond all words; and there are no philosophies or theologies attached to it.

Should such a fact be called a religion? I don't think so. It is called satori, or self-realization, or enlightenment.

Having discovered this new world, the Zen student must learn that it is essentially one with the phenomenal world we all know so well. In my teaching I often use a fraction as an illustration to show that all things

have two aspects, but are essentially one. In the fraction, the numerator is anything in the phenomenal world, a dog or cat, a finger or a flower, or you or me. The denominator is the world of the empty-infinite which we call the essential world. Since the symbol "∞" expresses infinity in mathematics, I use it encircled by a zero, as the denominator. The fraction is a way of expressing two aspects as one.

Regarding the relation between Christianity and Zen, I think it can be thought of as two highways, going on separate paths, but crossing at an intersection. The two roads may seem quite apart, but where they cross is common ground. Now, if we take Zen as a religion, Christianity and Zen do seem to be quite different. But their teachings have, as their intersection, a common area that belongs to both: the area of religious experience. I'm sure that a lot of words and phrases in the Bible can never be uttered outside a true religious experience. That, it seems to me, is not irrelevant to the satori experience in Zen.

Now it is of utmost important for beginners in Zen to comprehend its aims clearly. What are we going to attain by doing zazen? There are three categories:

1. Developing concentration of the mind.

2. Experiencing satori—awakening or enlightenment.

3. Making this experience personal.

The first is of the utmost importance in establishing and maintaining a successful life in this world. The ability to concentrate calms the surface of our consciousness. This is most necessary in making correct decisions and for receiving external impressions and information the right way. Also, when the mind is deeply absorbed, it does not easily yield to the influences of external circumstances. And moreover, when we want to actualize ideas that arise in our heart, or when we want to accomplish some work or business, a strong concentration of mind is indispensable.

The second, experiencing satori, is the most important to a Mahayana Zen Buddhist. Dogen Zenji has clearly stated that without enlightenment there is no Zen. This satori does not happen necessarily by mere concentration. This is especially true if the mind is brought to single-pointedness in the objective world. And even if this is achieved inwardly our most profound life problem, the problem of life-and-death, cannot be

solved fundamentally by concentration. It can only be resolved by enlightenment and the personalization of that experience. So if we want to free ourselves from the anxiety of the sufferings of life through zazen, the satori experience should be our main purpose for practicing zazen. Dogen Zenji has told us that we should pray for the help of the Buddhas and Ancestors. This resembles Christianity's prayers of intercession.

The third aim of zazen, the personalization or embodiment of satori, comes as a matter of course only after having attained satori. To attain this experience of enlightenment is not very difficult. For some people, only one sesshin is necessary. But to accomplish our ultimate personality is very difficult indeed, and requires an extremely long period of time. The experience itself is only the entrance. The completion is to personalize what we came to realize in the experience. After washing away all the ecstasy and glitter in the experience, the truly great Zen person is not distinguishable in outward appearance. This person has experienced deep enlightenment and consequently extinguished all illusion but is still not different externally from an ordinary person. Through satori and zazen, you should not become a strange person—not an eccentric or an esoteric person. You should become a normal person, a real person, and as far as is possible, a perfect human being.

III. On Shikantaza and Koans

Dogen Zenji and Enlightenment

Ko'un Yamada

DOGEN ZENJI, the great thirteenth-century master regarded as the founder of the Japanese Soto School of Zen, says, "Practice and enlightenment are not two."

Reading this, many people believe that Dogen Zenji's Zen is a Zen that does not require an enlightenment experience.

To state my conclusion first, such a belief is a mistake. I firmly believe that the most important matter of Buddhism is to attain enlightenment. The point by which Zen Buddhism is differentiated from other religions or philosophies and from all kinds of theories, is precisely this: the attainment of enlightenment.

When you carefully examine Dogen Zenji's writings, this becomes very clear. For example, in Dogen's masterwork, *Shobogenzo (Treasury of the True Dharma Eye),* in the famous chapter "Bendowa" ("The Whole-hearted Way"), or in the *Fukanzazengi (Instructions on Zazen to All),* we find that Dogen Zenji repeatedly emphasizes the importance of each person attaining enlightenment.

Elsewhere, however, Dogen Zenji also mentions that we should *just sit,* without paying particular attention to attaining enlightenment. We call that practice *shikantaza,* literally, "just sit!"

In his writing, Dogen Zenji always stands at the highest peak and tries to lead the students up to his level. Dogen Zenji speaks first of all to the very best students. Regardless of how difficult it is, they will certainly make the effort to penetrate all barriers.

In Zen practice, the first barrier is the initial experience of seeing into one's true nature (this seeing is called *kensho*). Dogen Zenji asks us to join him on the highest peak. Accordingly, having a kensho experience is so fundamental a prerequisite that Dogen Zenji does not put much emphasis on it; it is an unspoken necessity.

So first, you must experience kensho, seeing into your true nature. And yet this is just a beginning. We often see quite a few Zen students who quit after having their first kensho experience; this is like being admitted to an excellent school and then never taking any courses! This is clearly not right practice; it is not the practice of which Dogen Zenji writes.

Consider a three-story building. The first floor is where we usually live; it is the entry level. The second floor is the level of the kensho experience; and the third floor is the domain to which Dogen Zenji summons us. Obviously, in order to reach the third floor, you have to go by way of the second. But some people quit after getting up to the second floor, believing they have arrived at the roof. And furthermore, let me remind you that above the roof extend the boundless skies. Thus, in reality our practice is to clarify ourselves endlessly.

In another analogy of practice, consider a room in which we are all seated. Imagine the walls, ceiling, and floor are all very dark glass through which we can hardly see. Since it is opaque, one does not see that there is a world outside of this room. However, by Zen study, one starts to become aware of that world beyond the limited space of this one room. At some point, we catch a glimpse of the larger world ourselves, we see light beyond the darkened windows. And actually *seeing* the world outside this limited room is to have the experience of kensho.

To help us see through our limited views, we use koans such as Mu. To work on Mu is something like making a little hole in that dark glass. Sometimes in the process, a great part of the glass may even shatter and fall away. Again, this is what we refer to as the Great Enlightenment.

Even when the hole is very small, you become aware of a previously hidden world. With each successive koan you work with after Mu, your vision becomes clearer and clearer. Eventually, all of the dark glass falls away, and this is called Perfect Enlightenment.

When you achieve this state, you will see clearly that from the beginning, there were no walls, no ceiling, no floor. You realize that from the beginning, such limitations were self-imposed.

The great masters, such as Dogen Zenji, clearly realized that from the beginning there is no bondage. When we have had limited kensho, though we have some insight, we cannot quite realize what the next room is all about—let alone the entirety of the boundless sky. In other words, still there is a division between this room and the space outside. This inside world is regarded as the phenomenal or relative world, and the outside world is regarded as the Dharmakaya or absolute world.

Even though one may be fairly well accomplished in practice, it is rather common to speak in terms of some kind of division between these realities. We may feel as though there is perhaps a very thin screen separating the two. However, a great master like Dogen Zenji says there is not even a very thin division that separates him from anything.

Being thus completely free, Dogen may talk about the relative in one sentence and about the absolute in the next. Since there is no division, he speaks so freely about each of them; and when people read without such clear understanding as Dogen Zenji's, they may find him difficult to understand. In addition, because of the tremendous originality of his ideas, Dogen Zenji often uses language unconventionally.

Imagine what a powerful experience the air and sky would be for the one who had previously only lived in the water, or vice versa. It is the experience of a completely different world. After that initial breakthrough, we can become increasingly free, flying high through the sky and diving deep into the ocean. Having had a kensho experience, we keep practicing, becoming increasingly free in either sphere, the sphere of the relative or the absolute. After attaining complete enlightenment, making yourself completely free, you realize that from the beginning, there was never a division between the air and the water, the sky and the ocean, even though they had initially seemed divided.

Living side by side with Dogen Zenji, we can see freely in all directions, and his wisdom is no longer inaccessible to us, but is our very own.

Notes on Koan Study

Bernie Glassman

There are many talks based on koans, but we tend to hear very little about koan study itself. In essence, koans go back to the time of Shakyamuni Buddha. The flavor of koans in India is different from those of China and Japan. Now new koans and koan systems are developing in the United States.

Koans originally developed out of the daily life of masters interacting with their students. Students came to study and brought a question arising out of their own lives. If we look at the students who brought their own koans and persisted in examining them until they came to a resolution, they stand out as exceptional. The average person, on the other hand, does not persist in deeply investigating an important question that arises during daily life. He or she doesn't usually work on it with the vigor and passion that's demanded in order to break through dichotomous thinking. Thus masters would give koans to the students as a technique to force them to penetrate more deeply into reality, to shatter dichotomies.

Generally, koans fall into two basic categories: a koan we work on before the first opening (sometimes called *kensho*), and the koans we work on after this breakthrough.

Shakyamuni Buddha studied, sat, and practiced for many years before his enlightenment experience. In his case, that enlightenment experience was extremely deep. But in general, the first experience is more like poking a hole in the wall rather than shattering it completely in one blow.

So, we study further to enlarge that hole and finally to break apart that wall. Koans are one means of studying further.

As it exists now, there are two basic koan systems. One was organized by Master Inzan (1751–1814), the other by Master Takuju (1760–1833). Inzan and Takuju were two Zen masters in Japan who were the Dharma-grandsons of Hakuin Zenji (1686–1769).

Hakuin Zenji is responsible for organizing koan study as we know it today. He studied koans under various masters; each master had his own way of handling koans. And by studying koans, Hakuin himself sharpened his understanding and had many kensho experiences. Hakuin had over ninety Dharma successors. After him, the Rinzai sect flourished in Japan.

As a teacher, Hakuin emphasized both zazen and koan study. Having studied under so many different teachers, and having seen so many different styles, he felt it best to systematically organize the koans to help his students refine their understanding. Hakuin himself never completed that organization; this work was continued by his Dharma heir Gasan Jito and completed by Gasan's successors Inzan and Takuju.

Inzan and Takuju had completely different personalities. Inzan was vigorous, very dynamic; Takuju was meticulous, very careful in his study. And thus two koan systems developed, having the characteristics of each teacher: one very dynamic system, and one system requiring you to be very meticulous in examining all elements of each point of a koan.

Of the three masters in this book, Yasutani Roshi represents the Takuju line, stressing the meticulous examination of the koans. Koryu Roshi represents the Inzan line, stressing the dynamic interpretation of the koans. Maezumi Roshi, having completed studies in both systems received *inka*, permission to teach, from both Yasutani Roshi and Koryu Roshi.

Through the compassion of the successive teachers, koan study developed into an intricate form. The koans that we use to facilitate the first opening give a glimpse of Dharmakaya, sunyata, emptiness, the ground of Ultimate Reality. This emptiness is not absence. In this emptiness, everything abounds.

After experiencing an opening, students study the *hosshin* koans, or Dharmakaya koans, until they are at home in this world of the Dharmakaya, the world of Oneness. Many people, having some sort of experience of this oneness, get stuck there—they think that's it. They experience the oneness of all things, feel completely at home with

themselves, with Buddha, with the state of *I am*. But staying there is not good. Any experience, insight, emotion, or other phenomena to which one becomes attached, thus blocking further development, is called *makyo.* Getting stuck in oneness is just a kind of makyo. Next, students study the *kikan* koans. *Hosshin* koans focus on oneness, *kikan* koans focus on the uniqueness of all things. Everything is unique—but we have to see this diversity from the perspective of oneness. Everything is the same, but at the same time, everything is unique and different.

Then, completely understanding the oneness of life—the Buddha—completely understanding the diversity—the Dharma—we study the *gonsen* koans. We learn how to use words to express this understanding. This is a very difficult, very important part of koan study. It is said that enlightenment can't be expressed, and to a certain extent, that is true. And yet, we have to learn how to express the inexpressible. We must learn to appreciate the subtle use of words. We must learn to see the difference between living and dead words. We learn to see the powerful effects that our words have. We learn how to express the totality of life, in both its oneness and uniqueness.

After we have studied many koans from different angles, we then investigate the *goi* koans—the Five Ranks of Tozan Zenji. Tozan was one of the two founders of the Soto School in China. The Five Ranks are: (1) the absolute within the relative, (2) the relative within the absolute, (3) the absolute, (4) the relative, and (5) undifferentiated oneness.

In the koan system, the Five Ranks is used as a summary of our practice and as a detailed examination of the absolute, the relative, and their interelatedness. We examine each of these Five Ranks and sharpen and polish our understanding of how they function and interrelate. Then we investigate the *kai* koans. The kai are the precepts, the aspects of the enlightened life. There are about a hundred koans dealing with the sixteen kai, each from a variety of different perspectives. That's the general structure of koan study. But be aware that if at any point in the study, or if at any point in our practice, we think that our understanding is complete—then right there, we are trapped in a sticky web.

CAPPING PHRASES

Hakuin Zenji developed what he called "capping phrases," *jakugo*. He used these capping phrases to increase our ability to express our understanding. In Japan, capping phrases appeared in the classical literature—anything from a single word to several lines. The student, after realizing the spirit and expressing the content of a koan, was asked to find a phrase from the classics that expressed the spirit of the koan. In this country, sometimes two kinds of capping phrases are used: some drawn from literature, others from our own words. Each has its own merits.

In doing koan practice, it's important to devour each koan. Just chew it up! The koan becomes a part of our whole body; our bones, our blood. Just sit with it! Working with koans in this way, each one becomes an integral part of us.

Koans have to be looked at as a system and as skillful means for triggering our first breakthrough and then for deepening it. But they're not unique in their ability to do this; they're not the only means and they're not the only way of practicing Zen, but koans are extremely valuable, as they can protect us from complacency, overvaluing our present state of understanding. Some students don't need koans in order to drive through to the core of Zen and many students aren't temperamentally suited to koan practice; the koan system isn't best for everybody.

Situations that come up in our daily life can be koans. In fact, that's precisely how many koans in the classic koan collections came into being. But often, when something comes up in daily life, we tend to take it only at face value, not investigating further. Koan study is essentially a skillful means to really make us question what this life is, until we fully resolve the question. If we were to do that with the questions that are our daily life, then we'd be creating a new kind of koan system.

But it's not enough just to say that koans will come up in situations of daily life—in addition to recognizing them we have to really work on those situations in the way that we work on a case koan, and persist until we have thoroughly seen through it.

If you work on the classic koans, you develop a feeling of the history of Zen through India, China, and Japan. In koan study, there are anecdotes chronicling encounters between various teachers and students. The enlightenment experiences of the first fifty-two Ancestors, including the experiences of Shakyamuni Buddha and Dogen Zenji and other historical

incidents and stories are also koans. But, at the same time, the things chronicled in those koans are happening right now. Even though the cultures are different, and the way Zen manifests itself in each culture is different, the same things happen for students and teachers here and now. For instance, there are classic koans that deal with students who travel from teacher to teacher, just as they do today. Some koans have as background the cultural milieu of India or China or Japan, but the essence of the koans is the same.

Koans have been a living tradition in each of the cultures where Zen has been practiced, and they are a living tradition here as well. This is a natural process.

On Enlightenment, Koans, and Shikantaza

Koryu Osaka

THE ORIGINAL MEANING of the Sanskrit term *Buddha* is "The Awakened One," thus the word *Buddhism* implies a way of awakening oneself, and of helping others to awaken. Buddhism is the way of self becoming aware of Self; of penetrating the life of the universe, recognizing it as one's own life and living totally at one with it.

Dogen Zenji says,

To study Buddhism is to study the self,
to study the self is to forget the self,
to forget the self is to be enlightened by all things.
It is to be liberated from the body and mind
of oneself and of the self of others.

One who wishes to seek enlightenment must start by studying him- or herself. And in so doing, it is very important to keep the body and mind healthy and harmonious.

Centering around the lower abdomen, the *hara,* physical, mental, and spiritual power become harmonious, and consequently the limitless power of concentration is increased. As a result, unimaginable leaps will suddenly occur, and prajna wisdom will be realized. This is called *kansho hannya* ("illuminating wisdom") and also *kensho.*

In the Zen liturgy, it is in the *Heart Sutra* that enlightenment is explained. The *Heart Sutra* begins: "Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva, doing

deep Prajna Paramita, clearly saw emptiness of all the five conditions, thus completely relieving misfortune and pain." Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva is the embodiment of the enlightened vow to save all beings. Attaining enlightenment means that the body and mind are unified, and further, that no ego, no mind, no thoughts, and no ideas are there to be recognized. Beyond this attainment of enlightenment, one makes yet one more leap and is reborn as one's own true self, identifying oneself wholly with the universe. This is called the Great Rebirth after the Great Death. And to live after this Death is the way of Zen.

The *Heart Sutra* goes on to say, "All five conditions are empty." The five conditions are form, taste, touch, discrimination, awareness—whole body-mind. The emptiness of both body and mind refers to a state of no-self or no-mind. This state is sometimes expressed as: "Above the cushion there is no person and under the cushion there is no floor."

When you experience this realization, all sorts of physical problems may disappear, and tensions and rigidity of the mind are dissolved. In this way sufferings are relieved. In this state of no-mind and no-self, true enlightenment opens into a life of infinity, unrestricted in time or space. This is the life of one who knows him- or herself as the Buddha, and where such a one stands is the Pure Land of Mind. When you realize this, you will be able to live in an eternal moment, where you find delight and the real significance of life.

When Shakyamuni Buddha attained enlightenment, he exclaimed, "How miraculous! How miraculous it is! All sentient beings have the wisdom and virtue of the Tathagatha."

If you are able to accept this proclamation by Shakyamuni Buddha and realize it completely, you are already aware of your Buddha mind and are able to pursue an enlightened life.

Dogen Zenji, in fact, deeply questioned why we must practice at all if we are already enlightened. He left Mount Hiei, the center of Buddhist study at that time, and visited Master Eisai at Kennin Temple in Kyoto. After Eisai's death, he studied with Myozen, Eisai's successor. Then, accompanied by Myozen, Dogen Zenji went to China to seek the Dharma. In China he studied under Master Nyojo, and realized that zazen is the Dharma gate to liberation from attachment to body and mind. Having done this, Dogen Zenji returned to Japan.

According to Master Dogen, zazen is not merely an expedient means to attaining enlightenment, but also the Dharma gate of liberation of body and mind, as well as the very actualization of enlightenment itself.

Dogen Zenji emphasizes the importance of shikantaza and of having faith that practice and enlightenment are one. He tells us to practice with such an attitude of faith, even before we actually attain enlightenment.

Buddhism views enlightenment from two different perspectives: as original enlightenment, and as enlightenment achieved through practice. Master Dogen emphasizes shikantaza and original enlightenment. In other words, he believes that practice and enlightenment are one. Practice is enlightenment, enlightenment is practice.

There is no doubt that by having firm faith we can best develop, as well as sustain, deep samadhi power. When the time is ripe, the liberation of body and mind is realized. Life, once we have liberated body and mind, becomes the manifestation and functioning of prajna. When this happens, our life is in harmony with the Dharma. Teachers in the Soto School regard form itself as carrying the spirit of the Dharma, as manifesting the Dharma.

There are, however, very few people advocating oneness of practice and enlightenment who continue to sit until they actually attain enlightenment—even though they may indeed have great faith in original enlightenment. Often when people have profound faith and a good intellectual understanding of the teachings of Buddhism, they are satisfied to remain like that.

The koan is a very effective means by which to enter into the state of no-mind and no-self. Koans can facilitate realization of the oneness of self and other most effectively. This is true whether one approaches the koan Mu from great faith or intense questioning. The realization of enlightenment is possible in either way. There are many koans, so you can select the koan that most closely suits your practice. It is important, however, to begin koan practice by working on a koan of the *hosshin* category. The *hosshin* koans are those koans by which one realizes the Dharmakaya. In realizing the Dharmakaya, one realizes that this flesh-and-blood body itself is nothing but the infinite and indestructible body of the Buddha. The *hosshin* koans are those through which individuals realize that this limitless and unrestricted small-self is nothing but no-self, which is the true self and the universal self. The most popular koans of this

category are Joshu's "Mu," Hakuin's "Sound of One Hand," and the Sixth Ancestor's, "Original Face."

A koan can be used as an expedient means by which to attain enlightenment. For the person who is able to attain great enlightenment by only one koan, one koan is enough. For instance, when Shakyamuni Buddha saw the morning star, he attained Great Enlightenment. Passing through one gate, he passed through all gates simultaneously. We call this seeing everything at a glance.

To realize the structure of life at a glance, however, is very difficult. Even such great teachers as Master Hyakujo and Master Rinzai needed more than one enlightenment experience; that is, upon their first kensho they did not immediately see everything. Enlightenment can vary greatly in degrees of clarity and depth. Before attaining great enlightenment, both had several glimpses into the nature of Reality.

Buddhism is understood as the teaching of "turning delusions into enlightenment" and "turning consciousness into wisdom." Enlightenment exists when delusion is transformed into *four wisdoms*. These are: the great mirror wisdom, fundamental wisdom, subtle observation wisdom, and spontaneous action wisdom.

The perception of oneness, or fundamental wisdom; the perception of the differences, or subtle observation wisdom; the perception of the refined functioning of the five senses, or spontaneous action wisdom—these are three, and yet one. The three wisdoms together comprise the great mirror wisdom. There are all degrees of understanding, ranging from shallow to profound, in realizing these four wisdoms and in realizing their interrelationships.

As long as you have a self-centered view of the ego, you cannot understand what Buddhism really is. The first step toward understanding is to transform the "I-me-mine" consciousness into fundamental wisdom, or the wisdom of prajna. This is the reason that Zen practice emphasizes work on the Dharmakaya koans, which force you to realize prajna wisdom.

The Dharmakaya koans are very difficult to pass. When you pass your first Dharmakaya koan—the first barrier—turning your "I-memine" consciousness into fundamental wisdom, it is said that you have had kensho. You will realize what kensho is when you actually experience it yourself.

In the state of oneness, the mountain is no longer high and the ocean no longer deep; the willow is not green, nor the flower red.

Since this state is exceedingly wonderful, once you attain it you may become attached to it. To avoid forming an attachment to this state of oneness is a very real and very common problem following a first kensho experience. Continuing to practice hard and not clinging to this state of oneness, you begin to perceive differences within the oneness. After the state of fundamental wisdom becomes deeper, once more the willow tree is green, and the flowers red. When you are still in a deluded state before kensho, you make distinctions and discriminations, but they are based on "I-me-mine" consciousness. After kensho, you still perceive distinctions, but the distinctions are now viewed through the wisdom of subtle observation. The difference between these two perceptions of phenomena, before and after enlightenment, is like that between mud and cloud. After enlightenment, sight, hearing, taste, touch, even mind itself become mysteriously subtle. Only after attaining enlightenment and perceiving the oneness of all things, the Dharmakaya, can you perceive the true reality of distinctions. This is the wisdom of subtle observation.

Yet, even having attained the wisdom of subtle observation, if we do not put our understanding into practice, if we do not make our realization *function* in everyday life, then it is useless. This functioning, freed from conditioning, enables you to accept everything as it is and to respond to circumstances in an appropriate and natural way. This is the wisdom of spontaneous action.

There is one koan that says: "Pull a five-storey pagoda out of a teapot." When you are able to handle this sort of koan without any hesitation, you can act freely in any situation. Having truly attained the wisdom of spontaneous action, whatever you do in your daily life becomes the Buddha's action and the Buddha's conduct.

It is when we attain Great Enlightenment that we can truly appreciate the life of wisdom, which is like a clear, full moon illuminating the heavens.

In Zen we say that we do not depend on words or letters, for Zen transcends all verbal expression. Nevertheless, we have many verbal expressions. There are numerous records in which are found sayings, verses, capping phrases, commentaries, and interpretations—as well as elements from Taoist and Shinto literature.

All our actions and conduct in life become the realization of the koan. There is no end to koan practice. There is a boundless expansion of the creative process. It becomes possible for us to lead a highly aware and awakened life within the common ordinary life.

In koan practice certain koans are more appropriate to work on depending on the career of the individual, or on the structure of one's daily life. Of course, the most suitable koans to work on are those that have a close connection with our daily lives. In order to deepen our understanding, we must work on the koans for a long time, trying hard to realize and actualize them in our lives.

Koan Zen emphasizes attaining and experiencing enlightenment, turning delusions into enlightenment. It is all right to start with questioning and doubting. In fact, it is said that the deeper the questioning or doubting, the greater the enlightenment.

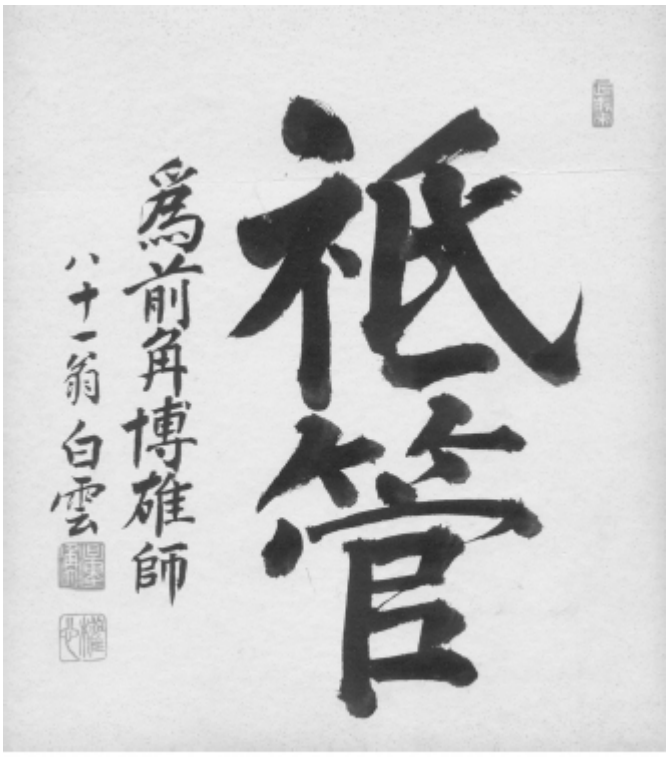
But how do we become enlightened? This is where koan study comes in. Many masters have used koans to attain great enlightenment. Koan study serves as a firm foundation for our practice and makes it easier for us to improve it. It is said that there are seventeen hundred koans. Actually, there are as many koans in life as there are individuals, and each individual's life is nothing but koans. One is able to work on them wherever and whenever one wishes to. It is necessary, however, to deal with them seriously.

Koan study provides us a chance to sit more intensively. In our study of koans, we also ought to have private interviews with a teacher. Samadhi power, or the power of concentration, is an inevitable byproduct as we try to solve the koans without letting go of them at any time.

When you start studying koans, and pass a few of them, you may feel that you understand Zen. You may even become arrogant and conceited. Self-satisfaction, whether it occurs in the beginning stages of koan practice or after you have completed koan study, impedes further progress.

Both shikantaza and koan study have advantages and disadvantages. If possible, it is better to first study koans in order to see clearly the fundamental problems or questions in Zen and become capable of handling them. After finishing koan study, you may deepen and refine your understanding by shikantaza. In this way I believe that you will become a true Zen student, who has the right realization and wisdom—

one who is able to freely utilize such understanding in everyday life. I truly hope that many such people will appear.



"Shikan," by Hakuun Yasutani (at age 81)

Koan Practice and Shikantaza

Hakuun Yasutani

IF WE WERE TO distinguish the various kinds of Zen practice, we would find two major types: koan Zen and shikantaza. The Rinzai and Obaku Schools emphasize koan study; the Soto School emphasizes shikantaza. But even when koan study is stressed, shikantaza is not abandoned. All the great masters of these three schools emphasize the importance of shikantaza; and conversely, the finest masters in all schools use koans freely.

Dogen Zenji, who brought Soto Zen to Japan, was instrumental in bringing his first disciple, Ejo Zenji, to enlightenment by giving him the koan, "One thread going through many holes." Since then, many masters of the Soto School have guided their students with koans. Let us examine both koan study and shikantaza in some detail.

KOANS

When you study koans, you should not study by yourself; you may fall into traps or go in the wrong direction. You must work under the right teacher. Even if you read a great deal, it is wise to keep in mind that books without a teacher are inadequate guides.

Koans reveal the very essence of the Buddha Way, uninterruptedly transmitted to us from the time of Shakyamuni Buddha. After the Sixth

Ancestor, Huineng, and especially in the Sung dynasty and the following years, koan Zen became very popular in China, as it was later in Japan.

The word "koan" originally referred to a public document of great authority issued by the government, and even in present-day usage the word retains its original implication of authority and rightness. It is by means of the koan that we examine the most fundamental and important questions of life and death.

Many koans consist of dialogues between Zen masters and their students, others are taken from important passages of Buddhist scripture. Among the koans of dialogue, there are some in which the student questions the master in order to clarify his own understanding; in others, we see that although the student has experienced enlightenment, his vision is not yet clear. So in order to further clarify and deepen his vision, the student visits various masters.

In yet another kind of koan, monks and priests who have already experienced enlightenment further train themselves by engaging a number of masters in Dharma combat. A koan is not an explanation or illustration of a thought or an idea. If you regard a koan in this way, it is not koan practice and you miss the point. Koans deal with the essence of the Dharma, with the fact that all beings are Buddha. This fact is the ground of our being. We use koans as expedient means to perceive and demonstrate our buddhahood.

SHIKANTAZA

Shikantaza should be personally and individually taught to you by a qualified teacher. While practicing shikantaza by yourself based only on what you've read is less harmful than unsupervised koan study, proper instructions are very rare.

The *Fukanzazengi* by Dogen Zenji is good instruction, but is very difficult to understand. It is especially hard to comprehend how to work with the mind, and how the practice relates to enlightenment. I will briefly explain how to practice shikantaza.

Generally speaking, zazen can be described in three phases: first adjusting the body, second the breathing, and third the mind. The first

and second are the same in both koan Zen and shikantaza. However, the third, adjusting the mind, is done very differently in the two practices.

To do shikantaza, one must have a firm faith in the fact that all beings are fundamentally buddhas. Dogen Zenji says in the ninth chapter of *Gakudo Yojinshu (Precautions on Learning the Way):*

You should practice along with the Way. Those who believe in the Buddha Way must believe in the fact that their own self is in the midst of the Way from the beginning, so that there is no confusion, no delusion, no distorted viewpoint, no increase or decrease, and no errors. To have such faith and to understand such a way and practice in accordance with it, is the very fundamental aspect of the learning of the Way. You try to cut off the root of consciousness by sitting. Eight, even nine out of ten will be able to see the Way—have kensho—suddenly.

This is the key to practicing shikantaza. But this does not at all mean that one must believe that one's small-minded, self-centered life is Buddha's life—on the contrary! Cast all sorts of self-centeredness away and make yourself as a clean sheet of paper; sit, just firmly sit.

Sit unconditionally, knowing that sitting itself is the actualization of buddhahood—this is the foundation of shikantaza. If one's faith in that fact is shaky, one's shikantaza is also shaky.

In doing shikantaza you must maintain mental alertness, which is of particular importance to beginners. Even those who have been practicing ten years could still be called beginners! Often due to weak concentration, one becomes self-conscious or falls into a sort of trance or ecstatic state of mind. Such practice might be useful to relax yourself, but it will never lead to enlightenment and is not the practice of the Buddha Way.

When you thoroughly practice shikantaza you will *sweat*—even in the winter. Such intensely heightened alertness of mind cannot be maintained for long periods of time. You might think that you can maintain it for longer, but this state will naturally loosen. So sit half an hour to an hour, then stand up and do a period of kinhin, walking meditation.

During kinhin, relax the mind a little. Refresh yourself. Then sit down and continue shikantaza.

To do shikantaza does not mean to become without thoughts, yet, doing shikantaza, do not let your mind wander. Do not even contemplate

enlightenment or becoming Buddha. As soon as such thoughts arise, you have stopped doing shikantaza. Dogen says very clearly: “Do not attempt to become Buddha.”

Sit with such intensely heightened concentration, patience, and alertness, that if someone were to touch you while you are sitting, there would be an electrical spark! Sitting thus, you return naturally to the original Buddha, the very nature of your being.

Then, almost anything can plunge you into the sudden realization that all beings are originally buddhas and all existence is perfect from the beginning.

Experiencing this is called enlightenment. Personally experiencing this is as vivid as an explosion; regardless of how well you know the theory of explosions, only an actual explosion will do anything. In the same manner, no matter how well you know about enlightenment, until you actually experience it, you will not be intimately aware of yourself as Buddha.

In short, shikantaza is the actual practice of buddhahood itself from the very beginning—and, in diligently practicing shikantaza, when the time comes, one will realize that very fact.

However, to practice in this manner can require a long time to attain enlightenment, and such practice should never be discontinued until one fully realizes enlightenment. Even after attaining great enlightenment and and even if one becomes a roshi, one must continue to do shikantaza forever, simply because shikantaza is the actualization of enlightenment itself.

Working with Mu

Koryu Osaka

The Gateless Gate *or* Mumonkan *is the most popular and widely used of all zen koan collections. In 1228 A.D., the Chinese Rinzai Zen Master Mumon Ekai (in Chinese, Wumen Huikai, 1183–1260) selected forty-eight important koans from the sayings of the old masters, added his own commentary and verse to each one, and gave them to his students for their zen study. The* Mumonkan *was first brought to Japan in 1254 A.D. by one of Mumon's disciples, the Japanese monk Shinji Kakushin (1207–98). The first case of the* Mumonkan, *and one of the most famous, is "Joshu's Mu," with which Master Mumon struggled for six years before attaining enlightenment.*

JOSHU'S DOG

The Case

A monk asked Joshu in all earnestness, "Has a dog Buddha nature or not?" Joshu said, "Mu!"

Mumon's Commentary

For the practice of Zen, you must pass the barrier set up by the ancient masters of Zen. To attain to marvelous enlightenment, you must completely extinguish all the delusive thoughts of the ordinary mind. If you have not passed the barrier and have not extinguished delusive thoughts, you are a phantom haunting the weeds and trees. Now, just tell me, what is the barrier set up by the Zen masters of old? Merely this Mu—the one barrier of our sect. It has come to be called "The Gateless Barrier of the Zen Sect."

Those who have passed the barrier are able not only to see Joshu face to face but also to walk hand in hand with the whole descending line of Zen masters and be eyebrow to eyebrow with them. You will see with the same eye that they see with, hear with the same ear that they hear with.

Wouldn't it be a wonderful joy? Isn't there anyone who wants to pass this barrier? Then concentrate your whole self, with its 360 bones and joints and 84,000 pores, into Mu making your whole body a solid lump of doubt. Day and night, without ceasing, keep digging into it, but don't take it as "nothingness" or as "being" or "non-being." It must be like a red-hot iron ball that you have gulped down and that you try to vomit up, but cannot. You must extinguish all delusive thoughts and feelings that you have cherished up to the present. After a certain period of such efforts, Mu will then be like a dumb man who has had a dream. You will know yourself, and for yourself only.

Then all of sudden, Mu will break open and astonish the heavens and shake the earth. It will be just as if you had snatched the great sword of General Kan. If you meet a buddha, you will kill him. If you meet an ancient Zen master, you will kill him. Though you may stand on the brink of life and death, you will enjoy the great freedom. In the six realms and the four modes of birth, you will live in the samadhi of innocent play.

Now, how should you concentrate on Mu? Exhaust every ounce of energy you have in doing it. And if you do not give up on the Way, you will be enlightened the way a candle in front of the Buddha is lighted by one touch of fire.

The Verse

Dog! Buddha nature!

The perfect manifestation, the absolute command,
A little "has" or "has not,"
And body is lost! Life is lost!

WHEN YOU CLIMB MOUNTAINS, you can't climb a high one from the very beginning without preparation; rather you first climb lower mountains in preparation for taking on higher peaks. Similarly, in Japan, when we have a week-long sesshin, we first have a short sesshin, three or four days in length, to prepare for the Great Sesshin, as the longer one is called. It is rather difficult to work on a koan right away, after not having sat a sesshin for a while. Your body, breath, and mind should be ready. By adequately preparing your body, breath, and mind, you can then effectively work on your koan. Even though at first, it is very difficult to do good zazen, the proper posture, breathing, and focus are essential. Zazen improves and progresses almost endlessly.

In order to adjust your body and mind ideally, two or three days should be spent in either counting the breath or following the breath, by which both mind and body settle into a very harmonious, steady condition. For those who are sitting daily, it is advisable to practice by counting the breath or following the breath for the first few minutes of each sitting, then, having adjusted yourself well, start working on your koan. This is always a wise way to practice zazen.

Before we get into the koan of Joshu's Dog, I should like to say a word about Joshu. He lived in China about 1,200 years ago and was the tenth successor from Bodhidharma.

When he was a teenager, he studied under Master Nansen. Master Nansen asked Joshu, "Where did you come from?" and Joshu replied, "I am from Zuizo." Then Master Nansen asked him, "Did you go to pray to the Great Buddha in Zuizo?" and Joshu replied, "No, sir, the Great Buddha is in front of me, lying down on the floor." The Master Nansen asked him, "What are you talking about?" And Joshu said: "My great teacher, I am very pleased that you are in good spirits and good health."

Zen has nothing to do with past or future, but always it directly deals with the moment right now!

When Joshu was eighteen years old, he had experienced enlightenment, but for forty years after that he stayed with Master Nansen and served him. When Joshu was fifty-seven years old, Master Nansen passed away. After his teacher's death, Joshu stayed for three years in order to conduct memorial services for him. And when Joshu was sixty years old, he began a twenty-year pilgrimage to visit masters all over China.

At the outset of this pilgrimage, Joshu made this determination: "If a seven-year-old kid knows better than I do, I will ask the kid to teach me, and if I encounter a hundred-year-old sage, if I know better, I will teach the sage." During these twenty years, until Joshu was eighty years old, he visited many outstanding masters in China and became very well trained. He took up residence in a temple, named Kannon in Joshu province, and there he taught until he was 120 years old.

He never used the stick or shouted. These methods were unnecessary for him; he knew exactly what to express and how to respond. He just verbally responded to the students, whomever came, and his words were like precious jewels. Thus we call his zen the zen of lips and tongue.

A wandering monk one day appeared in front of him, and seeing a dog running around the yard of the temple, asked Joshu, "Does a dog also have Buddha nature?" To this question, Master Joshu replied, "Mu." This is the koan at hand.

When Buddha Shakyamuni attained enlightenment he exclaimed: "How miraculously wonderful it is! All beings have the Tathagata's virtues and wisdom!" Mu literally means "negation, nothing." It's like the English prefix "un" or the word "no."

The Buddha's words definitely say that all beings have Buddha nature. But we hear Joshu's answer; he says, "No." This is quite a contradiction to the Buddha's statement. We must find the answer to this contradiction, and we find it in "Mu." The point of this koan is not in whether the dog has Buddha nature or not. This is not about the dog, or Joshu's answer: it is about you! You must resolve it yourself.

Master Mumon worked on this koan for six years. One night he was doing zazen, and heard a sudden clap of thunder. At that instant, he attained enlightenment. Since he opened his eye of wisdom by the koan "Mu" he named his book the *Mumonkan, (The Gateless Gate),* which comprises forty-eight koans.

Now let us appreciate Mumon's comment, "For the practice of Zen, you must pass the barriers set up by the masters of Zen." That is to say, in order to realize Zen, to understand what Zen is, you must pass through this koan, and realize it yourself. The very subtle dynamic state of enlightenment cannot be realized only by a psychological or philosophical interpretation. If you don't pass through this koan, you are like "a phantom among the undergrowth and weeds." Now what is this barrier? It is simply Mu, the barrier-gate of Zen, and this is why it is called "the Gateless Barrier of the Zen Sect."

Now what are the barriers set up by the masters? That is to say, what is the koan? It is this single syllable Mu. When you realize Mu, you will see the Buddha Shakyamuni, and all the great masters, such as Tozan, Rinzai, and Joshu. You will see things in the same way as they. Not only will you see them face to face and hear the same things as they hear, but also you will enjoy and go on the way hand in hand with them.

And so Mumon asks us, "Is not this a blessed condition? Wouldn't you like to pass this barrier?" And he continues, "Then concentrate your whole body, with its 360 bones and joints, and 84,000 hair follicles, into this question; day and night, without ceasing, hold it before you." That means with your whole might, with your whole concentration and effort and devotion, question this, day and night. Needless to say, this Mu doesn't mean "nothing"—but it is not "something" either.

When you work on this koan, try to knead it like dough when you make bread. Knead that Mu in your lower abdomen. And when you do it day after day, it will create strength, energy, and power within you, and with that strength you work on it still harder. When you work on this further, it is as though a red-hot iron ball is stuck in your throat that you can neither spit out nor swallow. And when you continue this state, that hot iron ball burns away all delusions and illusions, all miscellaneous thoughts and opinions, all unnecessary thinking that bothers you. Then eventually you come to the point where there is no distinction between inside yourself and outside yourself, between subjective and objective—and then you totally become One in the absolute state.

That is the state of mind in which there is no dog, there is no Joshu, there is no self; even the universe itself doesn't exist.

When you reach that point, to try to express that experience in words is like a mute man who dreams and wants to tell about what he has

dreamt but can't. And when you have that experience, you really will "astonish the heavens above and shake the earth beneath."

In China, there once was a general by the name of Kan-u who was such a strong man that when he wielded his sword no one could stand before him. When you become One with the absolute, you can freely wield the sword of wisdom by which you are able to cut through delusions and illusions and desires. You will become a person who freely comes and goes in the six realms of existence—heaven, hell, human, fighting spirits, hungry ghosts, and animals—and can save beings in each of them according to necessity.

The whole essence of work on this koan can be summed up like this: You totally become Mu, from morning to night; even in dreams—even in sleep!—you are with Mu and Mu becomes yourself. That is the way to work on this koan.

When you work on this all the time, you will get very used to it, and without trying to put much effort into it, you will be in that state day and night. As you maintain such a state, you eventually totally become one with Mu, and you become Mu yourself, and Mu becomes your self, and you become the whole universe. And when you continue to maintain this state, ultimately an explosion will take place.

Mumon composed a poem on this koan: Dog! Buddha nature! The perfect manifestation, the absolute command. A little "has" or "has not," and body is lost! Life is lost!" Mu itself is the Buddha nature, and when you thoroughly make this your own, in that moment, you realize what you are. If you fall into the sphere of dualism, even just a little bit, then you lose sight of it, you completely lose the total of this koan, as Mumon says: "If you think in terms of duality, you lose both body and mind."

Mumon has explained it based on his own experience. However, this sort of experience is not easy to have, and I should like to offer a few more words that may make your practice more effective.

It is always helpful to adjust your breathing. When you inhale, try to push your lower abdomen forward slightly. When you exhale, as the lung volume decreases, the diaphragm goes up. That means that the lower abdomen will slightly contract too. Work on Mu in harmony with your breathing. Concentrating on Mu, try to hold it in your lower abdomen throughout your inhalation and exhalation.

This practice is not only good for penetrating a koan, but also it creates a very healthy physical condition. Your lower abdomen expands on the inhalation, and simultaneously your diaphragm moves downward. On the exhalation, the lower abdomen contracts while the diaphragm goes up. This vertical movement of the diaphragm and horizontal movement of the lower abdomen stimulates the internal organs so that your body starts to function better. In this way, not only can you improve your physical condition, but your mind becomes clearer as well.

When you start practicing this sort of breathing, deep in your lower abdomen, the initially slight movement of the diaphragm increases. Then according to the increased motion of the diaphragm, your breathing becomes slower. The average frequency of normal breathing is seventeen breaths per minute. As practice continues, the frequency starts to decrease. When you really improve your breathing, it becomes only a few breaths per minute. As you breathe like this you start feeling very comfortable; not only comfortable, it even becomes a delightful feeling, and the air also becomes tastier. This delightful feeling is created not only because of the mental condition, but even your blood, skin, internal organs, each functions in its best way, and these organs feel joy and delight.

This is how you will create a strong harmony within yourself.

Pacifying the Mind

Koryu Osaka

Translated by Peter Kakuzen Gregory

"Bodhidharma's Pacifying the Mind," the forty-first case of the Mumonkan, *concerns an exchange between Bodhidharma and Master Eka, the First and Second Chinese Zen Ancestors in the sixth century C.E. This case takes place before the Second Ancestor's enlightenment.*

BODHIDHARMA'S PACIFYING THE MIND

The Case

Bodhidharma sat facing the wall. The Second Ancestor stood outside in the snow. He cut off his arm and said: "My mind is not yet at peace. Please, Master, put my mind at ease." Bodhidharma said: "Bring me your mind and I will pacify it for you." The Second Ancestor replied: "Although I have searched for the mind, it is utterly ungraspable." Bodhidharma said: "Then I have pacified your mind for you."

Mumon's Commentary

The broken-toothed old barbarian proudly came 100,000 *li* across the sea. It could be said that this was raising waves without any wind. In the end, he had only one disciple, and even he was a cripple. Alas! Shasanro doesn't even know four characters.

Mumon's Verse

Coming from the west and directly pointing—
The affairs are caused by the transmission.
The troublemaker for Zen monasteries
Is, after all, you.

MANY ARE THE DAYS and months spent idly, but few indeed are the hours spent seeking the Dharma. Time passes quickly and we grow old before we realize it.

Since most people have jobs and responsibilities, it's impossible to concentrate only on Zen practice. However, our practice is based on the principle that we must continue to polish and refine ourselves in the midst of our lives; we can't simply say that we are unable to practice because of our busy schedules.

You should carry the spirit of zazen to every area of your life. We emphasize the proper disposition of body, breath, and mind. If you practice this properly in the zendo, it will start showing up in your daily life. Then your everyday activities will be vitalized. First, make your life genuine through practice. Then you will be able fully and directly to appreciate the significance and joy of living with your own body and mind. You will be able to delight in others. This is "the taste of Zen." See how you can discover this practice spirit in your work. No matter how long it takes, it's all right—just as long as you realize this.

This realization is something that anyone can have. It will definitely come about as a result of your own earnestness and effort. Since practice is at its most basic in the zendo, just throw yourself totally into zazen;

don't hold back. When you do this, you will become stronger and less limited. Thus a turnabout takes place.

This case is one of the most important koans. It deals with Bodhidharma's coming to China and transmitting the Dharma to the Second Ancestor, Master Eka.

Bodhidharma is a Zen icon. His fierce demeanor is familiar to every Zen student. Although some scholars doubt his historical existence, he is said to have been an Indian monk, the third son of the ruler of a kingdom in Southern India. His father had a strong aspiration to practice the Way. Bodhidharma's teacher, Hannyatara, was the twenty-seventh successor of the Dharma from Shakyamuni. Hannyatara was frequently invited to the palace of Bodhidharma's father to expound the Dharma, for which the king was extremely grateful.

Once, when Hannyatara and his attendant were invited to the palace to chant sutras, only the attendant chanted; Hannyatara's voice couldn't be heard. Later, when asked about it, he replied that he was concentrating on his breathing. When he exhaled, he became one with the exhalation, and when he inhaled, he became one with his inhalation. In this way he was expounding the Dharma. Proper breathing was the same as proper sutra chanting. If you can totally follow your breath, then each breath becomes the vital activity of life. As the master followed his breath perfectly, he expounded the Dharma exactly as it should be expounded.

The king was deeply impressed and presented a splendid jewel to Hannyatara. Hannyatara used it to test the princes. The first and second sons praised it, saying that such a splendid gem could only be possessed by their father, the king. However, the third son, Bodhidharma, said that although the gem Hannyatara held was splendid, the true jewel was not a material thing but the mind. He said that a material jewel gives off only worldly light—the true light is the light of wisdom. Bodhidharma made this remarkable statement when he was only seven years old.

Hannyatara was greatly impressed and said to the king that his third son would become a great man. Hannyatara kept a close watch on him after that. When the king died, Bodhidharma meditated for an entire week in front of his father's coffin and entered into a state of deep samadhi. Thereafter Bodhidharma decided to become a disciple of Hannyatara. Hannyatara said to him, "You have already innately penetrated true reality." This is innate wisdom. Recognizing the exceptional qualities of

his student, Hannyatara gave him the name Bodhidharma—*bodhi* means "enlightenment," and *dharma* means "penetrating everything." Bodhidharma then served Hannyatara for forty years. After his teacher died, Bodhidharma taught Buddhism for sixty-seven years.

According to legend, Bodhidharma began studying with Hannyatara when he was about ten years old; he must have been around fifty when Hannyatara died. If we add sixty-seven years to this, he must have been over 110 when he left for China. There was a famous overland trade route known as the Silk Road, but Bodhidharma traveled by boat. Crossing the rough seas from India to China was no small feat. He surely met with great difficulties, but finally, after three years, he reached China. He sailed up the Pearl River and landed at present-day Canton, where he stayed for a short while, building a small hermitage called "Coming-from-the-West Hut."

Soon after this, the governor of the province reported to Emperor Wu of Liang that a wonderful old sage had arrived from India. Consequently, Emperor Wu invited Bodhidharma to his court—their meeting is recorded as the first case of *The Blue Cliff Record*. The emperor bragged about all his good deeds, the many temples he had built, and asked Bodhidharma how much merit he had gained. Bodhidharma replied, "No merit."

Although Emperor Wu was known as "Buddha-Mind Son of Heaven," he couldn't understand Bodhidharma. Later he exclaimed: "Even though I met him, I didn't meet him"—even though he had seen Bodhidharma's outward appearance, he had been unable to penetrate his true spirit. Thus, the emperor met Bodhidharma but was unable to meet the True Man, and so lost the chance of a lifetime. Emperor Wu's daughter, on the other hand, studied with Bodhidharma and eventually became an heir to his Dharma.

Because Emperor Wu of Liang didn't understand Bodhidharma's teaching, Bodhidharma crossed the Yangtse River and went to the Shaolin temple in the kingdom of Wei. There he faced the wall and did zazen for nine years. He didn't do this for his own sake. He sat facing the wall until the right person came for the Dharma.

Eventually, Master Eka who became the Second Ancestor of Chinese Zen, came to Bodhidharma. Master Eka was a wonderful person and was called "Divine Light" because a dazzling light had shone in the room

where he was born. He had studied Confucianism and Taoism and was well-learned and advanced in practice.

Even though Bodhidharma's "just doing zazen" may seem passive, he must have been sending out powerful energies. His disciples became attuned to him, and as this happened, a wonderful resonance began to build up. At first their response was slight, but it increased continually, and later his disciples came one after the other.

There is a verse that expresses this:

Peaches and plums don't talk, and yet
The path is naturally made under their blossoms.

Master Eka was the first of the disciples to arrive, and even though he had done so at great personal difficulty, Bodhidharma ignored him and just sat facing the wall. Even after Eka announced his purpose, Bodhidharma still continued to sit without greeting him. Eka just stood there. It was the night of December 9 and a heavy snow fell. Since Ancestor Eka was standing outside, the snow gradually piled up, burying his legs. Bodhidharma finally growled: "You there, standing in the snow, what do you want?" Relieved, Eka entreated Bodhidharma to save all deluded beings.

But Bodhidharma admonished him severely: "The unsurpassable subtle Way of all Buddhas is unattainable unless you devote all your energy and effort to it over an extremely long period of time. You can never accomplish the Way unless you are one who can practice what is exceedingly difficult to practice and bear what is exceedingly difficult to bear. Even if you try that hard, you will only be able to realize a little. With your careless and conceited mind, you already feel as if you control all under heaven and want to trifle with it—with such an easy-going attitude, you'll never be able to accomplish the Buddha Way."

Hearing this, in order to show the strength of his resolution, Eka cut off his left arm with the sword he was carrying and presented it to Bodhidharma gushing blood onto the pure white snow.

At that, Bodhidharma said, "Those who in the past have truly searched for the Dharma have never given a thought to their own physical well-being. Since you have such determination, you have the capacity to accomplish it, and it is fitting that you do so."

When Bodhidharma asked his reason for striving with such determination, Eka pleaded, "My mind is in upheaval and I can find no peace. Please, put my mind at ease." Bodhidharma replied, "Bring me your mind and I will pacify it for you." Eka's koan crystallized. As long as he was caught up in the disturbances of his mind, he simply couldn't recognize his true nature. But, in the end, he saw deeply into himself.

This is the way to practice zazen, to practice Mu. Correctly align your body, and just sit up. With steadfast resolution, sit massively. Thus, the *hara*, your center, begins to sit. When the *hara* sits, when you physically and mentally center your breathing in the *hara*, you're not thinking about anything, not even Mu. This Mu is without a doubt the wonderful truth.

Even though you have questions about Mu, you won't answer them with concepts. Investigate Mu persistently, practice Mu with all your guts. Just exhaust every ounce of your mental, physical, and spiritual energy in Mu. Concentrate! Concentrate harder! Don't divide your attention. Just continue to squeeze everything out with all you've got.

Working like this with all your guts, no matter how tired you become or how much your legs hurt or how many disturbances you have—just Mu. When thoughts of yesterday or tomorrow spring up, let them be, and return to your singleminded concentration. It's all right if in the beginning you can only concentrate with 50 or 60 percent of your energy. Gradually, you'll be able to concentrate a full 100 percent. When this happens, then external things will cease to affect you, and finally all that will remain is Mu.

As you continue to concentrate on Mu moment by moment, even concentrating will cease to be an effort. And yet, you are still doing it. When this happens, you become Mu, and Mu is muing Mu. What we call "I" becomes extremely small. This becomes an objective fact, firmly established.

When this happens, "my" effort stops and the effort that plunges deeper and deeper objectively continues. When the subject is completely eliminated, it becomes "mind-less" and "self-less." The "I" disappears and "my" voice also completely disappears.

Despite the fact that it is mindless and selfless, Mu continually springs forth. Mu—the Mu of no-thought—becomes absolute, becomes the activity of the life of the universe, something entirely pure and untainted. When the "I" consciousness is completely extinguished, you have reached the

state of the Ungraspable, that of which Master Eka spoke: "Although I have sought this mind, it is ungraspable."

This Ungraspable does not mean that you can't get hold of it. In fact, it means quite the contrary: it isn't some "thing" that can or cannot be grasped. The state of the Ungraspable springs out of the practice that is practiced through and through. In this state the "I" is totally dissolved into the Ungraspable, as is the whole universe. This is called "Absolute Mind." It is the state where you do zazen with heaven and earth filling your *hara*. You should work on Mu by placing heaven and earth in your *hara*. When you do this, you will become one with Bodhidharma.

The Second Ancestor said: "Although I have searched for this mind, it is utterly ungraspable!" Thus, he himself was Mind. Bodhidharma said: "Then I have pacified your mind for you."

Becoming Mu, your mind is truly pacified. All your anxieties and uncertainties are blown away and your mind is totally at ease.

In Mu, one becomes zero, and zero becomes everything. Therefore the Second Ancestor Eka and Bodhidharma each intimately illuminates the other; both stand together on the same Ground. They are "only Buddha and Buddha." Bodhidharma said to the Second Ancestor Eka, "That's so, that's so. This is what we call "face-to-face transmission." Without this intimate meeting of minds, the realm of oneness can't be grasped. Accordingly, Mumon comments: "The broken-toothed old barbarian proudly came miles across the sea." "The toothless old barbarian" is no other than Bodhidharma, who crossed rough seas and finally reached China after years of travel. He came neither to enhance his own position nor to gain renown, but to transmit the Buddhadharma. Bodhidharma taught "seeing into one's nature and becoming Buddha." It is in order to express his deep appreciation that Mumon says: "The broken-toothed old barbarian boldly came across the sea."

It could be said that this was raising waves without any wind.

Bodhidharma stirred his old bones and came neither for his own good nor out of necessity, but because of the overflowing of his compassionate heart to save all sentient beings. He had an inexhaustible bodhi-mind.

In the end, he had only one disciple, and even he was a cripple. Alas!

There are many instances in Zen where extremely disparaging words are used to express admiration. Here, Master Mumon praises Bodhidharma's incomparable achievement by saying, "In the end, he had only one disciple, and although it was good to have saved him, he was merely a one-armed cripple." Then he exclaims: "Alas!" Why does Master Mumon seem to express regret?

Shasanro doesn't even know four characters.

Sha is a Chinese surname, and *sanro* means "third son." It indicates an illiterate person, a person of no learning. However, what is meant by "no learning" in Zen is in fact freedom from reliance upon intellectualizing, exactly the opposite of what is usually meant by "no learning." If you thoroughly know yourself, it is not necessary to know anything more. It's something truly marvelous. Self-investigation is the starting point of Buddhism: the self searches for the self.

As we do this, the self gradually becomes empty. When this emptiness is thoroughly penetrated, zero is reached; this zero is wisdom and reveals itself as everything. Everything means that one's whole body is the entire Universe.

Going further, when you are the one that is everything, the human condition and the origin of the Universe are at once completely fathomed. Then there's no enlightenment to seek above, and there are no sentient beings to save below. Reaching this is what is meant by "no learning."

Thus, although "Shasanro doesn't even know four characters" sounds like a lament for ignorance, it actually signifies having thoroughly penetrated the deepest principles of knowing. Both Bodhidharma and the Second Ancestor have truly attained no learning. The Self has been completely realized. Mumon thus also praises the disciple's wonderful accomplishment.

Mumon's verse says:

Coming from the West and directly pointing—

Bodhidharma came from the West without teaching about this and that, he directly pointed to mind by saying, "Bring me your uneasy mind!" When the Second Ancestor met the true self and realized the utter

ungraspability of mind, Bodhidharma approved him, saying, “That’s so, that’s so.” That is what “directly pointing” means.

The affairs are caused by the transmission.

Since the Dharma was passed on just like water poured from one container into another, the matter of a disciple succeeding to the Dharma of his master arose:

The troublemaker for Zen monasteries is, after all, you.

After that, just as water is poured from one container into another, the Dharma was uninterruptedly passed down from Ancestor to Ancestor. The word for “Zen monastery,” *sorin*, literally means “a thicket,” a place overgrown with vegetation. “Trouble” refers to the ruckus involved in pursuing ourselves. Thus, “It is, after all, you” means that the one responsible for all this hubbub is you, Bodhidharma. Isn’t the trouble we have to go to to wrestle with koans and practice rigorous zazen due to Bodhidharma’s coming from the West? Even though it seems as if Mumon is shaking his finger at Bodhidharma, truly it was just because of Bodhidharma that the spirit of Zen was transplanted to China. Although it superficially seems as if Bodhidharma is being put down, in actuality Master Mumon is very highly praising him.

"Hekikan, Wall Gazing,"
by Taizan Maezumi

On “Roso Faces the Wall”
Taizan Maezumi

ROSO FACES THE WALL

Preface to the Assembly

Bodhidharma’s nine years are known as “wallgazing.” Eka’s three prostrations are outflowings of heavenly activity. How can the traces be swept away, the footprints eliminated?

The Case

Attention! Whenever Roso saw a monk coming, he would face the wall. Hearing of this, Nansen remarked, “I always tell others to receive directly even before the empty kalpa, and to realize even before the Buddha came into the world—but still I haven’t found half a man, let alone a man. If he is thus, he will be stuck in the Year of the Donkey.”

The Verse

Plain water has flavor, subtly transcending the senses.
It precedes forms, though seeming endlessly to exist.

The Way is precious, though seeming massively to be foolish.
Inscribe designs on a jewel and its glory is lost.
A pearl even from an abyss naturally beckons.
Bracing air burnishes autumn's swelter;
Far away a single tranquil cloud divides sky and water.

THE PREFACE mentions Bodhidharma's nine years of wall-gazing. How much do we understand and appreciate Bodhidharma? It's amazing how much just one person can do. The second line refers to Eka, Bodhidharma's successor and the Second Ancestor of Chinese Zen. Without Eka we probably couldn't have had a great Zen heritage; nor would such a heritage have been possible without Bodhidharma.

People often ask me, "When Bodhidharma was sitting nine years facing the wall, was he seeking enlightenment?" Nine years of wall-gazing, nothing else. But what is the wall?

When we do *shikantaza*, it's wall-gazing. When you work on Mu, remember the question: "What is the wall?" Mumon refers to this wall in his commentary on the koan "Joshu's Dog" in the *Gateless Gate:* "silver mountain, iron wall." To penetrate Mu, you can't think about it. Thinking does not help. When you get stuck, that's the the silver mountain, the iron wall. So how do you take care of it? In shikantaza you have to face something. What is that? How do you take care of it?

Bodhidharma said: "Externally, eliminate the dichotomy between yourself and objects. And internally, don't gasp." This word, *aegu* in Japanese, literally refers to a deep, gasping breath, but it is more important not to gasp mentally. Don't gasp, internally or externally—be peaceful, quiet.

The key is to make your mind like the wall. The wall stands for immovability, solidity. If you're really solid, unmovable, nothing will disturb you. But this immovability is not being like stone. To be unmoved doesn't mean to be like a dead man. Rather, it is "Perceiving everything, yet undisturbed."

When you encounter the iron wall, how do you climb up? How do you crash through? When you work on Mu, the silver mountain and iron wall

themselves are nothing but Mu. It's a very simple principle: Just be Mu. That's the way to take care of it. Bodhidharma's wall-gazing is the same: be the wall. That's shikantaza. It is the immovable state in which all takes place.

Roso is expressing himself totally here. What he is expressing can't be described in words, but nonetheless that's what Nansen is trying to do—they are saying the same thing.

Eka's three prostrations are outflowings of heavenly activity.

Bodhidharma had four Dharma successors. On one of the very last days of his life, he said to these four, "Tell me, what is your understanding?"

The first one to express his understanding was Dofuku. He said: "My understanding is neither apart from words nor sticking to words. And yet I freely use them."

The second successor was the nun Soji, the daughter of Emperor Wu in the Yang Dynasty. She spoke like this: "My realization is something like Ananda's when he saw the Buddhaland. He just glanced at it and never looked back again."

The third successor, Doiku, said: "The four elements—earth, water, fire, wind—not only make up the world, but also the human body, and are originally empty."

Bodhidharma said to the first: "You have gained my skin." To the second: "You have gained my flesh." To the third: "You have gained my bones."

The last successor was Eka. He bowed three times and then just stood beside Bodhidharma without saying anything. Bodhidharma said: "You have gained my marrow."

Dogen Zenji reminds us in the Shobogenzo: "Do not think that skin, flesh, bone, and marrow are different depths of understanding. Their understanding is equal."

Eka's silence and his three prostrations effectively expressed the very best activity; this is the "outflowing of heavenly activity." Eka's three prostrations and silence are nothing but the Dharma itself.

"How can the traces be swept away, the footprints eliminated?" Even though Eka did all right in expressing his realization, isn't there a trace or footprint still left? His realization is true whether he prostrated himself

three times or not. The Dharma is everywhere, at all times. As long as you sit diligently, one way or another the Way will flourish. You are responsible for this. So please, take it seriously. That's the reason I talked about Bodhidharma and the others as I did. It might encourage you to practice harder and better. Regardless of how hard we try, we cannot pay our debts to them.

Often by the middle of a sesshin, the atmosphere in the zendo gets much more subtle; it settles down. But, especially if you are working on Mu, please don't be hasty. Just sit well. Let it ripen.

This morning I had a flash about the difference between koan study and shikantaza. As I mention from time to time, these two practices are the same. Of course, they are different, and yet they are the same. "Whenever Roso saw a monk coming, he would face the wall." What was he doing? Let us truly appreciate this, in as minute detail as possible. Whenever a monk came to see Roso, he turned and faced the wall, without saying a single word. Regardless of what kind of questions the monk asked him, Roso just turned around and faced the wall.

What is he showing? What is he expressing? What do you hear? He is expressing more than words can express. He is expounding the Dharma that cannot be expressed in words. That's shikantaza.

There are various types of zazen. Every religion has some kind of meditation. Yet the purposes of meditation can be different: some people meditate for health, but Buddhist meditation is not for this purpose. Some practice in order to acquire occult powers, to acquire stronger concentration, or in order to center themselves. But people who meditate for these reasons are concerned about their own improvement. Meditation done for these reasons is "leaky." The Japanese say *urojo: uro* means "there is a leak," "there is delusion," and *jo* means "samadhi."

The alternative is *murojo,* "no leak in the samadhi." That's the Zen we practice. That's what Bodhidharma carried from India to China.

But what makes "no leak"? Wisdom. In one way or another we should become aware of that wisdom, whether through shikantaza or koan practice.

In this koan, we encounter Roso and Nansen. They are brother monks under Master Baso. Here they are expounding wisdom from two different perspectives, like from front and back. Yet the wisdom they expound is the same.

Roso's facing the wall is an outflowing of heavenly activity. He's showing the visiting monk the very first principle of life. Everything is just as it is, however it is, whatever it is, whenever it is.

And Bansho puts a capping phrase on this: "I have met him already."

In Japan, the first time you meet the roshi it is traditional to prepare your own incense, then offer it, to show your respect for the teacher. That's called *shoken*. Bansho says, *"Shokenryo"* (I have met him already).

Who is Roso? Roso is manifesting himself as Mu. So where do you meet Master Roso? How do you meet Master Roso? Right here, now! In sesshin, in zazen we are meeting Master Roso.

Who is Master Roso? Each of us without exception has to meet Roso himself—to meet is *kensho*. You have been constantly meeting him, yet somehow something gets in the way, gets between you and Roso, you and realization. That's what Nansen is trying to clarify in this koan: "Hearing of this, Nansen remarked, 'I always tell others to receive directly even before the empty kalpa.'"

The universe exists in four kalpas: the kalpa of growth, the kalpa of abiding, the kalpa of decay, and the empty kalpa. Even before that empty kalpa, you "receive." What does that mean? Here the empty kalpa stands for the time before your conscious mind arises. Receive directly. What is the distance between the empty kalpa and right now?

I always tell others to receive directly even before the empty kalpa, and to realize even before the Buddha came into the world.

After Buddha appeared, people started to worry about delusion and enlightenment. "We are deluded; he is enlightened." Without resorting to such a dualistic way of dealing with life, immediately grasp what life is.

"—but still I haven't found half a man, let alone a man." That is to say, only few can really appreciate.

"If he is thus," and Roso is simply expressing *thus*, *"He'll be stuck in the Year of the Donkey."* There is no such year as the Year of the Donkey! Yet, he is stuck in the Year of the Donkey. In other words, regardless of how many years you spend there, you'll never come to an end.

So, when your practice is breathing, please don't think that breathing practice is an exercise for beginners. This is not at all so. Breathing is not an elementary practice, and koan study is not an advanced one.

Although, we can say koan study was in existence since the time of the Buddha, structured koan study as we know it is more recent. Centuries ago, all Buddhist practitioners did was to follow the breath. Doing this, they attained awakening.

Every practice has its advantages and disadvantages. But the essential point is immovability, as Bodhidharma expresses. It's not a sticky thing. Make your mind like a vast wall. Nothing, no one, can break through. Then your mind is unified, and your life is boundless. Have conviction and faith, and trust in yourself, in your practice. And with deep devotion and aspiration, just keep on going.

Plain water has flavor, subtly transcending the senses.
It precedes forms, though seeming endlessly to exist.
The Way is precious, though seeming massively to be foolish.
Inscribe designs on a jewel and its glory is lost.
A pearl even from an abyss naturally beckons.
Bracing air burnishes autumn's swelter;
Far away a single tranquil cloud divides sky and water.

The first line says, "Plain water has flavor." In that plainness, there is terrific taste. Water is not totally tasteless, especially fresh spring water. How does it taste?

Of course, this plain state—that's the state of zazen. It is Roso's wall-gazing, Bodhidharma's wall-gazing, and it is your own zazen too. Zazen is plain water. Most people prefer beer or Coca-Cola; it's tastier to them. But when you really do zazen, there is wonderful taste "subtly transcending the senses." The word we translate as "sense" is *joi; jo* means "feeling" or "mind" or "emotion," and *i* means "words" or "verbal expression." That is what is transcended. In other words, that very subtle taste in zazen is indescribable. This is Roso's zazen.

"It precedes forms, though seeming endlessly to exist." What exists is that subtle taste, subtle zazen. The word we have translated as "forms" actually means our conscious mind, our discriminative mind. This line also says, "seeming endlessly." The word "seeming" expresses a more subtle nuance of zazen. "Precedes forms" is prior to the functioning of discriminative mind. As long as you are in your discriminative mind, you can't appreciate this subtlety in zazen. You are just involved with your

own ideas, limited to them. The subtle flavor of zazen precedes form, thought, and ideas. So it endlessly exists.

"The Way is precious, though seeming like massive folly." Actually, that "massive" is a description of a high, solid mountain. In *Fukanzazengi*, Dogen Zenji says, "Sitting just like a mountain, enter sitting samadhi." Make your zazen that of a huge, immovable mountain. Whoever comes, Master Roso turns around and just sits like a massive mountain. Roso seems like an idiot, like a fool, but he's not—and he's not a holy man either! He doesn't fall into enlightenment or delusion, good or bad, right or wrong. He transcends all these dichotomies and expresses the Dharma as is. Thus the verse says, "the Way is precious." No way is better than Roso's just sitting.

"Inscribe designs on a jewel and its glory is lost." This jewel particularly refers to Roso's wall-gazing, and the inscription is Nansen's remark.

In deep samadhi, open up the eye of wisdom and just sit. Why describe it? Why inscribe designs on the jewel of zazen? Everything is there. Nansen telling the people you have to receive it directly even prior to the empty kalpa is almost a joke! We don't need that kind of comment.

We can extend this observation to all the comments in all the koans. Not studying koans would be 100 percent okay; by commenting on this kind of thing, in a way we defile the genuineness of our life, our being. "Inscribe designs on a jewel and its glory is lost"—this is to say, its very best part is marred.

"A pearl even from an abyss naturally beckons." Again, praise for Roso's genuine zazen. Even though Roso doesn't say a word, that jewel, that pearl, shines just as is.

"Bracing air burnishes autumn's swelter. Far away a single tranquil cloud divides sky and water." These two lines, also, refer to Roso's wall-gazing. It's like bracing air in early autumn—so refreshing; genuine zazen cools off our hot heads.

"Far away a single tranquil cloud divides sky and water." This refers to Nansen's position. It's as if Nansen is dividing air from earth, sky from water. And yet he himself is like a single wind-blown cloud crossing the sky. No matter where the cloud is blown, nothing sticks to it—it leaves no trace, no footprint.

This is our practice.

On “Nansen Kills a Cat”

Taizan Maezumi

NANSEN KILLS A CAT

The Case

At Master Nansen’s temple one day, the monks of the east and west halls were arguing about a cat. Seeing this, Nansen held the cat up before them, saying, “If you can say a word, I won’t kill it.” The assembly made no response. Nansen cut the cat in two. When Nansen later told Joshu what had happened, Joshu took off his straw sandals, placed them upon his head, and went away. Nansen remarked, “If you had been here, you could have saved the cat.”

THIS KOAN is a very famous one. It appears in *The Blue Cliff Record*, *The Book of Equanimity*, and *The Gateless Gate*. In *The Book of Equanimity*, from which I have translated this selection, the whole episode is one case, whereas in *The Gateless Gate* and in *The Blue Cliff Record*, this case is divided in two and is handled as two consecutive cases.

Masters Nansen and Joshu had similar instances of awakening, and these instances are much like that of Master Mumon, the compiler and author of *The Gateless Gate*. Mumon attained realization by working on

Joshu's Mu—that was a case about a dog—this is about a cat! Does the dog have Buddha nature? Will the cat be killed? Where is the dog? What is the cat?

On the surface, talking about killing a cat seems like awful stuff—and in a way, it is awful. But on the other hand, it is not awful at all. What is cut in two? What is cut? We have to cut through seeing externals-as-apart-from-everything-else—that is Nansen's cat and Joshu's dog! Cutting that off is our true nature. And when we realize our true nature, we realize that the cat can't be cut in two, and that we ourselves are Joshu's Mu. This case seems to be about killing, yet the first of the ten grave precepts is the precept of non-killing. Non-killing is perhaps more accurate than "Do not kill." In Dogen Zenji's *Kyojukaimon (Giving and Receiving the Teaching of the Precepts)* he expresses the first precept as "Life cannot be killed." Of course we are not simply denying the reality of killing. Killing happens. And yet here Dogen Zenji is appreciating a deeper truth: that there are not separate lives that kill and are killed; there is only one life. Dogen Zenji goes on to say, "The seed of the Buddha grows continuously. Maintain the life of the Buddha. Do not kill life." Thus, if you do not see this wholeness and this undying life of non-killing, then you are violating this precept. It is in this spirit that Nansen speaks of killing the cat.

In the koan, the monks of the east hall and the west hall are arguing. Now you should understand that the argument is not about the cat as such; perhaps they're arguing about the differences between monks and laymen, or men and women, sitting lots of zazen or not sitting so much—it could be about anything. In any society or any group, within families, and among friends and countries, there are always all kinds of friction. In this koan, the people happen to be monks and they happen to be arguing over a cat.

But truly, what is this argument, what is this cat? We have all kinds of different feelings, emotions, thoughts, and ideas; we have a body and a mind—are they in harmony? That's the cat we argue about, that's the cat that should be taken care of. In the koan, Joshu came back and Nansen tells him what happened. Joshu takes off his straw sandals and places them on his head, and he walks away. Nansen says, "If you had been here, you could have saved the cat."

In a way, this second part is even more important than what exactly the argument is about. We must learn to appreciate Joshu's response. The

monks might have had an argument similar to the case of Joshu's dog; they might have been debating whether a cat has Buddha nature; is it enlightened or deluded, real or unreal?

For Joshu, clarifying the dichotomies of killing and not killing, arguing and not arguing, enlightenment and delusion, is totally unnecessary. In talking to Joshu about what had happened, Nansen was testing Joshu's understanding, checking to see Joshu's reaction. Joshu's state of mind goes beyond any explanation or description. You must appreciate it for yourself. Although his behavior looks crazy, it is important not to be misled by this kind of gesture into thinking that Zen somehow requires peculiar actions. But then again, when we really understand the spirit of Joshu's response, it is not at all peculiar. If you really see the absolute, the totality, the completeness of everything, of anything—including each one of us—what Joshu does is not at at all strange.

A person with very mature practice may be inconspicuous and even appear a fool, whereas someone who manifests enlightenment in a loud, and pompous way is clearly green. Joshu is not concerned with dualistic understanding and neither should you be: forget about good, bad, right, wrong, enlightened, deluded, east, west, killing, saving. Instead, he just put his sandals upon his head and, sandals being sandals, they didn't complain.

It's better not to say too much about a case like this. It spoils it.

The point is twofold: first we must clearly see how to take care of the cat; then we must manifest the Way in a spirit like Joshu's.

Our practice can be endlessly refined and accomplished. Let's practice well together.

IV. On the Way of Everyday Life

The Way of Everyday Life *(Shobogenzo Genjokoan)*
Eihei Dogen

Written in mid-autumn of the first year of the Tempuku Era (1233 C.E.) and given to my lay student Yokoshu of Kyushu.

When all dharmas are Buddhadharma. there are enlightenment and delusion, practice, life and death, buddhas and creatures.

When the ten thousand dharmas are without self, there are no delusion, no enlightenment, no buddhas, no creatures, no life and no death.

The Buddha Way transcends being and non-being; therefore there are life and death, delusion and enlightenment, creatures and buddhas.

Nevertheless, flowers fall with our attachment, and weeds spring up with our aversion.

To carry the self forward and realize the ten thousand dharmas is delusion.

That the ten thousand dharmas advance and realize the self is enlightenment.

It is buddhas who enlighten delusion.

It is creatures who are deluded in enlightenment.

Further, there are those who attain enlightenment above enlightenment; there are those who are deluded within delusion.

When buddhas are truly buddhas, one need not be aware of being buddha.

However, one is the realized buddha and further advances in realizing buddha.

Seeing forms with the whole body and mind, hearing sounds with the whole body and mind, one understands them intimately.

Yet it is not like a mirror with reflections, nor like water under the moon —

When one side is realized, the other side is dark.

To study the Buddha Way is to study the self.

To study the self is to forget the self.

To forget the self is to be enlightened by the ten thousand dharmas.

To be enlightened by the ten thousand dharmas is to free one's body and mind and those of others.

No trace of enlightenment remains, and this traceless enlightenment is continued forever.

When one first seeks the truth, one separates oneself from it.

When one has already correctly transmitted the truth to oneself, one is one's original self at that moment.

When riding on a boat, if one watches the shore one may assume that the shore is moving.

But watching the boat directly, one knows that it is the boat that moves.

If one examines the ten thousand dharmas with a deluded body and mind, one will suppose that one's mind and nature are permanent.

But if one practices intimately and returns to the true self, it will be clear that the ten thousand dharmas are without self.

Firewood turns into ash and does not turn into firewood again. But do not suppose that the ash is after and the firewood is before.

We must realize that firewood is in the state of being firewood and has its before and after. Yet having this before and after it is independent of them.

Ash is in the state of being ash and has its before and after.

Just as firewood does not become firewood again after it is ash, so after one's death one does not return to life again.

Thus, that life does not become death is a confirmed teaching of the Buddhadharma; for this reason, life is called the non-born.

That death does not become life is a confirmed teaching of the Buddhadharma; therefore, death is called the non-extinguished.

Life is a period of itself.

Death is a period of itself.

For example, they are like winter and spring.

We do not think that winter becomes spring, nor do we say that spring becomes summer.

Gaining enlightenment is like the moon reflecting in the water.

The moon does not get wet, nor is the water disturbed.

Although its light is extensive and great, the moon is reflected even in a puddle an inch across.

The whole moon and the whole sky are reflected in a dew-drop in the grass, in one drop of water.

Enlightenment does not disturb the person, just as the moon does not disturb the water.

A person does not hinder enlightenment, just as a dew-drop does not hinder the moon in the sky.

The depth of the drop is the height of the moon.

As for the duration of the reflection, you should examine the water's vastness or smallness,

And you should discern the brightness or dimness of the heavenly moon.

When the truth does not fill our body and mind, we think that we have enough.

When the truth fills our body and mind, we realize that something is missing.

For example, when we view the four directions from a boat on the ocean where no land is in sight, we see only a circle and nothing else.

No other aspects are apparent.

However, this ocean is neither round nor square, and its qualities are infinite in variety. It is like a palace. It is like a jewel. It just seems circular as far as our eyes can reach at the time.

The ten thousand dharmas are likewise like this.

Although ordinary life and enlightened life assume many aspects, we only recognize and understand through practice what the penetrating power of our vision can reach.

In order to appreciate the ten thousand dharmas, we should know that although they may look round or square, the other qualities of oceans and mountains are infinite in variety; furthermore, other universes lie in all quarters.

It is so not only around ourselves but also right here, and in a single drop of water.

When a fish swims in the ocean, there is no limit to the water, no matter how far it swims.

When a bird flies in the sky, there is no limit to the air, no matter how far it flies.

However, no fish or bird has ever left its element since the beginning.

When the need is large, it is used largely.

When the need is small, it is used in a small way.

Thus, no creature ever comes short of its own completeness.

Wherever it stands, it does not fail to cover the ground.

If a bird leaves the air, it will die at once.

If a fish leaves the water, it will die at once.

Know, then, that water is life.

Know that air is life.

Life is the bird and life is the fish.

Beyond these, there are further implications and ramifications.

In this way, there are practice and enlightenment, mortality and immortality.

Now if a bird or a fish tries to reach the limit of its element before moving in it, this bird or this fish will not find its way or its place.

Attaining this place, one's daily life is the realization of ultimate reality (genjokoan). Attaining this way, one's daily life is the realization of ultimate reality (genjokoan).

Since this place and this way are neither large nor small, neither self nor other, neither existing previously nor just arising now, they therefore exist thus.

Thus, if one practices and realizes the Buddha Way, when one gains one dharma, one penetrates one dharma; when one encounters one action, one practices one action.

Since the place is here and the Way leads everywhere, the reason the limits of the knowable are unknowable is simply that our knowledge arises with, and practices with, the absolute perfection of the Buddhadharma.

Do not practice thinking that realization must become the object of one's knowledge and vision and be grasped conceptually.

Even though the attainment of realization is immediately manifest, its intimate nature is not necessarily realized. Some may realize it and some may not.

Priest Baoche of Magu Mountain was fanning himself. A monk approached and asked, “Sir, the nature of the wind is permanent, and there is no place it does not reach. Why, then, must you still fan yourself?” “Although you understand that the nature of wind is permanent,” the master replied, “you do not understand the meaning of its reaching everywhere.” “What is the meaning of its reaching everywhere?” asked the monk. The master just fanned himself. The monk bowed with deep respect.

This is the enlightened experience of Buddhadharma and the vital way of its correct transmission.

Those who say we should not use a fan because wind is permanent, and so we should know the existence of wind without using a fan, know neither permanency nor the nature of wind.

Because the nature of wind is eternally present, the wind of Buddhism actualizes the gold of the earth and ripens the cheese of the long river.

This is a revision by Taizan Maezumi and Francis Dojun Cook of the Chotan Aitken-Kazuaki Tanahashi translation.

Commentary on the Way of Everyday Life
by Taizan Maezumi

When all dharmas are Buddhadharma. there are enlightenment and delusion, practice, life and death, buddhas and creatures.

When the ten thousand dharmas are without self, there are no delusion, no enlightenment, no buddhas, no creatures, no life and no death.

The Buddha Way transcends being and non-being; therefore there are life and death, delusion and enlightenment, creatures and buddhas.

Nevertheless, flowers fall with our attachment, and weeds spring up with our aversion.

Commentary One

In these first three sentences, Dogen Zenji states that to realize the true self is the major aim of our practice. In his writing Dogen Zenji does not use the words "we" and "I"; instead, he says simply, "When all dharmas are Buddhadharma." Buddhadharma can only really be understood from an enlightened perspective in which the "I" has been dropped and we become aware of who we really are.

Thus, we shouldn't overlook the deceptively simple word, "when." He doesn't say, "since all dharmas," or simply, "all dharmas," but "when"—at the moment we realize that, "all dharmas are Buddhadharma." It's like a person unaware of having a pocketful of money starving to death in front

of a restaurant because he thinks he can't afford food! Intrinsically, all dharmas are Buddhadharma. but until we realize it, it's not true for us.

The usual way of understanding these first sentences is to see them as a progression from affirmation to negation to integration or transcendence. According to this interpretation, the first sentence describes our discriminating awareness before enlightenment; the second, the first experience of oneness; and the third, the realm of subtle differences that we are able to perceive after enlightenment.

However, if we appreciate the passage in that way, we miss Master Dogen Zenji's intent. Actually, each sentence is saying the same thing from different perspectives. For example, we can say, "When all dharmas are Buddhadharma, there is *no* enlightenment, *no* delusion, *no* buddhas, *no* creatures, *no* life, and *no* death." Because everything is Buddhadharma, everything is reality itself, everything is *genjokoan, the way of everyday life.*" Consequently, there is no delusion, no enlightenment, no life, and no death apart from it. To see this, to identify ourselves with all phenomena, is enlightenment.

When we become really selfless in this way, all suffering, all happiness, as well as mountains, stars, trees, grasses, and people become nothing but the self. What does that really mean? We call such a state "emptiness"—not empty in the sense of void or insubstantial, but in the sense of empty of any fixed essence or self, constantly changing, unconditioned. This state is not something special, but the fundamental nature of our lives.

We usually perceive things in a dualistic way by separating ourselves from them. Then a gap appears, which makes room for anger, ignorance, and the various other ideas and emotions that disturb us. But when we really make ourselves empty and realize that everything is nothing but the self, the gap is eliminated and we see phenomena as they are.

Another way to clarify these first sentences is to use the analogy of waves and water. Seeing reality according to the perspective of the first sentence is like looking at the ocean and seeing the waves. We are aware the ocean is there, but our attention is on the waves, the various phenomena that make up our lives. In the next sentence the emphasis is on the water, the ground of being, emptiness, the absolute. And in the last sentence we go beyond the duality of waves and water entirely and see them both together as one indivisible reality. All along, of course, we are looking at the same ocean; only our perspective is changing.

This insight was expressed long ago by Qinyuan Weixin: “Before this old monk studied Zen twenty years ago, seeing a mountain, the mountain was a mountain; seeing water, the water was water. Later, I met my teacher and attained some realization. Then a mountain was no longer a mountain, water no longer water. Now, after further accomplishment, seeing a mountain, mountain is mountain; seeing water, water is water. I ask you, are these three views the same or different? If you can answer, you’ll meet me intimately.”

To carry the self forward and realize the ten thousand dharmas is delusion.

That the ten thousand dharmas advance and realize the self is enlightenment.

It is buddhas who enlighten delusion.

It is creatures who are deluded in enlightenment.

Further, there are those who attain enlightenment above enlightenment; there are those who are deluded within delusion.

When buddhas are truly buddhas, one need not be aware of being buddha.

However, one is the realized buddha and further advances in realizing buddha.

Commentary Two

“To carry the self forward” means to look for something outside of yourself. Doing that, immediately a dichotomy arises. No matter how much you practice, still a gap remains, and even enlightenment can become a hindrance by which you increase the separation between yourself and others. Enlightenment is one of the sicknesses of Zen!

“*That the ten thousand dharmas advance,*” on the other hand, means that, merging yourself into the object, the objective world itself becomes your life. In this very body and its functioning, abundant life and total liberation are constantly manifesting. This is our practice.

To try to seek after enlightenment, then, is delusion, and yet enlightenment is crucial. It is easy to say that we're all inherently enlightened, but not easy to realize that clearly. There are many levels of realization, of enlightenment. The ten oxherding pictures, in which the ox represents true nature, depict these. True enlightenment begins with the fourth stage, "catching the ox," grasping true nature, yet most of us, even those who have been practicing for many years, are still barely at the third stage of "seeing the ox." So our practice is endless, and there are innumerable levels we can achieve.

However, since all of us without exception are wonderful bodhisattvas, whether we have had an enlightenment experience or not is not so significant. We are all bodhisattvas who strive for higher, clearer realization. That is our practice. It's quite all right to be deluded. If we take enlightenment and delusion as separate, buddhas and ourselves become separate as well. We are not at all separate to begin with, so why do we have difficulty? Flowers fall. Is it because of our attachment? Weeds spring up. Is it because we hate them?

If you really identify yourself with everything else, you identify yourself with enlightenment also. In other words, enlightenment is nothing but you yourself. You just do whatever you do, and there is nothing extra, no problem to upset or disturb you. In that case, as Zen Master Linchi used to say, "Living in hell is like taking a walk in a beautiful park."

When you really become delusion itself, when only delusion exists, then there is no longer any delusion, for there is nothing apart from delusion. But as long as this remains just an idea, it's not true delusion within delusion. That's why it's crucial to experience such a state for yourself. We have a saying, "Fire can't burn fire." You have to become fire yourself.

"Attain enlightenment above enlightenment." We progress in this way, stage by stage, building up clarity upon clarity, wisdom upon wisdom, making the light of wisdom brighter and stronger.

"Deluded within delusion." The more we realize, the more compassionate we become, and the more compassionate we become, the more deluded we have to be. When all beings are wallowing in the mud, we have to jump into the mud to be able to help them. And obviously, when we get into the

mud, we become muddy. That's being deluded within delusion. That's our life.

When we are buddha, we don't necessarily recognize that we are buddha. In fact, Shakyamuni Buddha himself realized, everything without exception is the buddha. Or, as Zen Master Hakuin said, "Apart from sentient beings there are no buddhas. Apart from buddhas there are no sentient beings."

One of my teachers used to say, "Make your mind empty. Right there is the buddha." When we are involved in doing something, we should put ourselves completely into it. Reading, working, even laughing or crying. When we cry, we're crying buddha; when we laugh, we're laughing buddha.

But until we realize this, we're not convinced. Of course we don't have to say, "Now I'm the buddha." If you consciously recognize it in that way, there is something you have become that is different from who you were, and already you've started creating duality where none exists. We often use the expression, "Fire doesn't burn fire. The eye doesn't see the eye"—"When buddhas are truly buddhas, one need not be aware of being buddha."

Our practice and our accomplishment are as endless and as boundless as the universe. Shakyamuni Buddha himself says, "The three worlds are nothing but my possession, and all beings are nothing but my children." Thus, we should take care of everybody and everything else in the same way that we take care of ourselves. This is to further advance in realizing Buddha. To see everything else as part of ourselves is wisdom. And when wisdom is truly realized, then compassion and loving-kindness spontaneously arise as the functioning of that wisdom.

In Zen we speak of three different kinds of compassion. The first is compassion toward beings, which is compassion as it is most commonly understood: Seeing others suffering, you want to do as much as you can to help them, both by removing their suffering and by giving them comfort. The second kind of compassion, compassion toward phenomena, reflects a more advanced stage of understanding and practice: Having wisdom, you see that beings and objects do not really exist in the usual sense, as something substantial and apart from you. Thus, to hope to do something to save them is also a delusion; yet having that delusion, you still do the deluded work of saving others. The last kind of compassion is the ideal

one: Having no particular relation to others, what you do spontaneously is beneficial to them. When you are truly selfless, it just happens that way.

Seeing forms with the whole body and mind, hearing sounds with the whole body and mind, one understands them intimately.

Yet it is not like a mirror with reflections, nor like water under the moon—

When one side is realized, the other side is dark.

Commentary Three

This refers to the moment of enlightenment. For one Zen master it occurred at the sight of peach blossoms, for another at the sound of a pebble striking bamboo. But, please don't get the idea, though, that "seeing forms with the whole body and mind" is something only Zen masters experience, something exotic and very hard to attain. On the contrary. Whatever practice you are involved in, whatever work you are doing—even reading these words right now—absorb yourself in it totally, with whole body and mind. Just continue in this way, and when the time comes, you will see that your very life is the life of the enlightened one.

Elsewhere in the *Genjokoan,* Dogen Zenji uses the metaphor of the moon reflected in the water to explain enlightenment. In that instance, the moon is true self reflected on the surface of mind. If the mind is disturbed, true nature will not be apparent, just as agitated water will not reflect the light of the moon. But here Dogen Zenji says it is "*not* like...water under the moon" because there is no such object, no such true self, no such moon outside of ourselves to be reflected. Nothing exists but that moon, and that is who we are. When we call it "moon," we disappear. When we call it "I," the moon disappears. When there is just this true self, this one reality, nothing else exists besides that.

"When one side is realized, the other side is dark" means that this one side contains everything, without confusion or duality. Usually "dark" has the

sense of "ignorant," but here, it has the sense of "all-inclusive." When we've realized "one side," we are able to function quite freely in the realm of that "other side," which Dogen Zenji calls "dark." Actually, whether we call it "light" or "dark" is not so important. Being one with whatever we are doing, wherever we are right now—washing the dishes, listening to the sounds of birds—right there that is our whole life. Being one, we become infinite. Being one, we become zero. That is what is meant by "to forget the self" and "to be enlightened by all things."

To study the Buddha Way is to study the self.

To study the self is to forget the self.

To forget the self is to be enlightened by the ten thousand dharmas.

To be enlightened by the ten thousand dharmas is to free one's body and mind and those of others.

No trace of enlightenment remains, and this traceless enlightenment is continued forever.

Commentary Four

"To study the Buddha Way is to study the self." Remove "to study." Then what is left? The Buddha Way is the self. What is the self? The Buddha Way. Who are you? Who is Buddha? How can we realize Buddha? By forgetting the self. Now let's eliminate "the Buddha Way" and "the self." "To study is to study." Discipline is discipline. Enlightenment is enlightenment. Delusion is delusion. Life is life. But always we experience a separation, and that causes problems.

To study the Buddha Way is discipline. To know the self is discipline. To realize that the Buddha Way is the self is discipline. Become awakened—that's discipline. To really know who you are—that's discipline. That is what is meant by "to forget the self." Really be yourself. When you are,

you will be enlightened by all things. Everything in your life from morning to night becomes the enlightened life. Isn't it simple?

Unfortunately, the self we usually talk about is not the real self, but an illusion, a concept, a shadow. To perceive something through the senses is not real perception. When we perceive in that way, a part of our consciousness starts doing something with it—interpreting, evaluating, analyzing, criticizing—and then we formulate our own opinions and ideas about it. All of these intellectual functions are based on our knowledge and on our experiences, which are partial and limited. Consequently, whatever we conclude from them is also limited.

To forget the self is to go beyond these limitations by eliminating the subject-object relationship and perceiving reality directly. That is what is meant by being "without self." That's our practice. Just sit properly and totally absorb yourself in sitting, become sitting itself, and the subject-object dichotomy will fall away.

In Zen we often practice by using koans, penetrating questions or situational problems that we can't resolve intellectually. "Who am I?" for example, is an excellent koan. In fact, we practice together precisely in order to answer that koan.

Working on a koan like "Who am I?" you have to allow "Who am I?" to occupy you completely. As long as you and "Who am I?" are separate, it's still a relative or dualistic state. Putting yourself completely into it, you will even forget about being one with "Who am I?"—you yourself will be forgotten. Then nothing but "Who am I?" exists, and this "Who am I?" is absolute. At this point your true nature will show its face. That's what "To forget the self is to be enlightened by all things" means.

"To be enlightened by the ten thousand dharmas is to free one's body and mind and those of others."

Free has several interesting implications. First, there is the sense of being unrestricted, unhindered, liberated. Then we also have the implication of "without conditions, without taking anything in return"—just to give, that's the true spirit of *free*. When you sit in meditation, just sit freely and fully without any expectations or restrictions. Sitting freely, you are free.

Intrinsically, all of us at this very moment are buddha. We are in the midst of enlightenment and are leaving no trace of enlightenment. "Leaving no trace" means that in each moment we are newly being born

and newly dying. How are we perceiving and reacting to situations? Are we holding on to what we see and hear? Do we carry yesterday's emotion into today's relationship? These are the real questions for us to answer experientially. We may know intellectually that "this traceless enlightenment continues forever," but experientially it's up to us to practice and realize this for ourselves.

When one first seeks the truth, one separates oneself far from its environs.

When one has already correctly transmitted the truth to oneself, one is one's original self at that moment.

When riding on a boat, if one watches the shore one may assume that the shore is moving.

But watching the boat directly, one knows that it is the boat that moves.

If one examines the ten thousand dharmas with a deluded body and mind, one will suppose that one's mind and nature are permanent.

But if one practices intimately and returns to the true self, it will be clear that the ten thousand dharmas are without self.

Commentary Five

In Buddhism we have three fundamental principles that we call the three Dharma marks: impermanence, no-self, and nirvana. The first mark means that everything is constantly changing, nothing is fixed. For example, on the physical level, matter and energy can be seen as in constant flux. On the physiological level, cells are constantly dying and being replaced, and within seven years the entire body has been completely renewed. On an emotional level, from day to day, our moods change without any apparent cause. Intrinsically, impermanence is the nature of things. At a psychological level, impermanence takes the form of uncertainty,

insecurity, and a desire to find something dependable and absolute. That is why we practice, to discover the truth upon which we can rely.

Dogen Zenji himself lost his father when he was three years old, and his mother at the age of seven. Seeing the incense smoke at his mother's funeral, he became deeply aware of the impermanence of life. This was his primary motivation for becoming a monk.

The second mark, "no-self," is a natural outgrowth of the first. Since nothing is fixed, the so-called self has no fixed nature, and thus doesn't really exist. What we think of as our self is actually a constellation of feelings, thoughts, sensations, and so on, that are constantly changing from moment to moment. Since there is no self, there is nothing to gain and nothing to lose—for who is there to gain or lose? That being the case, there is nothing to worry about either.

Fully realizing this no-self is the third Dharma mark, nirvana, the extinction of all our troublesome desires, which is itself tranquility and peace. That's what Dogen Zenji is saying here. "Practice intimately and return to the true self." That true self is no-self, and no self is nirvana. Having this body and mind, these thoughts, sensations, and feelings, we are actively involved in life but are neither attached to nor detached from it. If we can live like that, we are already in nirvana.

"When one first seeks the truth, one separates oneself from it. When one has already correctly transmitted the truth to oneself, one is one's original self at that moment."

If you seek after enlightenment, enlightenment will elude you. Yet without seeking after it, you will never realize it. Buddha uses the analogy of the rich person's son who, having forgotten who he is, starts wandering as a beggar from place to place. After many years spent wandering in this way, trying to discover his identity, he finally arrives at his original home and suddenly remembers his inheritance. When we really discover our true self, our treasure house will open and we will be able to use it at will.

To realize that there is nothing to transmit is "correct transmission." And this is full appreciation, full realization of being yourself. If you put an extra head on top of your own, you will become a monstrosity—even if it's a buddha's head!

Firewood turns into ash and does not turn into firewood again.

But do not suppose that the ash is after and the firewood is before.

We must realize that firewood is in the state of being firewood and has its before and after. Yet having this before and after, it is independent of them.

Ash is in the state of being ash and has its before and after.

Just as firewood does not become firewood again after it is ash, so after one's death one does not return to life again.

Thus, that life does not become death is a confirmed teaching of the Buddhadharma; for this reason, life is called the non-born.

That death does not become life is a confirmed teaching of the Buddhadharma; therefore, death is called the non-extinguished.

Life is a period of itself.

Death is a period of itself.

For example, they are like winter and spring.

We do not think that winter becomes spring, nor do we say that spring becomes summer.

Commentary Six

Two views are commonly held concerning life and death. According to the first, although our physical body is destroyed, we have a soul or spirit that goes someplace else and continues to exist. The other commonly held view is that when a person dies, he or she simply ceases to exist.

In Buddhism, body and mind are not considered two but one, so there is no separate spirit that continues after death. All Buddhist teachings such as reincarnation, karma, and the various realms into which one might be reborn can be understood in terms of the present moment.

As far as our common sense goes, we think that we have had a past, are having a present, and are going to have a future, and that there is something that persists through all of these. But actually, each moment,

each instant, is totally absolute, and past and future are included in it. That total, absolute life of each moment dies and is reborn unceasingly.

Traditionally it is said that each twenty-four hours contains fifty million separate instants, like so many frames in a movie. We think we see continuity, but it is all an illusion. We see continuous motion, but actually each frame is totally independent. Our life is like that. If we look at them closely, we see that life and death as we usually think of them do not exist at all. Thus we speak of the "non-born" and "non-extinguished."

Therefore, not only does life not become death, but this very moment of life does not become the life of the next moment. There is nothing continuous that can come to an end, nothing to gain and nothing to lose. Isn't it wonderful?

A life that has never been born and will never be extinguished, a life that is absolutely life—that's what our life is. All of us are equally absolute, equally precious, equally splendid, wherever we are at this moment.

Gaining enlightenment is like the moon reflecting in the water.

The moon does not get wet, nor is the water disturbed.

Although its light is extensive and great, the moon is reflected even in a puddle an inch across.

The whole moon and the whole sky are reflected in a dew-drop in the grass, in one drop of water.

Enlightenment does not disturb the person, just as the moon does not disturb the water.

A person does not hinder enlightenment, just as a dew-drop does not hinder the moon in the sky.

The depth of the drop is the height of the moon.

As for the duration of the reflection, you should examine the water's vastness or smallness,

And you should discern the brightness or dimness of the heavenly moon.

Commentary Seven

In an earlier passage Dogen Zenji said that the moment of enlightenment is "not like a mirror with reflections nor like water under the moon." Here he says, "Gaining enlightenment is like the moon reflecting in the water"; nevertheless, he is not contradicting himself. An analogy is always partial; no analogy covers every aspect. In the first passage he is talking about the very state of enlightenment: when you say "moon," the whole world is that moon; when you say "water," that water occupies the whole world. Nothing else but moon, nothing else but water. If we recognize something outside of ourselves, we become separate from our true nature just as the moon is separate from the water. Thus, "when one side is realized, the other side is dark." When we become completely one with the moon or the water, there is nothing outside of that moon or that water.

In Soto Zen we tend to emphasize the intrinsic aspect of practice and enlightenment: we are all already enlightenment itself, so there is no need to seek it outside of ourselves. This is definitely true, but first we have to pass through the stage of seeking it. In our daily life, we are using wisdom from morning to night: we get up, eat, go to work, eat dinner, enjoy ourselves, go to bed—this is nothing but the functioning of wisdom. And yet in the midst of that wisdom we are deluded by our ideas and views, which arise from our self-centered consciousness and separate us from others.

If we were completely contented and satisfied with ourselves as we are, there would be nothing more to say. But somehow our discursive, dualistic way of looking at things is so deeply rooted, our self-centered consciousness is so stubborn, that we've got to do something about it experientially. The moon is not actually separate from us, but somehow it seems to be. Until we see it reflected in the still water of our minds, we can't be satisfied.

"Although its light is extensive and great, the moon is reflected even in a puddle an inch across. The whole moon and the whole sky are reflected in a dewdrop in the grass, in one drop of water."

Here Dogen Zenji is talking about the various degrees of realization. Enlightenment itself is boundless, but each of us realizes it to a greater or lesser extent. Yet great or small, enlightenment is enlightenment, the moon's reflection is the moon's reflection.

"The depth of the drop" is one's achievement in practice, one's understanding and clarity, which is equivalent to the light of the moon. The deeper one's realization, the brighter the moon will shine. On the other hand, we hinder ourselves because of our limited, shallow understanding. Depending on whether or not it's ego-centered, that same understanding can become the wisdom to guide our lives or can become a hindrance, causing us difficulty and pain.

In Buddhism, the term for ignorance literally means "no light." Having no light, we don't know where to go, and not knowing where to go, we bump into things, causing trouble for ourselves and others. Experientially, we can deepen our lives, deepen our understanding through practice; intrinsically, our lives already have a certain depth, a certain light, and by our practice we allow that light to shine forth.

When the truth does not fill our body and mind, we think that we have enough.

When the truth fills our body and mind, we realize that something is missing.

For example, when we view the four directions from a boat on the ocean where no land is in sight, we see only a circle and nothing else.

No other aspects are apparent.

However, this ocean is neither round nor square, and its qualities are infinite in variety. It is like a palace. It is like a jewel. It just seems circular as far as our eyes can reach at the time.

The ten thousand dharmas are likewise like this.

Although ordinary life and enlightened life assume many aspects, we only recognize and understand through practice what the penetrating power of our vision can reach.

In order to appreciate the ten thousand dharmas, we should know that although they may look round or square, the other qualities of oceans and mountains are infinite in variety; furthermore, other universes lie in all quarters.

It is so not only around ourselves but also right here, and in a single drop of water.

Commentary Eight

"When the truth does not fill our body and mind, we think that we have enough. When the truth fills our body and mind, we realize that something is missing."

You might consider such statements strange because they seem to involve a contradiction. Ordinarily we think, "When the truth does *not* fill our body and mind, we think that it is not enough." In fact, you may believe that the reason you practice zazen is to fill your body and mind with the truth until you feel your understanding is adequate.

What actually happens is that after the first enlightenment experience, in which you feel as if you occupy the whole universe, you may become somewhat arrogant and overestimate your accomplishment. Of course, that may be a necessary stage to pass through, but as long as you think you've accomplished enough, it's not true accomplishment. The deeper your realization and the clearer your wisdom, the more clearly you see how much there is for you to do. In this way, wisdom gives rise to compassion.

"We see only a circle and nothing else." Circles stand for perfection, completeness, and in that sense, each one of us is a circle, particularly when we do zazen. If you really spin a top well, you can't tell whether or not the top is moving. A perfectly spinning top becomes transparent and disappears. Our zazen is like that. If we really sit well, the self disappears and we become a boundless circle that includes everything. How small it is, how big it is, how clear it is, depends on the power of our vision.

Consider the ocean: The ocean's features are truly infinite in variety: all kinds of creatures live on the bottom, fish and sea mammals swim at all depths, coral and rocks and seaweed abound. To a fish the ocean appears to be a great palace, and to a heavenly creature it looks like a jewel. Yet riding on the surface, all we can see is the vast expanse of water. By our practice, we penetrate the surface of this ocean and begin to see its innumerable qualities for ourselves.

"Although ordinary life and enlightened life may assume many aspects." What we have translated as "ordinary life" literally reads "six dusts," the objective world that we perceive through our five senses and our consciousness. We call them dusts because they "defile" our fundamental condition, which is intrinsically pure. For example, when we see something beautiful, we cling to it, and that attachment becomes a

defilement. Of course, there is nothing intrinsically defiling about the senses themselves, but we are conditioned to react in a certain way to what we perceive. That is the ordinary deluded way of living.

On the other hand, the enlightened state is the state in which we forget the self and are enlightened by all things, identify ourselves with all things. In this state, there is no way in which our perceptions can be a defilement, because things are not perceived as separate from ourselves.

When a fish swims in the ocean, there is no limit to the water, no matter how far it swims.

When a bird flies in the sky, there is no limit to the air, no matter how far it flies.

However, no fish or bird has ever left its element since the beginning.

When the need is large, it is used largely.

When the need is small, it is used in a small way.

Thus, no creature ever comes short of its own completeness.

Wherever it stands, it does not fail to cover the ground.

If a bird leaves the air, it will die at once.

If a fish leaves the water, it will die at once.

Know, then, that water is life.

Know that air is life.

Life is the bird and life is the fish.

Beyond these, there are further implications and ramifications.

In this way, there are practice and enlightenment, mortality and immortality.

Commentary Nine

True nature is our life. To struggle to understand this true nature is to be like birds who are in the air but do not recognize that fact. The bird is air, air is the bird. True nature is you, you are true nature. Everything is true nature. Usually we think that the bird and the air are separate. It's amazing to see how deeply deluded we are.

Dogen Zenji writes, "Know that air is life...." We can put the word "emptiness" in place of "life." Know that water is emptiness, know that air is emptiness, that we are emptiness, and emptiness is everything. This emptiness is the same as "without self." When all dharmas are without self, we see that water is life and air is life, life is the bird, and life is the fish. But leaving emptiness, we'll die at once. Our practice is to realize this fact.

In another sense, emptiness is boundlessness—what Dogen Zenji refers to when he says, "there is no limit to the air...no limit to the water." Since our life itself is empty, it has no limit. "When the need is large it is used largely. When the need is small it is used in a small way." When we recognize any limitation, we are limiting ourselves.

Large and small: what scale can we use to compare them? Each is absolute and complete in itself. A big bird is not superior to a small bird. Each has its own function, its own place. That's why Dogen Zenji says, "No creature ever comes short of its own completeness. Wherever it stands, it does not fail to cover the ground." Life is completely contained in you. Being as we are, right here, right now, can we call it large or small? The terms "large" and "small" don't express it.

"However, no fish or bird has ever left its element since the beginning." In the same way, human beings never leave enlightenment, and no matter how much of it we use, there is always enough. In fact, just as "the depth of the drop is the height of the moon," the more we practice, the more deeply we realize the nature of our lives. And just as the moon and the water don't hinder one another, life and realization are perfectly interfused.

Now if a bird or a fish tries to reach the limit of its element before moving in it, this bird or this fish will not find its way or its place.

Attaining this place, one's daily life is the realization of ultimate reality (genjokoan). Attaining this way, one's daily life is the realization of ultimate reality (genjokoan).

Since this place and this way are neither large nor small, neither self nor other, neither existing previously nor just arising now, they therefore exist thus.

Thus, if one practices and realizes the Buddha Way, when one gains one dharma, one penetrates one dharma; when one encounters one action, one practices one action.

Commentary Ten

"Now if a bird or a fish tries to reach the limit of its element before moving in it, this bird or this fish will not find its way or its place."

We are living the abundant life that we call Buddha nature or true self. If we try to measure it before we start practicing, it is almost as if, putting living aside, we were to try to find the meaning of life. The only way we can discover life's meaning is by living and appreciating it.

In the case of the bird and the fish, it's obvious that wherever they are, that's their place, and wherever they go, that's their way. Some birds, for example, migrate back to the same place year after year. We also have our way, which we call the Buddha Way. That is to say, when we do one thing, we are complete in that moment. The way is right there, wherever we are. When we realize that this is the place and we are the way, practice follows spontaneously and that practice is the *genjokoan*, the realization of ultimate reality.

"Attaining this place and this way."

This very place is the place where you make yourself liberated and content. This way is the way of enlightenment, the Buddha Way. When you attain the way of enlightenment, your life itself becomes the enlightened life. We shouldn't confuse this "way" with some technique, or with some road for traveling someplace else. This way itself, this life itself, is realization. If we speak of realizing something else besides this life, again it's like putting another head on top of our own. To do very ordinary things in a very ordinary way—that's the Buddha Way.

One of the great Chinese Zen masters said, “Inwardly seeing your self-nature and being unshakable, indestructible, that’s Zen.” Mere physical sitting is not enough. You have to sit carefully and attentively. Let your body sit and let your mind sit. Let your emotions sit, let your breathing sit, let your blood circulation sit. Let your entire being sit. Then your sitting becomes indestructible, immovable. And when you really penetrate into it, it becomes more than that: the entire world in the ten directions becomes one bright pearl. Nothing to move and nothing to be moved; nothing to destroy and nothing to be destroyed. That’s zazen. As Dogen Zenji mentions elsewhere, don’t just understand it conceptually, but understand it with your whole body and mind. When you practice in that way, your zazen becomes nothing but the unshakable, indestructible, enlightened state itself. Extending that practice into everyday life, your whole life becomes the enlightened life.

“Since this place and this way are neither large nor small, neither self nor other, neither existing previously nor just arising now, they therefore exist thus.”

Since the realization of one’s life is inborn, it is not newly arising. On the other hand, if you neglect practice, you won’t realize the innate value of life. Since it’s not “existing previously,” you have to do something to bring it forth. The word “thus,” then, is like the sharp, emphatic whack of a stick urging us to realize this wonderful *thusness* of life.

Since the place is here and the way leads everywhere, the reason the limits of the knowable are unknowable is simply that our knowledge arises with, and practices with, the absolute perfection of the Buddhadharma.

Do not practice thinking that realization must become the object of one’s knowledge and vision and be grasped conceptually.

Even though the attainment of realization is immediately manifest, its intimate nature is not necessarily realized. Some may realize it and some may not.

Commentary Eleven

In the first sentence, Dogen Zenji is emphasizing that understanding arises from living and not vice versa. For instance, a fish that tries to find out how big the ocean is before swimming in it won't get far. We do that ourselves. We try to find out the dimensions of our life before living it, but it's simply impossible.

Similarly, some people think that until they complete their practice and attain enlightenment, they can't help other people. But such a time of completion will never come, because practice is our life itself, and continues endlessly. So according to the demands of each situation, we do our best. That's our way.

"The limits of the knowable are unknowable..." In the act of knowing in the usual sense, there is a split between the knower and the known. But being itself is simply unknowable, as the eye can't see the eye.

Then why does Dogen Zenji say, *"Some may realize it and some may not"*? Regardless of who realizes it and who does not, we are nothing but the Dharma, the way itself. And yet definitely there is real enlightenment by which we can see the limits of the knowable, a wisdom quite apart from knowledge or conceptualization. In order to realize this, we have to practice, which brings us to the monk's question and Priest Baoche's reply in the next section.

Priest Baoche of Magu Mountain was fanning himself. A monk approached and asked, "Sir, the nature of the wind is permanent, and there is no place it does not reach. Why, then, must you still fan yourself?" "Although you understand that the nature of wind is permanent," the master replied, "you do not understand the meaning of its reaching everywhere." "What is the meaning of its reaching everywhere?" asked the monk. The master just fanned himself. The monk bowed with deep respect.

Commentary Twelve

The monk is asking, "Since we are nothing but Buddha nature itself, why is it necessary to practice?" Dogen Zenji himself wrestled with this question for many years before finally resolving it. There is a commonly held view that the enlightenment experience is unnecessary because we are already intrinsically enlightened. *"The nature of wind is permanent and there is no place it does not reach"* means that all sentient beings are intrinsically buddha. *"Why then must you still fan yourself?"* Until we actually experience the fact that we are the life of the whole world, we won't understand its meaning. This awakening is the very essence of Buddhism.

"The master just fanned himself." Through activity, through practice our nature expresses itself. Without this active expression, our true nature is rather static. We have to move it, we have to revolve it. Then more and more as time goes by, we will mature and ripen. Everything is right here. *"The monk bowed with deep respect."* Again, everything is right here. I really mean it. What more is there to seek outside of this?

This is the enlightened experience of Buddhadharma and the vital way of its correct transmission. Those who say we should not use a fan because wind is permanent, and so we should know the existence of wind without using a fan, know neither permanency nor the nature of wind.

Because the nature of wind is eternally present, the wind of Buddhism actualizes the gold of the earth and ripens the cheese of the long river.

Commentary Thirteen

"Actualizes the gold of the earth" means that we ourselves, our very body, our very mind, are nothing but the golden body of buddha. Our life, however long or short, is enriched by proper practice and we together grow into wonderful people.

"Cheese" is not an exact translation. The Japanese term *soraku* refers to a cultured milk drink popular in ancient China. Our whole life is a river that is slowly maturing and ripening, but unlike cheese or the milk drink, over-ripening won't make us sour. The more sincerely we practice, the richer and smoother the taste of our life will become. The gold of the earth will be actualized and the cheese of the long river ripened. The gold of the earth, the cheese of our life's long river, is our true nature. As we practice, and our wisdom ripens and matures, we are able to function freely for the sake of all beings.

V. Appendices

Appendix I

The Sixteen Precepts

The Three Treasures

Be one with the Buddha

Be one with the Dharma

Be one with the Sangha

The Three Pure Precepts

Do not commit evil

Do good

Do good for others

The Ten Grave Precepts

Do not kill

Do not steal

Do not be greedy

Do not tell a lie

Do not be ignorant

Do not talk about others' faults

Do not elevate yourself by criticizing others

Do not be stingy

Do not get angry

Do not speak ill of the Three Treasures

Appendix II

Bodhisattva's Precepts and the Capacity for Bodhisattva's Precepts

Selection from Jiun Sonja Hogoshu
Translated by Taizan Maezumi
with John Daishin Buksbazen

Jiun Sonja (1718–1804) was the founder of the Vinaya subsect of Shingon Buddhism. He also studied Zen under Soto Master Daibai at Shoanji Temple in Shin-Shu province. He was an outstanding Sanskrit scholar and was also well versed in Confucianism, Shinto, and other fields of learning and literature. As an artist, he is especially well-known for his dry-brush style of calligraphy. This selection is from the book Jiun Sonja Hogoshu (A Collection of Jiun Sonja's Dharma Word). *These are Jiun Sonja's opening remarks at a Jukai Ceremony [the ceremony in which one receives the precepts], in Bosatsukai Dojo, November 11, 1761.*

The precepts are the precepts in one's own mind. That is to say, [they are] the precepts of Buddha nature. Samadhi and wisdom are the same samadhi and wisdom within one's mind. That is to say, [they are] the samadhi and wisdom of Buddha nature.

Only the Buddha, the World-honored One, has attained supreme enlightenment. Seeing that the precepts-dharma is already inherent in the minds of all sentient beings, he expounded upon it. That is the precepts-dharma that I will give you. Realizing this samadhi and wisdom originally in the mind of each sentient being—that is the sutras.

As for the capacity of sentient beings, this precepts-dharma can be described as great or small. If you receive this precepts-dharma, still attached to the body and mind of the five skandhas, and wishing to liberate this body and mind, all the precepts you receive will become the shravaka precepts.

If you understand that from the beginning the form-dharma of the five skandhas is like a cloud in the sky, and that the mind-dharma is like the reflection of the moon in the water, and realize that all sentient beings and yourself are originally equal and can be said neither to be one nor many, and if you raise the Four Great Vows to receive these precepts, then the precepts you receive become the Bodhisattva's Precepts.

Due to having received the precepts while still attached to body and mind, the very body of the precepts will decline in accord with the destruction of body and mind.

While the Bodhisattva's Precepts are apart from attachment to the five skandhas, and [one] receives them with an equal and vast mind, the precepts-body flows into the ocean of the future kalpa.

Buddha expounded the Five Different Natures. Although he talks about five natures, they are one Dharma nature. But although it is one dharma-nature, it doesn't hurt to talk about it as five natures. These days people are attached to worldly fame and profit, greedy and filled with the five desires, unable to raise aspiration toward the right Dharma for even a short while.

Attached on top of attachment, and greedy on top of greed—moreover, raising all sorts of worldly cleverness, sophistry, deluded views, and evil states of mind—they embellish their errors and accumulate misdeeds without realizing their own shamefulness.

Occasionally they have a chance to hear the right Dharma and to see the Buddha's sutras, but they do not raise the faith. People of this sort are called "Animate beings of no nature." It could be said that temporarily [their] Buddha nature has disappeared. These days there are many people of this kind in the world. Even if perchance they have had *jukai*, still this amounts to only a tenuous [karmic] connection. Indeed, such a person does not have the capacity for the Bodhisattva's Precepts.

Again, there is a group of sentient beings who realize the impermanence of worldly desires and know the awfulness of life and death, who, understanding the necessity of practicing the precepts,

samadhi, and wisdom, willingly seek for the Dharma of tranquil nirvana. If we compare these people to the previous group, there is the difference between heaven and earth; and yet, due to not raising that vast mind, to not realizing that they're originally equal to all sentient beings, and just wanting partial liberation for themselves—neither do they have the capacity for the Bodhisattva's Precepts.

This is called the shravaka-seed nature.

Again, among these, some brilliant individuals, without waiting for others to expound the Dharma, practice and enlighten [themselves], profoundly contemplating on the karmic causations of birth and death. These people are superior to the former group, and yet due to not raising the true bodhi-mind, to being attached to their own mind, they also lack the capacity for the Bodhisattva's Precepts.

This is called pratyeka-seed nature.

Again, if there are persons who realize that the body and mind of the five skandhas are like a cloud in the sky, like the moon in the water, and that all beings and their lands in the ten spheres are nothing but the manifestation of their own mind, and who raise the equal, unconditioned, compassionate mind toward all sentient beings, such person—all of whose deeds are dedicated to the animate beings in the dharma-worlds, and who offer their own lives in order to seek the Supreme Way—these are the ones who have the true [right] capacity to receive the Bodhisattva's Precepts.

Contemplating and considering like this, with sincere devoted heart [mind], receive the Dharma of the precepts.

Appendix III

The Benefits of the Three Treasures

from Jiun Sonja Hogoshu
Translated by Taizan Maezumi
with John Daishin Buksbazen

If you don't receive the Three Treasures, you may fall into the the three unfortunate realms of rebirth: the hells, the realms of hungry ghosts, and the realm of animals. Having received them, even if your faith in them is shallow, you will receive the benefits of the human realm. When your faith in them is deep, you will receive the benefits of heaven. Having true faith in them, you will receive the benefits of *sravakas* [hearers of the Dharma] and *pratyekabuddhas* [solitary realizers of truth]. Having complete, fully realized faith in the Three Treasures, you will attain bodhisattvahood and buddhahood. The distinction among these degrees of faith depends upon the shallowness or profundity of your faith in the Three Treasures.

When you have faith in the Buddha, casting away your body and mind, there is no mind aside from the Buddha, and no Buddha aside from the mind; there are no beings aside from Buddha, and no Buddha aside from beings; there is no land apart from Buddha, and no Buddha apart from land. This is what is meant by having faith in the Buddha. When you really penetrate this, you may attain great enlightenment even before you arise from your seat.

When you have faith in the Dharma, casting away your body and mind, there is no Dharma aside from your body, and aside from your body, no Dharma; there are no beings aside from Dharma and no Dharma aside from beings; there are no mountains, rivers, and the great earth aside from Dharma, and no Dharma aside from mountains, rivers, and the great earth. This is what is meant by having faith in the Dharma. When you really penetrate this, you may attain great enlightenment even before you arise from your seat.

When you have faith in the Sangha, casting away your body and mind, there is no Sangha aside from yourself, and no self aside from Sangha; there are no beings aside from Sangha, and no Sangha aside from beings; there are no phenomena aside from the Sangha, and no Sangha aside from phenomena. This is what is meant by having faith in the Sangha. When you really penetrate this, you may attain great enlightenment even before you arise from your seat.

Appendix IV

Lineage of Taizan Maezumi Roshi

The lineage of Taizan Maezumi Roshi is called the White Plum Asanga. For a list of Dharma successors in the White Plum Lineage, please visit www.whiteplum.org.

Glossary

ango (lit. “peaceful dwelling”): A practice period, originally three months in length, devoted to meditation, study, and communal work.

anuttara samyak sambodhi (Skt): Supreme, complete awakening.

Avalokiteshvara (Skt; J: Kannon, Kanzeon; Kanjizai): One of the three principal bodhisattvas in the Zen Buddhist tradition, Avalokiteshvara is the personification of Great Compassion.

bodhi-mind (Skt: *bodhichitta;* J: *bodaishin*): The awakening of the determined aspiration for enlightenment.

bodhisattva (Skt; J: *bosatsu*): An enlightened being who has forsworn final liberation until all beings have attained enlightenment.

bosatsukai (J) (lit. “a meeting of bodhisattvas”): Can be used to denote any group of Zen Buddhists who meet together for practice.

Buddha nature: The intrinsic nature of all beings.

dharma (Skt): Any thing or event.

Dharma (Skt): The teachings of the Buddha; Truth; Buddhist doctrine; universal Law.

Dharma hall: A room or building in a monastery in which the abbot gives talks on the Dharma.

Dharma name: The name given upon receiving the precepts *(jukai)*.

Dharma successor: A person designated by a Zen teacher to carry on the teaching lineage and authorized to teach, and in turn name Dharma successors.

dharmakaya (Skt; J: *hosshin*): One of the three forms of the Buddha, the realm of Oneness.

dhyana (Skt; Ch: *ch'an;* J: *zen*): Sitting practice as exemplified by Shakyamuni Buddha.

Eihei Dogen Zenji (1200–53): Co-founder, with Keizan Jokin Zenji, of Japanese Soto Zen, he established Eiheiji, a principal Soto training monastery; best known for his writings, especially the *Shobogenzo.*

dojo (J): A training hall.

Dokusan (and/or) Daisan (J): A one-to-one encounter between Zen student and teacher in which the student's understanding is probed and stimulated and in which the student may consult the teacher on any matters arising directly out of practice. *Dokusan* is generally used to indicate that the teacher is a roshi, whereas a less senior teacher is indicated by the term *daisan*.

enlightenment: Realization of true nature.

Five Worldly Desires: Desire for money or wealth, sex, food, fame, and sleep.

Four Great Vows: "Sentient beings are numberless; I vow to save them. Desires are inexhaustible; I vow to put an end to them. The Dharmas are boundless; I vow to master them. The Buddha Way is unsurpassable; I vow

to attain it." Zen students chant these vows daily as an expression of their aspiration.

Fukanzazengi (J) (lit. "Universal Promotion of the Principles of Zazen"): Dogen Zenji's sitting manual.

gakki (J): Memorial service.

Hakuin Ekaku Zenji (1686–1769): The patriarch of Japanese Rinzai Zen, through whom all present-day Rinzai masters trace their lineage; he systematized koan study.

hara (J): The area of the lower abdomen that is the physical center of gravity of the human body, which becomes a center of awareness in zazen.

jukai (J): Ceremony in which a person receiving the precepts formally becomes a Buddhist and is given a Dharma name.

kalpa (Skt:) An eon; an extremely long period of time.

karma (Skt): The principle of causality, which holds that for every effect there is a cause.

Keizan Jokin Zenji (1268–1325): Fourth patriarch and co-founder, with his predecessor Dogen Zenji, of the Soto School in Japan, Keizan Zenji was largely responsible for the spread of Japanese Soto Zen.

kensho (J) (lit. "seeing into one's own nature"): An experience of enlightenment.

kinhin (J): Walking practice, usually done for five to ten minutes between periods of sitting.

koan (J): A brief anecdote recording an exchange between master and student, or a master's enlightenment experience. Koans are used in Zen to

bring students to realization and to help clarify their enlightenment.

Manjusri (Skt; J: Monju): The Bodhisattva of Wisdom, often depicted riding a lion, holding the sword of wisdom, which cuts through delusion. Especially appreciated in the Zen sect, Manjusri Bodhisattva is the principal figure on the zendo altar.

muji (J): The character "mu," a negative prefix. When used alone, it points directly at reality and has no discursive content. The use of the word in this sense originated with Master Joshu (Ch: Chao-chou, 778–897), who, when asked by a monk, "Does a dog have Buddha nature?" directly answered, "Mu!" The incident is used as the first koan in *The Gateless Gate (Mumonkan)*.

nirvana (Skt; J: *nehan*): In Zen practice, a non-dualistic state, beyond life and death.

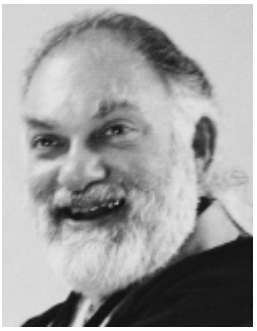
rakusu (J): Made of five strips of cloth and thus the smallest of the Buddhist robes *(kesa),* the rakusu is the only kesa worn by both monks and lay person s, and is suspended from the neck by a cloth halter.

sanzen (J) (lit. "penetration in Zen"): In the Rinzai tradition, sanzen is synonymous with dokusan. For Dogen Zenji, founder of the Soto School in Japan, however, sanzen more broadly signifies the proper practice of zazen.

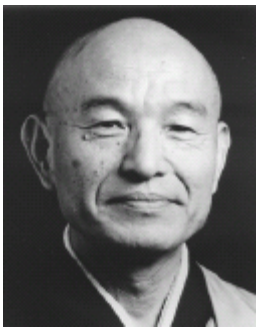
Zenji (J): Honorific title meaning "Zen teacher or master." Often reserved for the abbots of Eiheiji and Sojiji, the main monasteries in the Japanese Soto School. Maezumi Roshi also used it for esteemed Zen ancestors.

About the Authors

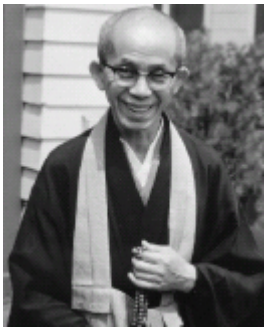
EIHEI DOGEN (1200–1253 C.E.) co-founder (with Soji Keizan Zenji) of the Japanese Soto School of Zen. Dogen Zenji's teaching emphasized the realization of the Dharma as everyday life, while also stressing the necessity of having a personal experience of enlightenment. A reformer, he denounced the often formulaic use of koans prevalent in his day, while making free and creative use of koans himself. His masterwork, the *Shobogenzo*, is generally thought to represent a high point in the literature of Zen Buddhist thought.



BERNIE GLASSMAN ROSHI (1939–) Maezumi Roshi's first Dharma successor, Glassman Roshi is the founder of the Greyston Foundation, and cofounder with his late wife, Roshi Sandra Jishu Holmes, of the Peacemaker Community and the Zen Peacemaker Order. He is the co-author, with Rick Fields, of *Instructions to the Cook* (Bell Tower, 1996) and the author of *Bearing Witness* (Bell Towers, 1998), and *Infinite Circle* (Shambhala: Boston, 2002). He lives in Massachusetts.



TAIZAN MAEZUMI ROSHI (1931–95) A Soto Zen priest, Maezumi Roshi was a successor to masters representing three major lines of Zen teachings: Hakujun Kuroda Roshi, Hakuun Yasutani Roshi, and Koryu Osaka Roshi. He was the founding abbot and resident Zen master of the Zen Center of Los Angeles, and Zen Mountain Center, and the founder of the White Plum lineage. He was co-author, with Tetsugen Glassman, of *The Way of Everyday Life* (Los Angeles: Zen Center of Los Angeles Publications, 1978), and author of *The Echoless Valley* (Mt. Tremper, NY: Dharma Communications, 1998), *Teaching of the Great Mountain* (edited by Anton Tenkei Coppens, Boston: Tuttle, 2001), and *Appreciate Your Life: The Essence of Zen Practice* (edited by Wendy Egyoku Nakao and Eve Myonen Marko, Boston: Shambhala, 2001).



KORYU OSAKA ROSHI (1901–85) A lay Zen master in the Rinzai tradition, Koryu Roshi was successor to Hannyakutsu Joko Roshi. His special contribution to Zen was his emphasis on the practice of lay persons. Koryu Roshi was head of the Musashino Hannya Dojo, and president of Shakamunikai, an independent organization of Zen Buddhists in Japan.

KO'UN YAMADA ROSHI (1907–89) Yamada Roshi was the senior Dharma successor of Hakuun Yasutani Roshi, and head of the Sambokyodan in Kamakura, the independent religious organization founded by Yasutani Roshi in 1954. Yamada Roshi's zendo was especially popular with Christian clergy. He was for many years president of the board of directors of Kembikyo Hospital in Japan.

HAKUUN YASUTANI ROSHI (1885–1973) A Soto Zen priest, he became the disciple of Daiun Sogaku Harada Roshi, from whom he received inka in 1943. He founded Sambokyodan, an independent religious organization. Yasutani Roshi made frequent visits to the United States, and in 1970, named Taizan Maezumi as a Dharma successor.

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TAIZAN MAEZUMI, a successor to masters representing three major lines of Zen teaching, was the founding abbot and resident master of the Zen Center of Los Angeles. He died in 1995.

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