Active Recognition: On Work

by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin

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Tonight I've been asked to talk about "work". I take this to mean that you would like to look into finding "work as practice", or finding "practice within work". I also take it that what you really mean is your "job", because the truth is that we're always working but, somehow, we have come to believe that work is something that we can stop and start.

We get up in the morning, and then we wash our face, we make the bed, we sit and we work with the breath or with a koan; we get up, we make breakfast, eat breakfast, do the dishes. We're always working. Everything that we do involves us in this give and take of daily effort, but something funny has happened with our attitudes towards work. We talk about "going to work" as if "work" were a noun; as if it were something that we "go to do" at a certain point. This seems to be part of how we segment our life, our world; it arises from a split between working mind and sleeping mind, between self and other, between good and bad, right and wrong. "Work" is a verb; it's an action; it's a continuous activity. The heart works; when you have a problem, the mind works on it; we breathe in and we breathe out; and this is "work".

With that said, we'll begin by talking about "work" and then, later on, we'll talk about "jobs".

First of all, work is considered to be essential within Zen. In Theravadin countries a monk does not work. In fact, his precepts prohibit him from breaking the ground by hoeing, planting trees and so on and so forth. He depends entirely upon dana or the generosity of lay people. In the morning, he goes out with his bowl to the nearest village and begs his meals for the day; then the rest of the day is to be spent in practice or study, and also doing little services for the lay people; death services, and those sorts of things. In China this situation wasn't possible because the Chinese people simply would not tolerate it. They just would not have given the monks enough to eat. And so, it became necessary for monastics to begin work, to begin to farm. As Zen communities began to take on a definite shape, structure, and mode of practice, work became an essential aspect of the life of practice within a monastery or Zen community.

Baizhang, one of the early Ancestors, who is credited with creating the first true monastic structure for Chan monks, was well known for his saying: "A day without work is a day without eating." Work is thus regarded to be part of one's responsibility towards all sentient beings. Work is regarded as an active and yet simple recognition of the inter-relatedness of everything that we do. In fact, the clothes that we wear came from somewhere, were made by someone, the fabric was woven by someone using certain fibres and so on and so forth. Sunlight and air and rain are all involved in these as well. If we begin to look at anything that we encounter throughout the day, we find a seamless web of inter--relationships and, the more that we cut through the seeming dualities, the more that we find this seamlessness. Work is then regarded as a way of recognizing this fact and taking responsibility for it. "Responsibility" means to make a response, to answer. We must answer the situation by doing what needs to be done.

Work is also regarded as a formal Zen practice, through which we can apply and deepen mindfulness and insight. This is known as "samu" or caretaking practice. In Zen monasteries, at Eihei-ji for example, a novice monk, an unsui, will spend most of the day (when he is not sitting) polishing the floors or doing some such work. When he

polishes the floor he simply has a damp cloth and, getting down on his hands and knees, rubs at the floor. The floors shine as if they're waxed and polished, but they've never seen wax or polish, simply this ceaseless rubbing of novices' hands. Being forced by the situation that one is in to confront these kinds of tasks, like polishing the same floor three times every day, brings one face to face with the goal orientation with which we usually do everything. This sense of working towards a goal is connected with the way that we separate things into what we want to do and what we don't want to do. This attitude only reinforces the sense of hope and fear which robs us of satisfaction and delight in doing what we do.

We tend to ignore the fine details that compose everything that we do and only recognize course lumps and chunks of them. For example, when we have a task to do, we start the task by thinking about how it will be when it is finished, and what we're going to be doing after that. In Zen, we begin a task by noticing the details that we're working on at this moment. In the next moment, we're working on another detail, and in the next moment another detail; and at some point the task is finished. That means simply that we go on to other details, other moments of seeing, hearing, touching, colours and sounds. The task was never really finished because it was never really there, but it was done completely because each detail was done completely.

When dealing with something like Zen, or any sort of so-called "spiritual" practice, there's always a tendency to try to abstract oneself from the true matters of life at hand. We worry about the "sound of One Hand" or the Unobstructed, Luminous, Essenceless Nature of Mind, rather than being concerned with such things as how we walk, how we talk, how we treat other people, how we make coffee, how we drink coffee; and yet this walking, talking, making and drinking coffee are the things that we actually do. If enlightenment isn't here, then where else could it be? Because we are nowhere else but where we are, from moment to moment.

The truth displays itself openly and completely in every perception, in every cognition. Because you see colours, because you hear sounds, there is this hearing, there is this seeing. What is it that is aware of these things?

Each thing that occurs, each experience that arises, dwells and decays is a reminder of this nature of mind. It points to the nature of mind. If we are attentive, we find that the "external world" is always presenting us with messages about how we are from moment to moment; whether we're tense, whether we're angry, whether we're dull, whether we're listless, whether we're joyful. In this way the "external" world and our "internal" world are always communicating with each other. When this communication can happen honestly and completely then we find that there is no "external" or "internal" side to our experience, to our life.

The way that we do things affects the actual doing of them: if we are hurried and slovenly then we do things in a very hurried and slovenly way. This is one of the messages that we are getting from the world of Dharma.

The other message which is being presented to us is the actual presentation of these moments, the actual being-time of these moments; the being-time of tasting coffee. The taste of coffee points to the true nature of mind. It is a reminder of the true nature of mind. The taste of coffee, of course, is not the true nature of mind, but it points to something and yet, whatever it is, it is not drowned in that taste of coffee.

When Dongshan Liangjie was walking through a pond, he looked down and, seeing his reflection rippling on the water, had his Daikensho. He wrote a verse about this and part of the verse says, "I am not it, and yet it is all that I am". Whatever it is, is there in that taste of coffee, in the task to be done.

When we get up in the morning we begin our work; in fact all night we were doing our work: our dreaming work, our sleeping work, our resting work, our rolling around in bed work. We sit and we work with the koan, and we work with the breath. We make breakfast for the kids or whatever we do and we go off some place else and do some work there. Instead of splitting our lives into work-week and week-end, we can recognize the fact that we are only living one moment at a time anyway, and we are doing what we are doing when we do it. This brings us to this inter-relatedness that I was mentioning.

There is a grounded quality in paying attention to the things that you're doing, a solid, grounded quality. Yet trying to fixate on the task at hand or to fixate on how you were doing it seems to miss the point; seems to form ice around the subject. Although there's a very grounded quality, this groundedness immediately points to a sense to spaciousness, a sense of openness. Because each thing arises, dwells and decays, these details all shift from moment to moment. You work on "this" and then you work on "that". You can't keep working on this forever; at some moment, it becomes that. The truth of impermanence, the fact of impermanence itself, if recognized, helps to take that grounded quality and open it further into a vast sense of spaciousness, of openness, of readiness to work with whatever comes up. There is a sense of touching and letting go freely; touching firmly, holding lightly, and letting go easily.

If we get stuck on what we're doing then it is much like when we're following the breath. If we try to follow this breath completely and we try to make sure that we've followed that breath, we won't allow the next breath to come in because we really want to follow this breath; and then we end up dying. Rather than self-consciously trying to be mindful of everything that we do, if we exert true mindfulness a broader awareness begins to open out at the same time.

This Awareness is that which sees, hears, walks, talks within the realm of the Buddhas. It is itself the realm of the Buddhas and it is present in every task that we do. Practice is never very far from the work that we do because we do it with body, breath, speech and mind and these are the things with which we practice. Since these things are with us all the time the mind of practice is always available. Since we're seeing and hearing there is some sort of awareness there anyway, some sort of recognition, so practice is always possible. Yet we still tend to get lost in that Unobstructed Nature of Mind. We get lost in the feelings that arise, dwell, and decay and the sheer number of tasks that we have to do and the fact that our co-workers might be people that we don't like or, perhaps, that don't like us, or there might be some politics in the office, and so on and so forth.

Still, if we can recognize the basic facts of what is going on from moment to moment, such as the fact that when we stand up our feet are on the ground, or the fact that we see colours and hear sounds, this can remind us a little bit of our actual context. No matter what is occurring to us, we recognize that Awareness is here. In this culture, it is necessary for people to work. It is almost impossible for someone to sit for twelve hours every day. We depend on our jobs to bring in money. In order to eat, to practice, to liberate ourselves from birth and death and to liberate all sentient beings we need to work, we need to have a job. Because of this we don't have as much time for formal practice as would be desirable.

Our priority is to find a way to live this life as honestly and completely as is possible. If we want to find out what this life is, then everything that we do will have to arrange itself around that. Our relationships, our jobs, our clothes, our food, all become ways to practice and to apply practice. They all become means for us to apply our realization and to practice forth and deepen that realization. When we view the things that we do in this light, then we never take our "jobs" seriously as "careers". Instead, our "job" is an active recognition of our own needs

and the needs of others. We will then naturally try to choose means of livelihood that are capable of being of benefit to ourselves and others. In this way, if we always recognize the priority of formal practice, everything becomes an art form through which we can paint or carry out our expression of what we are realizing about our life. This is the true "right livelihood" that Sakyamuni Buddha spoke of in his teaching of the Eightfold Path. In Zen we don't tend to split things up into the eight of this or the thirty-seven of that; instead, if we just work with the simple fact of this life and this moment all of the principles of the Teachings are fulfilled.

Beyond this general availability of body, breath, speech and mind, the world of practice and the world of Buddhas and everything that comes up we can schedule little things within our jobs that will give us some sense of continuing our connection with formal practice. For example, when the phone rings we can let it ring three times and follow our breath during that period and only then reach for the phone, touch the phone, recognize our context, hear the person's voice and listen when we listen and speak when we speak. We can, as Robert Aitken roshi has said, create little "islands of practice" in our jobs; little areas where we can remind ourselves of our connection to practice.

It is not necessary to take our office and plaster it full of pictures of Buddhas and calligraphy or have a little altar in there. We can do very simple things such as spending three, four or five minutes just sitting at the desk being mindful, following the breath, before we begin the day's work. During coffee break instead of going "Oh!" and running off to get coffee you could just get up from the desk be aware of getting up from the desk, walk to the canteen and get your coffee; or you could simply stay in your office and sit at your desk and follow your breath. You don't have to take any particular posture, you don't have to create a situation which will disturb and freak out your fellow workers. You can simply sit at your desk, keep your back straight and be mindful following your breath. Also, you can go for a walk; a nice slow walk; you don't have to do kinhin, but again, just simply walk.

This is where such things as mantras and so on can come in handy. A mantra can seem to be somewhat more of a "solid" thing than the breath when we are lost in the jungle of activities and events of our jobs. It can be something that we can take "hold of" to reaffirm our commitment to mindfulness. If we use the mantra, or even the breath, as something to remove ourselves from the task as such, by inverting attention to some abstract state, then it is dangerous because it would merely deepen the quality of insincerity that self-image has in regard to actually having to step past its thoughts and feelings and states and actually do something. If we are sincere about how we use the mantra or whatever then we will use it to release our sense of confusion rather than use it as a means to avoid what we are confused about.

In our jobs if we can recognize the fact that this is work and work never begins and never ends then we can give up waiting for "time off" from work. When you leave your job, you come home and you make supper and you eat it and you do the dishes and, hopefully, you sit again and work with the breath and work with the koan, or whatever one's practice is. We cannot take "time off" from our lives because our lives are always the work of this moment. Work never begins and work never ends.

Begin Here: Five Styles of Zen

by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

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[from the book, "Before Thinking"]

The way in which we view something defines for us what we're going to allow ourselves to see of it. A point of view is merely one degree out of the three hundred and sixty degrees of a circle; each point of view can see from that point only, and so is three hundred and fifty nine degrees blind. When we become fixated on our "point of view," our interpretations and expectations blind us. This is true of how we view our practice as well. Since our practice is about opening to our life as it is, opening to this moment as it is, and allowing this clear seeing to pervade our life, it is important that our view of practice also be open and clear. This requires honesty with ourselves and our own motives and a very open and clear investigation and recognition of the ways in which we might be approaching our practice as a means to try to grasp at things within our life, instead of opening to the vastness of our life itself.

One particular way of understanding various approaches to practice was taught by Kuei-feng Tsung-mi. Tsung-mi was a C'han master, and also the fifth Ancestor of the Hua Yen tradition in the Tang dynasty in China . He spoke of five different kinds of Zen, which are bompu zen or "usual zen," gedo zen or " Outside Way zen," shojo zen or "Hinayana practice," daijo zen or "Great Practice zen" and saijojo zen or "Easy and perfect" zen. In this sense, we could say that zen with a small "z" means simply a form of practising.

Zen practice is so vast that we can approach it from almost any angle and still gain something. However, if we can approach it from where we are, sitting directly in the midst of our life rather than coming at it from any particular angle, then all of its riches will begin to open for us. We will find that grasping at these riches pushes them away. Even if we are able to hold onto one thing, as soon as we close our hands around it and hold on, we can't pick up anything else, we can't use anything else. Every time we grasp at something, we limit ourselves. Yet, no matter how hard we grasp or clutch, we cannot hold on because everything and everyone is always changing and coming and going. It is not just a matter of not being able to hold onto things; the whole act of grasping is one of limiting.

If we sit and just sit, so that it isn't even a matter of "you" sitting or "me" sitting, but just sitting, then the practice begins to open for us. We will find that it is so simple, so profound, so ordinary, so vast and so limitless, that we can never encompass all of it. The more deeply we practice, the more we find that practice encompasses us.

Bompu zen

Bompu zen, or "usual zen," means engaging in a meditation practice in order to procure the same kinds of things that one has always been looking for; that is to say health and happiness, some sense of well-being. There is nothing wrong with wanting to develop a sense of health and well being. We are not saying that any of these approaches to practice are "wrong"; it is just that some of them are more limiting than others. To limit oneself when it is not necessary is like tying your own hands.

We can obtain health and well being through our practice. The sitting posture itself allows the body to be as it is. It allows the body to sit in such a way that the spinal cord is erect, but not stiff. The shoulders allow tension to fall away from them and the weight is evenly balanced. There is no pressure being placed upon any of the internal organs by scrunching them as we fall into some slouching posture, or as we try to draw ourselves in and hold our chest tight.

Since we practice with the body and with the mind, both body and mind gain great benefit from practice, simply because they can function freely. Our mind will become calmer. We become able to face whatever is arising for us

without panicking, and without trying to hide from it. We begin to realize a sense of strength and confidence which is not based upon puffing ourselves up in any particular way, but is grounded in simply being as we are.

There is a certain unshakeability and confidence to our life as it is. When we see blue, it is blue. When we breathe in, the breath is this breath. When we speak, we can feel the tongue against our teeth and we know what we are saying. We don't need to be compelled by the impulse to overpower what the other person is saying, or by a feeling of rushing, or by the need to justify or to excuse ourselves. When we can just speak simply and clearly, there's a certainty to what we're saying. If we find that we're wrong about anything that we have said or done, that isn't any particular problem either. We might notice, perhaps, the feeling of wanting to eliminate something that we have done wrong. We notice this, and because we see all of it, we are not overcome by it. The seeing itself stands free from it. Even when we are shaken from our point of balance within our life, this itself is a signal, a reminder, to find a balance which doesn't depend upon anything.

In bompu zen, one practices to take a vacation from the grinding of the wheels of society and work, and also tries to build up a sense of calm. Traditionally, one might practice by trying to become absorbed or lost in the sensation of the breath and perhaps tighten the hara to strengthen it. Through this momentary and occasional dissociation with the things that make up one's daily experience, one can feel a sense of relief from the symptoms of one's own contraction and duality.

Martial Arts, Taoist longevity practices, Noh theatre and all of the Zen Arts (if engaged in as ends in themselves), and most of the modern Western forms of meditation, would all be traditionally considered to be bompu zen. Fundamentally then, bompu zen is practice engaged in for what we might call "therapeutic" purposes. Bompu zen is an aspirin, a pain reliever.

Or it can focus on "character building," as it does for so many modern Japanese. Many huge corporations in Japan send their employees and executives to Zen temples or to places that teach Zen-inspired practices for a week or two, to "toughen them up," make them more resourceful and flexible and so on. Recently I had lunch with a young man from Japan who had spent two months at Mampaku-ji, the Obaku Zen-shu's main temple. He had felt some need for organizing his life and so had entered the monastery to "build character." He found the regularity and intensity of the zazen inspiring, the setting of the temple grounds and buildings aesthetically pleasing, and the emphasis on taking care of each grain of rice philosophically stimulating. He left the monastery fundamentally unchanged but pleased and soothed by this experience.

Bompu zen is concerned only with the issues of health and well-being and that's a fine place to start: starting to allow ourselves to recognize the richness of our own experience. It is a fine place to start, but we need not stop there.

Gedo zen

The next kind of practice is called gedo zen, which means " Outside Way " zen. Tsung-mi composed this teaching during the Tang dynasty in China , and was viewing this whole issue in a manner defined by the times. In China , at that time, there were many power plays between various Buddhist Schools , Taoism, Confucianism, and so on. They were all competing to gain prestige and influence, and also, at the same time, trying to be present within the culture in order to benefit people. So, " Outside Way " in this case means a practice that isn't Buddhist practice as such.

I believe that true Buddhadharma is never "Buddhist." Buddhadharma means waking up to what is evident when we see clearly. This is the whole matter of Buddhadharma: the Great Matter of birth and death, the Great Matter of being alive and practising this life, realizing this life. That is what Buddhadharma is.

We should understand gedo zen not just as a form of practice that isn't "Buddhist," but as a form of practice that puts us outside of our life. That means viewing our practice as a way to feel "spiritual," a way to try to get something that is going to make us into a big "S" Self, something that cannot be assailed, something that cannot be brought into question, a big cosmic Self-image. We put ourselves outside of our life when we start to bring in all kinds of things that we might have heard of, all kinds of things that we might have some feeling for, but something that really is outside of our experience.

Gedo zen is religious in its intent and methods. In gedo zen, one's practice might consist of prayer and devotional attention to some entity or state of being which is separate from one, or related to one in some more or less parental fashion. Such practices might also involve the cultivation of various siddhis or "powers," whether real or imagined, in order to gain some control over the physics of day to day experience so that one can imagine oneself to be more "godlike." One pursues ecstasies of various mental and physical kinds hoping that the accumulation of these will add up to something. This "something" can then be added to one's personality to make it better, special, divine or whatever. Essentially, this is a matter of exploiting the mechanisms of the central nervous system, pushing buttons on the spinal cord, and claiming that the results have ontological meaning. Gedo zen is an intoxication. It is like alcohol or drugs, transporting you out of your own experience and life into a temporary state of ease.

Gedo zen would also be, for example, sitting and feeling some sense of calm, some sense of concentration and then some sense of lightness and stillness, which begins to show you that your experience is not a dense matter, it isn't heavy. You begin to notice that your experience is vibrant, is living, that things are constantly changing, coming and going. Then, you try to fit that experience into some cosmology. For example, you might say "this is an experience of the grace of God," or some other such statement, and you start to bring in things that have nothing at all to do with your experience. You start to throw your experience away in exchange for something that isn't even going on.

Whenever a cosmology arises, it begins to distort our experience and we place ourselves outside of the Way of our own life. If we say "well, this is Shiva," or "this is Jesus," or "this is this or that," that's fine, but these are just thoughts, these are just feelings. Recognize them as thoughts and feelings and don't guide your practice or your life by your thoughts or feelings, because they are a very small part of your life, they're just one thing going on within this process of being alive.

Allow your life to guide your life, your experience to be your experience. Please, don't assume anything, don't presume anything. Please don't predispose your experience in any way because then you're simply lying to yourself about your experience. Allow your experience to speak for itself and listen to what it is telling you.

Shojo zen

The third approach to Zen would be shojo zen, which means "Hinayana," "Practice of Jhana," or "Small Vehicle" zen. This is actually concerned with trying to realize the Buddhadharma. It is beginning to actually work with our

life as it is, and to examine our own suffering and confusion in order to not only relieve us of the symptoms but to cure the cause. It is a profoundly vital investigation into perception and cognition, into how we experience our world and ourselves, and what this world and ourselves are. We want to make real that which has been realized by the Buddhas and Dharma Ancestors, the people who have passed on this Lineage of Transmission, and who have made this practice available to us through two-thousand five-hundred years of effort. We want to understand what they understood, but we want it to be our understanding. So we practice.

The Teachings tell us things like "just pay attention to what's going on," and that makes sense to us. But it also says things like "right from the beginning there is not one thing," or "form is emptiness, emptiness is form." What does that mean? We can only understand these things directly through our own experience when we allow ourselves to very deeply experience our life.

"Buddha" means "one who has woken up from the dream of self-image." We can't really understand what waking up is until we wake up. We can talk about it but we can't really describe it as such. Someone who is sleeping might dream about being awake, going to work, meeting friends and so on, but it is a dream. So, usual mind cannot encompass Awakened mind within itself. We can't put a big box into a small box. Only Buddha can realize Buddha.

The Teachings say that "you are Buddha." It is not a matter of "becoming" Buddha. It is a matter of realizing for yourself that you are Buddha and that there is a fundamental Awakened quality at the core of your experience. It is a matter of realizing for yourself that sanity, honesty, clarity, wisdom and compassion are your basic nature, that all conditions are inherently unconditioned, that Awareness is all that is ever going on and it is never limited. Awareness is boundless and always free. This unconditional freedom is your own Nature and you can realize this.

Shojo zen is an approach to practice which is based on trying to grasp at realization, trying to get it, which presumes that it is separate from us; and so we are running around trying to make something happen instead of attending to our experience as it is. It is only in our experience as it is that we can begin to contact the Nature of our experiencing; it is not something separate, not something underneath or above. Our own Nature is not something separate from us. It is what we are. But just as "I am not my hands, I am not my eyes, I am not my tongue, I am not my thoughts, I am not my feelings and I am not the sound of my voice, nor am I the total sum of these," and that no "self" can be grasped in these, we also cannot grasp at our Nature. We simply have to realize this Nature, to experience it from within.

Often, shojo zen involves trying to practice concentration as something that will lead us to what is called "mushin-jo." "Mu" means "no," "shin" means "mind or heart," and "jo" means "practice, a concentration state or a meditative state." Mushin-jo means trying to get to some state in which you are free of your confusion because you've closed the door on it and it can't contact you any more. This is a very conditional kind of freedom, because as soon as you let that door open a little bit, the confusion is going to come welling in. Since you've held it under pressure, the pressure starts to build and it actually opens the door by itself. You can't keep it locked out. However, the attitude of jhana is one of thinking that we can, that if we just keep everything very, very quiet then nothing is going to bother us, and then everything is okay.

This kind of practice involves counting the breath and then trying to maintain a state of equanimity. When concentration on the breath is stable, one tries to "become one with the breath," and so on. We are searching for some kind of clear state of mind which is really only the absence of our usual states. We believe that there is some state of mind which is somehow inherently better or ultimate. The whole project of shojo zen is, at its root,

based on how self-image usually is. Self-image thinks that freedom is something we can have, instead of realizing that freedom is who and what we are.

Nonetheless, shojo zen is somewhat more wakeful than the previous approaches to practice that we have described as bompu zen and gedo zen. It is something like drinking a strong cup of coffee in the morning when you are bleary-eyed.

Daijo zen

The fourth mode of practice is daijo zen, or "Great Practice zen," which is the practice of the Mahayana or the "Great and Open Way ." This Way embraces everything that is arising for us and is not simply concerned with our own liberation, but recognizes that the liberation of all beings is inseparable from our own because we are inseparable from all beings, and works for that liberation.

The whole of the Mahayana is embodied in the Shi Gu Sei Gan, the Four Great Vows that we chant after formal sittings here in this temple:

"All beings without number, I vow to liberate. Endless obsessions, I vow to release. Dharma Gates beyond measure, I vow to penetrate. Limitless Awakening, I vow to unfold."

These are the Four Great Vows. The Mahayana is practice which is not only for your own benefit, but for the benefit of all beings, because you realize that the way in which you are affects everybody else, and the way in which everybody else is affects you. It can be very hard, sometimes, to find a clear line which truly divides you from others.

As you attend to your experience more, you begin to meet things more intimately. You actually begin to come face to face with the people that you meet. You actually begin to hear what they tell you. You actually begin to feel what they are feeling when they tell you about their feelings. You actually begin to feel how others are, in a very intimate way.

You know that, when standing in line at the bank or something of this nature, you can look at somebody further on in the line and if you keep looking at them, they'll turn and look back at you. Somehow, they feel that you are looking at them. We are with each other to an extent that cannot be imagined by usual mind because it is beyond imagination; it is simply how it is. Since we are only looking at small parts of our experience, we don't see how our experience actually is.

Daijo zen is based on realizing your experience and practising it; realizing the vastness of your own Nature and realizing that it is the Nature of all beings. Then you see that all beings have not realized the vastness of their own Natures. You recognize the suffering that is inherent in limitation, in creating boundaries for yourself. You then practice to further manifest being without boundary in your own experience, so that you can demonstrate that boundarylessness to others and show them how they can realize it. Your practice is everybody's practice and everybody's practice is your practice. You live your life, everybody lives their life, but all of this is arising within life itself. That is the attitude of daijo zen. Therefore, you're doing everything that you can to wake up. You're putting all of your effort, all of your strength into it, to realize being Buddha.

The Mahayana has taken many forms, from the Shin-shu and Tendai to the Vajrayana practices of Shingon and Tibetan Buddhism. The daijo practice of the Mahayana is like drinking a glass of orange juice in the depths of winter and feeling your very cells come alive. Or else, it is like drinking a medicine which heals the dis-ease of confusion about your Actual Nature, and then sharing this medicine with all of those who are yet ill with self-image.

When we speak of styles of Zen as such, daijo zen is traditionally associated with the Rinzai style, which concentrates on koan practice and which, at the end, opens into the practice of shikantaza, or just sitting. shikantaza is the starting point within Soto Zen practice, which is the practice of our Lineage, as Transmitted to us by Dogen zenji.

Saijojo zen

The fifth kind of Zen is saijojo zen which means "Great and Perfect Practice." It is great and perfect practice because it is not based on trying to realize anything. It is based on practising practice. It is based on sitting the sitting. It is based on seeing what you see, hearing what you hear, not looking for Buddha in any way but simply realizing one's own looking to be Buddha.

shikantaza is known by many names and many different forms within the Buddhist Transmission: in the Tibetan schools it is called Mahamudra, Maha-ati or Chagya-chenpo and Dzog-chenpo; the Theravadin school calls it Mahavipassana; within Soto Zen it is shikantaza, and in Rinzai Zen as well, one practices shikantaza after finishing koan study. Since the saijojo is so simple and straight-forward, it also seems to be quite subtle. Therefore, many people seem to have become quite confused about what shikantaza really is. Some even consider just sitting quietly like a good little boy or girl and watching the breath, or just "being mindful," to be shikantaza. Dogen zenji exclaimed that shikantaza is "just sitting," it is "dropping the bodymind." This does not mean sitting in some state of dissociation from body and mind, nor does it mean that this dropping bodymind only happens when you sit. It means that when you experience each experience as it is, when you penetrate into your True Nature, when you realize that there is no body or mind, time or space, then your sitting is "just sitting." shikantaza is a wordless release of all gestures of grasping. It is like opening a fist or opening the eyes. It is not the closing away of attention from any state of experience. "Wordless" does not mean that one artificially induces a state of blankness, is holding one's tongue, or has gagged the mind. It is a questioning so subtle and penetrating that it occurs before and between, around and within all thoughts, impressions, sensations and differentiations, whatsoever.

Experiences and states arise freely as the activity of primordial Awareness itself. Awareness is effulgent with forms but is always formless. Nothing that arises, dwells or decays can, in itself, invite or provoke any confusion, or separation, or identification. In shikantaza, all worlds and all beings are always sitting as their own True Natures.

In Soto Zen, shikantaza is the root of all practice and so, although we might have to work our way through these other four orientations to some extent, some realization of shikantaza is necessary for us to actually begin practising, if we are going to practice Soto Zen. This means having some sense of being Buddha, even if only on a feeling or intellectual level, a deep sense that no matter how screwed up you can be, you are basically sane after all. No matter how you might find yourself getting caught up in things, there is still a basic clarity that's available to you.

Opening further and further to that clarity is the basis of saijojo zen practice. This practice flowers into simply manifesting that clarity in everything that is arising. We recognize clarity to be all that is ever, in fact, going on; that no matter what point of view we might momentarily take, that all these are just orientations within a greater view of just seeing. Kensho (seeing into one's own nature) is, in some ways, actually where practice begins within Soto Zen. It is not just having some experience of kensho, some particular experience of kensho, but the whole orientation of kensho forms the basis of one's practice.

Within Soto Zen, when one is practising as a formal student, there is an interaction between Teacher and student which is based on the Teacher working to show his or her mind to the student so that the student can recognize the Original or Primordial Nature of his or her own mind. When these two minds can meet openly, then there is Transmission. This is Buddha meeting Buddha. This is that which is before, within, behind and all around, all of your thoughts, feelings and experiences. It is that which is giving rise to your thoughts, feelings and experiences expressing themselves. The Teacher is always trying to give some taste, some flavour of this Original Mind to students, so that the students can then practice that realization to whatever extent they are able. Through that, the form of practice that student will engage in becomes clear. Soto Zen might involve koan practice, anapanasati and many different forms of practice, but they are all grounded within shikantaza. They are grounded in some way within our realization that we are Buddha.

In the Transmission of this Lineage which was passed from my master to me, and through me to you, the Teacher calls the student to take up and realize shikantaza, to practice the great and perfect ease of saijojo. While I call you to do this, you practice bompu, gedo, shojo, or daijo zen and occasionally, from time to time, you glimpse saijojo. I will continue to call you to this until that glimpse becomes clear seeing and present experience of yourself as you are, "before body and mind, beyond sight and sound." Saijojo zen is like the taste of water: cool, clear, flavourless and the very source of all life. It is tasting water, it is entering into the flow of life, going past the play of the waves and plunging into the heart of the ocean.

Whether we're practising as formal students, as general, public or associate students, let's please try, as much as is possible, to approach our practice with the open view of not trying to get anything from it but just practising and seeing what's present for us. To hear what we hear. To feel what it is like to stand, to take a step and to take that step firmly. See how the room moves as you move. See how the movement of the room and your movement are the same movement. See how your experiences actually are and allow your clarity to manifest itself.

You can't grab at clarity. You can't make yourself be clear. Clarity simply opens when you get out of your own way. It is something that begins to pervade your experience more and more. It bubbles up. It wells up. Even though you are lost in some particular state, you find yourself becoming aware of that, being able to straighten up, stand free within that state and watch the state change, watch it start to open. When you get lost in a thought, you come back. You don't choose to wake up from the thought, but somehow that just happens. Somehow you find yourself back here, facing the wall, breathing in and out. Since you find yourself here, facing the wall, breathing in and out, you might as well sit there, breath in and out, and be aware of what's actually going on for you.

The time that you spend in your formal practice is a matter of practising that time. In your informal practice, when you're working, eating, talking, going to sleep and waking up in the morning, more and more you can find yourself also practising that time. You can find that each moment manifests some quality of practice, of clarity, of compassion, of wisdom, of openness so that you are practising and realizing your own dignity at more and more

intimate levels. You are realizing what it means to be a human being. All of the things that we have expected it to mean have nothing at all to do with being a human being. Being human does not mean to be petty, to be afraid, to be proud, to be jealous, to make our way in the midst of a cruel world. Being human means dignity, compassion, realizing that one's life is the life of all beings. It is realizing the unshakeability, the certainty, the sheer sanity of our own experience.

So with that we will end.

And perhaps we can begin again with each breath, with the coming and going of each breath, the coming and going of each thought, the coming and going of each experience. Can we penetrate this coming and going? Can we come so close to this coming and going that there's no longer any barrier, no longer any separation? We've passed through it. We realize that this coming and going of our experience shows us how open our life is. Despite the fact that we can't hold on to our happiness, that we can't hold on to the things that we like, we find that we don't need to. There is always something happening. There is always something arising for us. There is always the freshness of the moment and the moment is beginning and ending continually. We will end here and we will begin here.

Beginner's Mind Workshop

by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

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Language is a wonderful thing. You know, we can say "hello", we can introduce ourselves and say "What a beautiful day." But, of course, we are not our names and none of the things that we experience are the names that we have for them.

It is wonderful to be able to talk because then we can communicate with each other. However, sometimes we can be so clever with our words that we become confused by our own double-talk. What I mean by double-talk is that we have words that refer mainly only to other words. We have symbols that refer to other symbols. Symbols can be very useful because they can instruct us in something, they can tell us how to do something, in which case the symbol refers to something that we actually experience, but when symbols only lead to other symbols, then it seems to become a closed system. Now, we are so good at talking (and so good at double-talk) that most of you spent a lot of time, this morning, thinking about what was going to happen when you got here. You were rehearsing it in your head despite the fact that you really had no idea what was going to happen. In the same kind of way, whenever we meet anyone we usually rehearse what we are going to say beforehand and when we get there, nothing ever happens the way we thought it was going to happen.

Sometimes we might notice that and feel upset; sometimes we might not notice that because we are already rehearsing the next thing in our head. So we are continually talking to ourselves about what we are doing. We have a kind of monologue or a story-line in which we talk to ourselves about what we have been doing, what we are going to be doing and, from time to time, we even comment on what we are doing right now.

We become so good at language, at words, at names, that we really do begin to confuse our experiences with our names for our experience.

So that is one of things that we want to take a look at this afternoon. We want to find out what happens if we begin to see that our thoughts are not what our experiences really are and that, in fact, the thoughts are just a very small part of our experience. It is not a matter of attempting to get rid of our ability to name things or to think. But because we have invested so much energy into our thoughts, we often do not have any room for what our experience actually is. Everything gets filled up by the separations that we create between things.

We name a thing and we think that because we have named it, we know what it is. We name something and as soon as we name something, we start to think that it is a noun. For example, we say "mind" and many of us think that is a noun, that mind is a kind of a thing, that it is one thing, a kind of a substance, it is always the same.

But what is it that we are calling "mind"? We are calling thoughts and feelings, sights and sounds, experiences which are always coming and going, always shifting and changing radically, "mind". And we act as if that is always one thing. We act towards the mind, then, and towards our experience, as if it should always be one way and when it is not, we become frustrated. And because it never really is one way, we are almost always frustrated. And because we become frustrated, we wind up telling ourselves more and more stories about how things should be.

So, what we want to do, then, is just begin to work with our experience as it really is, because none of our names, none of our words for our experience is what our experience really is.

Of course, that is why we are here. We have some idea that there is a reality which is outside of our thoughts and feelings. But as soon as we say "reality", we might have a little bit of a problem because reality, to us, almost always means something final, something real. But, of course, there are many different realities, each reality based on what you think it is going to be, what parameters you set out for it, what you expect.

So perhaps we could put aside the search for reality and instead work with our experience, because regardless of what we think reality is or is not, regardless of what we have named things, regardless of how confused we might be about things, one thing that we know for sure is that right now we are right here. Right now we are listening to something and we are seeing different colours and we are feeling the temperature of the room. We are aware, right now. We are experiencing right now. We know that to be true. Regardless of anything else, we know that to be true. Now, what does true mean? Just simply that it is going on, that there are these colours and forms and sounds. There is this experience. We know that this is true. It is the only thing that we know is true, for sure. Anything else might be a story. So, what we do here is we work with experience, we play with experience. We experience experience, because experience stands outside of all of our names, all of our thoughts, all of our storylines, all of our categories and yet, at the same time, all of our names and storylines and categories arise within experience.

So what we want to do is actually just put everything in its right place. What I mean by its right place is right here.

Although we might be thinking about what we are going to be doing later, we are right here. Although we might have a memory about what we have been doing, we are right here.

Right here stands outside of our storylines and our storylines only arise within it. Unfortunately, our experience of right here often only happens for us in the context of a storyline. Something has meaning because of our associations with it -- a colour, a form, a sound, a person, an event, a place -- all is meaningful for us because it reminds us of something else, but it is not something else, it is this. Because, of course, that is the thing about names and categories and storylines, is that they are all about the past and the future. But our life does not happen in the past or the future, it only happens right here and now. And our life is not a story, it is the real thing. What do I mean by the real thing? I mean: you are hearing these sounds.

Now, the other really interesting thing about experience and about right here, right now, this time, is that although we can know all kinds of things and name all kinds of things, although we can say that is black and that is blue, this is a candle -- we have all kinds of names for things and we can describe things -- we can say whether we like it or whether we do not like it, what is it, really? What is it?

When we see a colour, what is that, really? Now we could talk about light vibrating, we could talk about waves and particles, but that seems to miss the point. It is much like talking about love.

If we want to know what love is, we have to be in love, right? That is the only way that we can find out what love is, is to be in love. We could talk about glands, we could talk about breeding cycles, we could talk about all kinds of things, but that is not exactly what love is. That might be part of how love happens, but that is not what love is.

If we want to find out what love is, we have to be in love and as we love, we may find that we get confused about love when we are telling ourselves stories about love -- you know, when we are telling ourselves stories about the person that we love -- we tell ourselves stories about what will happen for us because we love this person. We confuse ourselves when our love is a storyline. In the same kind of way, if we want to know what experiencing in itself is, or reality is, or what the mind is, or who we are, we have to experience experience.

Now, experience is colours and forms and sounds, thoughts, feelings, smells, myriad things, numberless things. How many colours are you seeing right now? Now, as you are listening, do you feel your feet, do you feel the hands? Are you aware of the breath? Do you hear the traffic sounds, do you hear the sound of your own breath? You do when I mention it, but perhaps you were not until I did mention it.

Now, that again is very interesting. How is it that we can experience something and not experience it? How is it that we can be noticing something and yet not notice it? When our attention becomes invested in only a part of our experience, whether it is a thought, a name, a story, or whether we are paying more attention to a sound than to a sight, then we are not really experiencing all of our experience.

One way of working with experience can be called the path of meditation. And this recognizes that we get very confused because we identify a lot with our names and stories and words and our attention is always scattering. And so we want to take this scattering and bring it to a kind of settled state so that instead of the mind flipping around to the past, the present, the future, and all of these different things that we are aware of, we want to find one thing that we are aware of and pay attention to it. And so we narrow our attention down and just pay attention to one thing instead of letting our attention scatter.

Now, if we catch any of you doing that here, you will be thrown out because that is not what we do. Zen is not about meditation. You cannot compare it to meditation. The problem is not the scattering. The scattering occurs because of focusing, because our attention contracts on something and then excludes everything else. So, simply focusing our attention on something else, say [counting] the breath or [focusing on] a mantra or a visualized image is exactly the same thing that we have been doing that has been confusing us in the first place, except that we are just going to learn how to do it better so that we can become even more thoroughly confused. Because all that we will have done is focus on one fragment of our experience. We will not understand what our experience in itself is, what our life in itself is, or who we are because the most fundamental question, of course, is what is it that is experiencing experience? What is it that is aware?

There are all kinds of things that we are aware of: Colours and forms and sounds, different ways of being aware, waking, sleeping, dreaming, all kinds of subtle states, yogic states and so on, which are possible. But those are all things that we are aware of. What is the awareness? Regardless of what we are aware of -- a colour, a person, a building, anger, fear -- what do all of those things have in common? They all have in common the fact that we are aware of them. Regardless of what we are experiencing, the basic fact is that there is this experiencing presenting itself as these experiences. And if we want to understand what that is, we have to work with the whole of our experience and we have to work with the process of how experience presents itself.

If we find that we are confused, rather than trying to avoid our confusion, in Zen we want to see how we become confused so that we can learn how we do that, so we can learn how to stop it.

So in Zen, we practise experiencing experience itself. If we want to know what Awareness in itself is, the only way to do that is to be aware, fully, thoroughly and completely. So what we do, is we work with different aspects of our experience and begin to bring them together.

There are different techniques that we use in Zen. There is zazen, sitting practice. We will not call it "meditation", we will call it "sitting practice", sitting. There are many different ways in which we sit. Usually, when we begin our practice, we begin by working with the breath, but if we continue our practice and our practice deepens, then our teacher will give us different techniques to use until we can burn through the techniques, until we do not need any technique at all, which is called shikan taza, just sitting. And that is really what we practise here.

But, there are different things that we might use: Koan, the breath, sometimes a mantra, sometimes feeling the body, all kinds of different things. As well as sitting, we have walking practices called kinhin; we have movement practices called kata; for eating we have something called oryoki practice. There are also sleeping practices, dreaming practices, because in Zen we want to work with each aspect of our experience, completely.

So then, none of these things are themselves Zen. Sitting is not Zen, kinhin is not Zen, oryoki is not Zen. The entire continuum of the training is Zen.

So what we are going to do this afternoon is introduce you to some basic elements of Zen practice. You are not going to learn Zen this afternoon. You are not going to learn Zen in a week or a year or fifteen years. But what we will do is introduce you to some basic elements of Zen, which I hope you will find useful. I am sure that you will find them useful because they are based on your experience, working with your own experience. And then, if you

find that you like working with your own experience, then you might want to take up Zen training as such, but that is not the purpose of this workshop.

The purpose here, is just to introduce you to these elements of practice so that you can use them on your own, so that you can adapt them to whatever your purposes are. But we do want to make sure that you know what the real fundamental purpose of Zen is. The real fundamental purpose of Zen is to be Awareness in itself, to realize who and what you are, to stand free of all states by being the context in which the states arise.

Zen is not about cultivating any particular state of mind. It is not about any particular kind of experience. It is being the nature of experiencing itself. So that whether one is waking, sleeping or dreaming, one is the context in which these states are coming and going.

With that out of the way, now we can get to something that you might find a little more useful and interesting. We will talk about what we are going to do this afternoon more specifically. What we are going to do is to try to bring together body, breath, speech and mind, so that the mind and the body are in the same place and at the same time.

Now, of course, they are always in the same place and at the same time. They are always right here. But unfortunately, we do not always experience it that way. Often, we are so caught in wanting something else to be happening that we do not allow ourselves to experience fully our own experience, as if there is something wrong with our experience, as if there is something wrong with us, as if we need something outside of us to make us happy. And so we are continually running around trying to find something that will make us feel richer, stronger, more open, more loving, more loved, because we are so distanced from our own experience that we do not experience its richness and so we continually act out a sense of poverty.

So the purpose of mindfulness practice, to begin with, is to show you the richness and wealth of your own experience so that you can allow yourself to have fun. You can allow yourself to enjoy tasting an orange, peeling the orange, smelling the skin and the flesh of the fruit, seeing how the juice sprays, seeing the light shining on the juice as it dribbles down your hand, actually tasting it. And driving your car, feeling the steering wheel, feeling where your feet are, being right where you are instead of trying to be where you are going, being right where you are, having enough time for yourself to experience your experience as it really is. To see the sunlight, to feel the rain, to take a step, to breathe a breath and know that you have enough time to breathe this breath, you have enough time to take this step. You have enough time for your own life. That is what we want to begin to work with, mindfulness.

And so the first thing that we are going to do is something called kinhin, which is walking practice. In walking practice, we walk. We are not going anywhere, we are just going to walk around and around in this room for a little while. And in fact, although we call it walking practice, it is not really walking practice because what we are actually going to do, is we are going to pay attention to each step. And so we are not really worried about walking any place and we are not even worried about walking. We are not worried at all. We are just feeling this step, heel, sole and toe and feeling how the posture is, noticing what the breath is like, noticing when we get lost in a thought, bringing ourselves back and just feeling the step. After we do kinhin, then we will do some sitting practice, some zazen, and we will work a little bit with postures, find a posture that will be suitable for you. And then you will continue doing this for a while. And then there will be a little bit of a free period, a little bit of a break, but I hope that during the break, what you will do, is you will actually pay attention to what you were

experiencing right then. That is to say, tasting the coffee, feeling the sunlight, noticing whether your knees ache, noticing if your knees ache, whether you can still feel your feet, whether you can feel your shoulders, whether you can feel the whole body. Noticing whether, if something is unpleasant, you focus on it and exclude everything else, right?

So I hope that you use the free period as sort of a free form of practice and then when we come back, we will do some bowing and chanting practices to show you what those things are like. You see, because we can sit, we use that in our practice, we sit. Because we can walk, we use that in our practice. Because we can make sounds, we use that in our practice and so on. So we want to give you a glimpse of basic elements of the continuum of Zen practice and then after the chanting and so on, there will be some more sitting and some more walking.

So right now, we are going to stand up and we are going to do some kinhin. Now, the thing is that our practice has already started. It does not start when we start walking, it starts when we come in here. So when we stand up, this is part of our practice. So we begin by taking care of our zafu. This round cushion is called a zafu and it is made specifically for sitting practice and so we want to take good care of this because if we take care of the cushion, it will take care of us. It will be more comfortable for us to sit on. Instead of continually cluttering our lives with our thoughts and feelings and cluttering other people's lives, we want to begin to have some quality of actually taking care of things. So we begin with taking care of the cushion. . The other thing is that we never know what is going to happen. As we breathe in and breathe out, each breath might be our last breath. So we might die during kinhin and then we might leave some flat cushion for somebody else to sit on and that would not be very nice. We want to take care of the cushion. If we take care of it, it will take care of us and that helps us to take care of others. Then as we stand, we want to feel what that is like.

So as you can see, I guess we could say that kinhin is the practice of walking with the whole bodymind. And in that practice, one of the first things that we notice is that we are not often experiencing the whole bodymind, but just little bits and pieces of it. And we can notice this because we are slowing it down and paying attention to it. Just how those fragments of experience can begin to gouge into and rip and tear other things, so that when we get lost in thought, we almost feel like we are going to fall over. We do not even know how to walk. It is amazing.

Although you might find that you become lost in thought or sleepy or fall into some kind of feeling tone or state, some memory, some planning, or you might begin to find that all kinds of feelings might begin to well up, buried feelings or feelings that we tend to get into almost out of rote, this is not an obstacle to your practice. Your practice is to pay attention to how your experience is right now and feeling the step in kinhin is the medium that you are using in order to do that. So, the practice is not really feeling the step; the practice is paying attention and using the step as a touchstone so that you know what the quality of your attention is. If you cannot feel the step, it is because you are lost in something. So in the same kind of way, in our sitting practice, the practice is to experience our experience and to bring the thoughts and feelings into the context of the body, the room, this moment right now.

So if you get lost in thought -- and you will get lost in thought, you will get lost in thought a lot -- that is fine. The question is: what is it like when you get lost in thought? What is it actually like? When you bring yourself back, how do you do that? What we want to actually do is to work with the movement of attention. We are not trying to manipulate it, we are simply allowing contraction, allowing moments of fixation to open so that we can begin to attend more and more completely to the whole of our experiencing.

So in our zazen, we sit not just with the mind, but with the bodymind as a whole. So we begin with the body. We begin with the body by finding a posture that will help us to attend. So one of the most important things, then, is a posture of balance. If we are leaning forward or leaning back or anything of this nature, then we can often put stress on some areas of the body and then the whole body begins to become out of balance. So the most important thing, then, is a balanced posture. It is not important to look like you know what you are doing. It is important to do what you are doing fully and completely. So there are many different postures that we could use in our zazen practice. I know that there is one person who has some problems with her back, so in this case she will be sitting leaning against the wall because to do otherwise might involve a lot of unnecessary stress and damage. But if we do not have severe back problems, then we would like to sit without any support for the back so that we can allow the weight of the upper part of the body to be grounded in the lower part of the body so that the upper part of the body is actually supported by the lower part, so that it is in balance, rather than leaning forward from it and being dragged down.

We have several instruments that can be used here. There are some chairs. There is a seiza bench, the low wooden bench there, and then there are the round things, the zafus. When you are sitting on a zafu, you want to sit on the first third of it, basically, so that when you sit, you do not have the zafu digging into the backs of your thigh, otherwise it will cut off the blood flow. If you are sitting in a chair, again, you want to sit so that your feet will be flat on the floor, your back is away from the back of the chair and you are sitting more or less on the edge of the chair, not perched, but balanced, using the chair for support rather than sort of folding yourself into the framework of the chair. With the zafu, you want to sit on the first third of it because we want to balance the posture as much as is possible. One of the most balanced things is a tripod. So in this case, we have knees and we have buttocks, so we want to balance those. There are several ways of doing this using the zafu or the seiza bench. The first way is called seiza, which is a kind of kneeling posture, so that the knees are spread and the buttocks rest on the heels. In this posture, however, you might find that blood flow will be cut off and the heels will begin to hurt and so on, so usually people will use a zafu and place it in between the legs like this (on its side). Or one can use that wooden bench back there, kneeling with the heels underneath the platform of the bench, and again, resting on the seiza bench in such a way that the platform of it is not cutting into the backs of the thighs. So if you cannot sit in a half lotus posture, a full lotus posture or something of this nature, you might find that the seiza posture is the best thing. If you sit in a cross-legged posture without your knees making contact with the ground, or with the mat, then your posture will not be thoroughly balanced. If you are sitting cross legged like this, in tailor fashion, it puts a lot of strain on the thighs and then that starts to create strain in the lower back and in the belly and then your shoulders start to curve forward and so on, and it becomes very complex. You can use cushions to support your knees like that, but again, it does not actually allow the hips to open and that is one of the things that we want. We want to allow the body to actually practise the posture. It is not just a matter of leaving the body in this posture while the mind does its "Zen thing" or its spiritual thing. That is an unfortunate attitude that many of us might have because, say, if we do something like this Zen or something, we simply do that as part of our own storyline - you know, this is some neat thing that I do - and we add it to all of our other experiences and we put it on and take it off like a costume. But to really practise, we cannot practise like that. We have to practise with the whole bodymind, using every element of our experience.

The body has a great deal of wisdom to show us. It can show us states of mind that we might not otherwise notice, and it can show us subtleties of those states that we might not otherwise notice. And we will mention a couple of those things just briefly.

When you are sitting and a thought comes up, it comes up in the bodymind. A mental state is also a physical state and a physical state is also a mental state. When you become angry, your shoulders raise up, your jaw juts out, the chest becomes tight, the sphincter muscles tighten, the arms tighten, the thoughts begin to rush, the vision narrows, the hearing flattens. All of these are different factors of the mental state, anger. But those are all physical, are they not? When we are thinking, often, we might think that our thoughts are closed to everyone, but

all kinds of things are happening in our posture. All kinds of things are happening to our facial muscles and so on. Mental states are also physical states.

Because we often only notice the names and the words and the stories that our states are telling us, we don't notice the state itself and we do not notice how the wholeness of our experience becomes broken up by hiding within the texture of that state. The body can show us that, in that if you get lost in a thought when you are sitting, a good posture will show you that you have lost balance, it will show you that you are slumping forward. If you start to become lax, that is to say, if the mind starts to become dull and you are not actually attending to the details of your experience and you are beginning to drift, then your posture will start to collapse. So we want to have a posture that will allow us to be very sensitive to everything that is going on for us right now and how it is going on for us right now and what it is.

So as we practise, we begin to find that all kinds of things change as our practice deepens. We begin to access all kinds of hidden memories and patterns and different ways of knowing things. The body begins to let go of a lot of things that might have been stored for a long time and the shape of the body begins to change. One of the things that happens is that the hip bones begin to open as the muscles of the thighs and the back and so on, begin to become more limber. It is a funny thing that just sitting with your legs bent like this will actually do that, but that is so because the body itself wants to be free. It does not want to be held prisoner by any of the states that we bring to it; it does not want to be held by anger or by fear or by sadness or by loneliness. The body wants to just be the body.

The posture of zazen gives the body a chance to be just body, instead of acting out our state of apathy or horror or fear, it just sits. That is an amazing thing. Usually, we use our body as a way to represent our states to ourselves and to others. For example, right now, I want you to be interested and so I am moving my hands and engaging in various ways so that you will actually pay attention to what I am saying.

So that is fine, that can be very useful. On the other hand, though, often the body is acting out states and we have no idea that is happening and so states become deepened and propagated and so on and so forth. The sitting posture gives the body a chance to just be body. So if you cannot sit with the knees on the mat, it is best to sit in a seiza posture so that in the long run, as you continue with the practice, the hips will begin to open, the thighs will begin to loosen.

The other thing, too, is that, of course, if one has to prop oneself up on various cushions and so on, that means that you need a lot of equipment to help you to sit and we would like to keep things as simple and clear as is possible. Because one of the very crucial things about this practice is that you should be able to do it any time, anywhere.

A seiza bench or a zafu for seiza is one option. The next posture we can call the agura or the Burmese posture, in which the knees are down on the mat and the legs are simply placed one in front of the other, like this. If you can do this posture, that is fine, because it gives you, again, that quality of balance. If you can, you could also try to bring one of your feet up onto the calf, which is a quarter lotus or onto the thigh, which is a half lotus. Or you could bring up the other foot, as well, which is a full lotus, which is the best posture. This is not because it is the most pretzel-like or anything of this nature, and not because, you know, it looks like this guy here, (the Roshi gestures to the Buddha rupa on the altar) but because it is a very balanced posture, in that this will help the thighs to open. It does ground the knees and allows the lower part of the body to just sit.

So if you can do this, that is fine. If not, do a half lotus, if not, do a quarter lotus; if not, just have your knees on the mat; and if not, use the seiza bench and if not, use a chair. All right? So the main thing is to have a quality of grounding the lower part of the body. Now, there is the upper part of the body. What do we do with that? Well, it just sits on top of the lower part of the body, which means that we want to have the ears over the shoulders and the nose over the navel so that the upper part of the body is straight. By straight, I do not mean rigid and tight, but in balance. This is important because in order for us to attend fully and completely, we need to have a good view of things, we need to have some sense of space. If we are leaning forward or if we are trying to rest and make ourselves comfortable, what we wind up doing is closing ourselves into smaller and smaller spaces.

You know how it is, when you are feeling very crowded, people are bothering you and you say "Go away! Leave me alone! I need some space!" and in your effort to create some space for yourself, you become very claustrophobic and very tight and it just does not work. So instead, what we need to do is to use the space that we have as fully as we can.

As well, you might have noticed that when you are watching a movie or something of this nature, when the interesting part comes, almost everybody straightens up in order to see what is going on. So there is some association between having a straight back and paying attention. So that is what we want to do. We want to sit so that the upper part of the body is straight and balanced.

As our posture deepens, we begin to find that there is a particular point which is called balance point, which is the optimal posture for the body. And that has nothing to do with where the legs are or anything of this nature. This can happen when you are sitting in a chair and it can happen when you are walking and so on. Balance point is when the upper part of the body is so light that it is almost transparent and the lower part of the body is fully and completely grounded without feeling heavy.

A little clue that could help you to find balance point is to sit with the ears over the shoulder, nose over the navel, draw the spine up and the shoulders up and then let the shoulders go and then lean forward in a bow, breathing out like this, bringing the body straight and then bring yourself back, straighten up and just when you feel perfectly straight, let go of the muscles and now lean back just an eighth of an inch. You will usually find that creates a feeling of lightness, almost as if you are sitting on the edge of a cliff. It is a dangerous kind of lightness in that it can be very sensitive, so that if a thought comes up or a feeling comes up and you identify with it or you try to avoid it because it is about something you don't want to think about it, then that registers in the body as a feeling of weight, that quality of transparency becomes closed down by the contraction of the mind.

So that is the optimal posture for zazen, balance point.

Now, we have these hands and these arms, so how do we use those to help us to do the practice? Well, we place the hands in the lap so that we are not touching ourselves, not going around scratching and fiddling and so on, because one thing that we will find, sometimes, is that we are continually trying to reinforce our sense of who and what we are. In fact, most of the time that is what we are doing. We are trying to find out who we are, reinforce our sense of who and what we are by bringing in some kind of memory or something to hold onto. So we might find ourselves wanting to do a lot of this: Touching our head, touching our face, scratching and so on. If you itch when you sit, that is fine. Just feel the itch, don't scratch, please. Just let it come and let it go because

one of the things that can happen, sometimes, is we can get really itchy because we want to find something to identify with.

The other thing about that itching that can sometimes happen is that we are starting to feel with the body and it starts to become alive and it starts to become fiery. We hold tension, sometimes, in the muscles, but we also hold tension at an epidermal level, we actually do. And so when we sit, sometimes a lot of itching can come up. We call this "tana", or burning and it is fine. It will come up and it will go if you don't scratch, but you know what happens. When you scratch one place, another place becomes itchy and then another place becomes itchy and then another place, and it just goes on and on and on and on and on. Just like if you get angry with someone, they will get angry and they will get angry back at you and it just goes on and on and on.

So what we want to do is just stop all the propagation and just cultivate what is actually happening. So you put your hands in your lap so they don't go flying around and place the right hand down first. If you are sitting in a full lotus posture, then the back of the hand goes on the heel of the left foot. If you are sitting in a half-lotus posture, then the ball of the wrist rests inside the hollow of the right thigh. If you are sitting in the agura posture, then you want to rest the back of the wrist in the hollow of the thigh and the same is true of the left hand.

Place the hand so that the knuckles of the left hand, the first knuckles of the left hand fit into the fold of the knuckles of the right hand, like this, so that the hands are touching lightly. And then bring the thumbs together over the hands, not up like a mountain and not down like a valley, but just even, so that they are just touching.

Now notice whether you are pushing them together to prove to yourself that you are feeling them. If so, let go and just let the thumbs touch lightly, so lightly that it is almost as if you could slide a piece of paper in between them. I don't know why you would want to do that, but that is how you would want the pressure of the thumbs to be very light like that, so that again, the mudra becomes very sensitive. This is called the hokkai-in mudra, or the gesture of the display of things as they are. Which means that if you get lost in thought and you start to become angry or something of this nature, you might notice that the hands will press. Or if you start to get judgmental about your practice, that you are not doing right and so on, then again the thumbs will press. If you become very lax, very dozy and spaced out, then the thumbs will drop. And so that will help you to notice how the mind is. And it is good to have the blades of the hands right against the belly. That is why I say that the wrists should be in against the hollows of the thighs, there. Because, again, if the hands start to slide forward, what does that tell you about your practice? Learn from that, bring the hands back. If the shoulders are tense, just let the elbows hang. So ears over the shoulders, nose over the navel, the hands in this mudra. Now we have the posture of body. Next is the posture of the breath.

One of the things that you might have noticed is that you cannot notice very much. You tend to think more than anything else. When you are not thinking, you are feeling. Now, feelings and thoughts are related to each other and you could say that feelings are more of an environmental quality and then the thoughts are the statements of those feelings, and that the feelings and the thoughts both happen, as we were saying, in the context of the bodymind as a whole.

So although they are part of our experience, they are merely part of our experience and yet they tend to occupy almost the whole of our attention. So what we want to do is simply see how that happens, notice how that happens and feel what it is like.

Now, one of the things that you will have noticed is that when you are not noticing things, there is a claustrophobic quality. There is a smallness to one's experience. When you get lost in a thought, sometimes the room is gone and you are someplace else. And then you wake up and you come back and the room is so big, you wonder where it could have gone while you were lost in that thought. Of course, it was right here; everybody else was right here. All the colours were here, all the sounds were here. So habitually, our attention is disposed in patterns of contraction in which we become abstracted and isolated from our life as a whole, and yet our life as a whole is always available to us. That means that no matter how contracted we might become, no matter how angry we might become, no matter how fearful we might become, still, primordially present, always present is the possibility of openness and clarity because in this moment, there is just this moment.

One of the things we will have noticed is that we make things very, very complex. The practice that we have been doing is very, very simple. Just sitting, following the breath. It sounds easy and yet, it becomes so complex for us.

So we want to see how our experience becomes complexified. We want to see how it becomes knotted up and tied up, begin to understand how that knot is tied and untie it.

The simplest and most straightforward thing for us to do if we want to untie the knots that have contracted body, breath, speech and mind is to bring that complexity together with that simplicity. That is to say, when we notice that we are contracted about something, that we are puzzled about something, that we are wondering about something, that there is some sense of problem, what is going on right now? Are you aware of seeing, are you aware of hearing? What is the breath like? What is this moment, as a whole, actually like?

In this moment, the colours are as they are, the sounds are as they are. When you stand up, you stand up. When you sit down, you sit down. And so there is a simplicity and a clarity that is present in this moment which is not based on simplifying things, in terms of trying to get rid of complexity. Instead, the complexity happens when we are not aware of the richness of our experience of this moment. The simplicity of this moment consists of richness which has many different facets and many different capabilities. In this moment, we are able to see, we are able to hear, we are able to move, we are able to think, we are able to feel and if we can allow the energy of our attention to express itself as the whole of our experience, rather than fragments, that means that we will have all of our energy available to us right now. We will be able to do whatever needs to be done without hesitation, without fear, without rehearsing, but just simply doing it.

So no matter how complex our experience might be, at the same time there is a simplicity which is available to us. There is a clarity which is available to us. This is not something outside of us; this is not something that we need to gain. This is not something that we need to fabricate or acquire or manufacture in any kind of way. It is simply something that we need to wake up to. And so this is called "Zen", which is a form of Buddhist practice.

Buddhist practice was started by the Buddha, which means "One who has Woken up". Waking up is sometimes translated as "Enlightenment", but what waking up means is uncovering and realizing the basic clarity and sanity of our experience, itself, stepping past the dreams and the contractions and the fabrications and the double-talk that are mere interpretations of and fragments of our experience, waking up to the wholeness of body, breath, speech and mind, and of that which is experiencing body, breath, speech and mind, that which experiences the waking state, the sleeping state, the dreaming state.

Bowing the Body of the Way

by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin

River Road Zendo

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This body is nothing other than the Way itself. Composed of subatomic particles, cells, hair, blood and bone, it comes and goes. Bright and miraculous, it does what it does: elbow bends, hand gestures, eye sees, stomach digests, anus excretes. When the body is purely the body, and the mind is purely the mind, there are no obstacles for each and they are not obstacles to each other. The single bodymind reveals itself. Dogen zenji wrote: "With the single bodymind see sights, with the single bodymind hear sounds". When this seeing is just seeing, this hearing just hearing, where is this bodymind? Dropping off the bodymind, where do you stand? Step from off this one hundred foot pole into free air, and instantly all beings wake up and get to work.

This body is the posture, or asana, or mudra of the Way. Slumped and folded into itself, the Way becomes narrow and crooked, and it is hard for beings to pass through to liberation. Back straight, mind clear, weight evenly distributed, the Way is broad and supple and all beings are carried naturally.

It is easy to see how posture affects attitude and attitude affects posture. An attitude of clear and spacious awareness is a little like Buddha Mind and is easily manifested by a clear and erect posture. A clear and erect posture is a little like the natural ease with which the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas work with situations, to cultivate the insight of beings.

Realize this attitude and posture at all times: in sitting, sit straight; in walking, make a complete step; in lying, lie down; in bowing, just bow.

Why do we bow? We do not bow to curry favour with invisible Buddhas or the Lineage of Ancestors who have transmitted this Way through their own lives. Although the more that we practice, the more our gratitude for being able to practice is awakened towards the Teacher and the Lineage of Teachers, this is not why we bow. We don't bow to make ourselves humble or devotional, or blissful, or holy, or cute. We don't bow because of culture, although culture may influence the style with which we bow.

We bow because this body is nothing other than the Way itself, and bowing can show us parts of this Way.

In some Lineages of Buddhism, such as the Tibetan Buddhist schools, bowing is done in conjunction with filling the imagination with complex visualized pictures, filling the mouth and mind with mantra, filling the emotions with feelings of reverence and repentance. Filling ourselves with various techniques can perhaps numb the self-obsessive qualities of the usual mind, but it can also numb the mind itself; although intended to cultivate wholesome qualities, these techniques may just foster hothouse growths onto barren soil. In this Way, we can have no images about ourselves, we just bow as we are, and in this bowing, uncover what is naturally there. Perhaps there might be resentment, boredom, doubt, fatigue, self-consciousness. Who? Who is it that resents? Even if we can't completely penetrate this question, we still contact the Way and sense our dignity, clarity and a

simple open-heartedness. Whether we penetrate, or merely sense, is up to us. In any case we don't want to trade in the honesty and simplicity of these qualities for the pomp and grandeur of worship, because if we did, we would only end up feeling purified and holy, instead of being aware and gentle. It is because we don't cultivate holiness that we are free to recognize the immense sacredness of things as they are, of the whole moment unbound by imagery and concept.

We also do not use such techniques mixed in with our bowing, because if we did so, we would sooner or later have to face the fact that we were cranking up the appropriate emotions in response to objects of worship that we have cranked up. Seeing the limits of this and smelling something fishy we would become discouraged and give up on bowing, and that would be a shame because we wouldn't learn then what bowing has to teach us.

When Yasuda roshi first introduced me to bowing practice I was a young teenager who had no doubt that this was merely a cultural relic and had nothing to do with Buddhism, and less than that with Zen. I had all kinds of ideas about what Zen meant, and I wasn't particularly pleased to be taken outside of the limitations that I imposed. As a result, I spent most of the movements ignoring them as much as possible. I bowed with doubt, with resentment, with embarrassment, with boredom, with boredom, with boredom.

I spoke to him about this and he grinned and said: "Well, feel just as much resentment as you feel; just don't let it interfere with your bowing. Bow through a resentful mind, bow through a bored mind. Your feelings will come and go. Bowing practice is always the same. Mind is bored, mind is restless. Where did boredom come from, where does it go? Who is aware of boredom? Who bows?"

As bowing as a practice is found in all Lineages of the Buddha Dharma in many cultures, various styles and approaches have evolved. In the Tibetan Buddhist lineages, one-hundred-thousand prostrations form part of the ngondro (preliminaries) which ripen one for more complex levels of practice, through purifying karma and cultivating further openness to the transmission of the Teachings. It is also used there as a way for pilgrims to intensify the devotion and energy of their journeys to sacred sites, and so on. In Theravadin countries, it is used as a customary greeting to bhikkhus and Teacher, forms a part of the daily puja of laypersons, and is often used as a mindfulness and insight practice. In Thien, Son, Chan, and Zen, it is used in much the same way.

There are many different kinds of bows to be made: bows made from the hips with the hands held in gassho to the altar in the Zendo, to the Teacher, to other students, to the place where we have practised. With all of these, there are slight differences in how the hands are held, and in the depth of the bow.

And then there is the Great Bow, the bow which carries one to the ground and up again. These bows are made to the altar at the beginning, or end, or both, of Zazen, during extended chanting practices. Traditionally they are also offered to the Teacher in dokusan (although for our purposes we use only the standing and kneeling bows). These Great Bows also present us with a practice in their own right just as do zazen, walking, chanting and working.

We bow in the direction of the altar, or wherever we have made room for a practice place. The altar acts like the hub of a wheel, the central point from which turn our activities which benefit beings. Although it is just a table or shelf with a rupa or calligraphy on it, and is no more (just as) sacred then as anything else, it acts as a place where we focus our commitment to practice-realization. When we bow, we bow to the Buddhas and Ancestors or our

Lineage, although this is not why we bow. In bowing, we uncover the Ordinary Mind of the Buddhas and Awakened Ancestors and, with a shock of recognition and profound gratitude as we become what we are, we bow as the Buddhas and Awakened Ancestors.

Standing upright, allow your lower back to arch slightly to support the chest with shoulders held naturally straight. Your feet are set about a fist apart, and your weight is evenly distributed. Inhaling gently, bring your hands smoothly together in gassho, with your elbows out from the body. As your hands approach each other and the fingertips touch, feel how attentiveness becomes roused; to connect with this, rest your gaze lightly on the tips of your middle fingers, keeping the peripheral vision open.

When we bow, we are offering something; we are offering the dignity of our posture, the simplicity and clarity of awareness and, as always, whatever discursive imagery is shushing around in our thoughts. Recognizing Awareness, we realize that because this is what it is, it cannot be grasped, cannot be held on to, and therefore we offer it.

Never begin a bow by slumping into it. You should begin and complete a bow, or anything else you do, thoroughly. Don't act like you are doing existence a favour by being alive. No matter how you may have seen anyone else bow at any monastery or centre, don't let your bow be cowardly mindless action. No matter how well you may bow, how mindful or whatever, don't be proud of it and compare it to anyone else's. This is a bow, after all. Such comparisons sever the energy of the seventh Precept, and reveal a tangle-limbed hairy demon still chewing his mother's fresh heart, all decked out as a Zen student.

When your gassho is complete, begin to bow from the waist, as you would for a standing bow, but allow yourself to be carried to the ground. Exhaling gently, bend your knees and allow your right knee to contact the ground a fraction of a moment before your left knee. To someone watching, there should be little or no discernible difference between right and left knees touching the ground, but it is nevertheless a point to maintain, as part of the attentiveness we pay to this practice.

Your gassho now parts and, still exhaling, you touch the ground with your right elbow, and left elbow, right palm, left palm, and forehead, in that sequence. Smoothly, turn your hands palm up and, without curling the fingers or bending the wrists, lift them slowly to beside your ears and then back to the ground. This motion symbolizes lifting the feet of the seated Buddha over your head, which was a traditional Indian mark of respect. If you find this meaning uncomfortable, simply think of it as lifting up and offering the bow itself, to Awareness itself, as Awareness itself, for the benefit of all beings. In other words, just lift your hands and put them down again. During this part of the bow, you are neither exhaling nor inhaling, but you are also not holding your breath. Simply be without breath and rest in this, as you lift and lower your hands.

Now inhale gently and rise with your hands in gassho. It might take some practice before your balance in this is even. Stand tall and repeat the bow.

These Great Bows are done in rounds of three, before and after main zazen sessions. If you have been asked to do them as main practice, in addition to root the practice of zazen, then they are to be done in rounds of twenty-five, fifty, one-hundred, and so on. When doing extended bowing, you might find that breathing becomes very forced and out of sync with your movements, and that the space between inhalation and exhalation has become

gasping. If this happens, merely pause between three or seven bowing sequences and, with hands still in gassho, take a breath to adjust yourself.

Any specific problems or adjustments to the practice will be taken up in dokusan. Many of the details discussed in this text are from the secret oral Teachings (kuden) of Dogen's Zen Lineage, as transmitted to me by Yasuda Joshu Dainen roshi, and verified by my own experience. Further Teachings are transmitted to the student as his or her bowing matures, and so will not be recorded here.

Bowing practice joins together two necessary types of practice; samatha and vipasyana. Samatha is a clean mind, free of coarse distraction and dullness, and this is fostered by attending carefully, moment to moment, to movement, breath and attitude. Vipasyana is the cutting edge of insight, which penetrates each moment and movement completely, seeing clearly that there is no trace, no place to stay, no staying. Breath comes and goes, movements come and go, thoughts come and go, realizations and experiences come and go. Only the process of bowing is the same and, even there, sooner or later our bowing ends, and we move on to liberating beings in the next moment and in the next way.

Confusion is the Mother of Wisdom

from a Dharma Assembly

by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

Zazen-ji, May 1991

So first of all, I would like to wish you all a Happy Prajnaparamita, Mother of Wisdom Day. What we are gathered here this morning to look into is this whole issue of confusion.

Moment after moment, thoughts and feeling arise, and they come and go. There are some thoughts that we feel pleased to welcome when they arrive. There are other thoughts that we simply do not want to have. And there is the fact that these thoughts are continually arising moment after moment after moment and filtering our view of our experience so that we continually fall into points of view that are very partial, very biased.

Some of the ways in which this bias arises we can describe as the three klesas: passion, aggression, and stupidity. So that there are things that we like and we tend to draw them towards us, thinking that somehow they will enrich us, somehow we can have something from them. Somehow, we have some kind of fundamental poverty, some fundamental lack that this thing, this object, this person, this event will fill. Finding that this isn't so, we continually grab. There are things that we feel threaten us, things that bother us, things that irritate us, that push at us, that impinge on us and so we have aggression. We set up a boundary, a territory, and then struggle to defend it continually. But the enemy is not only without, but within. And so the struggle goes on.

And then there is the klesa of stupidity. Finding that we can only maintain passion for so long, we can only maintain aggression for so long, for the most part we lapse into a kind of apathy in which we don't really see, we don't really hear. Most of the people that you meet you never look at in the eyes. Most of the people you listen

to, you're spending most of that time waiting for them to shut up so that you can say something or just waiting for them to shut up and go away. So this is part of how our confusion manifests.

It also manifests much more deeply, much more subtly as "self and other", "this and that". It manifests even more subtly as what we believe to be a body, what we believe to be a mind, what we believe to be time and space. We have all kinds of beliefs, all kinds of conceptions, all kinds of points of view that we fall into that do not match our experience. And so we call this confusion, or we might call it dukkha; we might call it suffering.

Since there is so much attachment to our confusion, when we begin to practice and we begin to realize that there is a possibility of clarity, a possibility of wisdom, we want to release our attachment to confusion and we want to grab on to clarity. We want to hold on to clarity. But the whole source and root of confusion is attachment and to become attached to clarity, to become attached to wisdom, is simply confusion. It is in directly recognizing confusion as it arises that wisdom also arises. If we believe that wisdom or clarity is a state without confusion, at the moment that we are confused then wisdom is completely separate from us. At that moment being confused, wishing to be clear, wishing to have wisdom, we try to impose some state upon ourselves that is not present. And so we enter into conflict, we enter into struggle, because we are being far too simple-minded. We are being quite idiotic about the whole matter of practice. Or some moment of clarity arises and we congratulate ourselves. We start to compare it to our confusion and say "Oh this is so much better". But this state is not wisdom. This moment of clarity is perhaps a glimpse of what our experience is like when we are not hiding from it, when we are not falling into points of view. But as soon as there is the slightest measure of attachment, of identification with this state, then we have become confused, because this state will go, confusion will arise once more.

Now when you sit, you get lost in a thought and then you wake up and you come back and you might feel frustrated that you have continually become lost in thought or become localized or contracted around a sound or a pain in the knee, some sensation which is present. Or you are following the breath and there is this sense of being somebody who is following the breath which you sense as a kind of hesitation, which you sense as something that just is not necessary, some kind of holding and seeing this you become more and more frustrated because you want to let go of it, you want to do something that you might have heard of, like becoming one with the breath, and so the frustration builds. Perhaps at such a moment, what we can do is drop the image that we have at that moment of what we should be like and attend to how we are.

Instead of trying to "become one" with the breath, which is simply a conditional state of concentration in any case rather than a direct insight into the nature of our experience, and instead of berating ourselves for having been lost in a thought, perhaps we could recognize that at the moment that we notice that we are not mindful, mindfulness is present. Perhaps then we begin to allow ourselves some room, some space in which whatever is arising for us can arise. If there is enough space, then whatever arises will go. Quite simply, quite clearly it will self-liberate rather than our having to do something to liberate ourselves from it. The thought, the feeling, the conception will self-liberate.

Attention arises as what we are experiencing moment after moment, waking, sleeping, dreaming, the characteristic of all of our experiences is that they are annica, they are impermanent or even sunya - they are empty. This emptiness is like a blue sky. Whatever arises within the sky is part of the sky.

There have been some strong winds gusting down the streets, over the buildings, messing up your hair, making you drop your bag of groceries, then there was blue sky and now there are clouds, a gray sky; but all of these are

sky. The clouds that are arising within the sky are the sky. They are hot and cold fronts mixing and moisture, the very moisture that makes the sky blue, gathers together and forms clouds. Clouds are not separate from the sky. Clouds are what the sky is doing. Whatever arises within awareness cannot actually obstruct awareness. It is simply how awareness is presenting itself in that moment.

Our awareness is always a Great Space or Daiku. Whatever arises in your life arises as your life. The people that you meet, the things that you do, arise within your experience. They are not outside of you. You might believe that your skin forms a kind of boundary between you and the world, but the skin is in fact simply another way of knowing the world. Do you feel the clothes on your back and on your legs? Do you feel the temperature of the room? This is what the skin does. It knows. It is aware and alive.

The more closely that we look into our experience, the more that "inside" and "outside" make no sense whatsoever. If inside and outside really define nothing, then we have no territory to defend. There is nothing that we need to conquer. There is nothing that we need to avoid. There is nothing that we need to be attached to. Whatever is arising within our life is arising as our life and this, of course, includes confusion. This, of course, includes our tendency to distance ourselves. It includes the boundaries that we set up. All of these boundaries, these thoughts, these experiences, these colours, these forms are the Activity of this Space.

Sometimes we can become so overcome by the Activity that we have no recognition of Space. Sometimes we can try to hold on to Space and treat it as if it were separate from the Activity, in which case we are attached to emptiness. We have some conception, some idea that has festered in our mind concerning our practice. Or perhaps we simply space out, perhaps we simply want to avoid experiences. But whatever is presenting itself the Activity of this Great Space, and both this Activity and Space arise within our knowing of them, so Knowing, Activity and Space are inseparable and they are how our lives present themselves.

Confusion is when we hold on to space and avoid activity or hold onto activity and avoid space. But whatever arises presents itself within Awareness and points directly to the fact that one is aware. Whatever one is aware of is not what Awareness in itself is. This Awareness, this Knowing, this Space, this Activity, the essence, the Heart of our experience, presents itself as experiences and yet it itself is not an experience, not a state. It, itself, can never become bound or defined. It can never be lost. It can never be found. Because it presents itself everywhere and is always unconditionally free; because it is no time, no place. It has no body, it has no mind, because it arises as all bodies, as all minds, as all times, as all places and yet it never moves.

Just as reflections arise within a mirror, the mirror is always standing free of what it's reflecting and yet intimate with each reflection. Each reflection arises on its very face. "So Awareness always stands unconditionally free as the heart of all experiences, as the heart of all worlds."1 This Awareness itself can never truly become confused because confusion arises within it.

Mindfulness is beginning to attend to our experience as it is rather than as we believe it to be. It means taking our beliefs and asking ourselves if they are true or not. Finding out whether they are true or not by examining them in the bright light of our direct experience of this moment of seeing and hearing, of touching and tasting, smelling, thinking and feeling. It is seeing the arising, dwelling and decaying of all of our experiences, penetrating into the impermanence and emptiness and openness and transparency of this activity of experiencing. Mindfulness is zazen; it is kinhin; but it is also sleeping, dreaming. All of our experiences must be penetrated so that we can realize all of these experiences to be the activity of this great space and activity and space to be simply Knowing.

We can only do such a thing when we are completely open to our experiences. If we wish to avoid confusion, then certainly there is no room for such a deep inquiry, for such a thorough and penetrating questioning.

When confusion arises, at some point you know that you are confused. You become angry and at some point - usually very, very soon as the shoulders rise, as the belly clenches, as the sphincter tightens, as the chin moves forward, as the thoughts begin to push and the vision narrows - there is some recognition that there is anger present, that you are angry. And if you look at this moment of recognition, you realize that it itself is not angry, but we have everything all geared up. We are all ready to be angry now. We are convinced of the anger and so we follow it through.

But what would happen if we followed that simple moment of recognition, the moment that arises - without any judgment, without any blame, without any identification - but simply see clearly. This recognition is present in each state. When you start to argue with somebody, very soon you wish to stop it. Why don't you? You are afraid and all of a sudden you look at the fear and then you fall back into it. What if we simply stayed with that moment of recognition? You wake up from a thought and there is a recognition of your present situation. What if we were to stay with that? What if we were to renew that rather than falling into thinking about thinking? What if we were to allow our confusion to trigger wisdom, to allow our confusion to be an invitation to wisdom, if we were to allow confusion to transform itself into wisdom?

Perhaps we could have a discussion. Is there anything that anyone would like to ask or to say, any comments or questions? Have we all understood?

[Student]: No. How is it that we know things? We know lots of things. I know my phone number. I know it's sunny outside. I know how to move my fingers.

[Roshi]: Yes. Well, we know all kinds of things in many different ways. We have memory. We have thoughts. We have feelings. Everything that we experience is a kind of knowing. In practice we are not so much concerned with categorizing these different kinds of knowing as we are to recognize what the Knowing in Itself is. The Knowing is not knowledge - knowing your phone number, knowing your name. As I was mentioning in the beginning of my workshop yesterday, I have these here. This is... what is this?

[Student]: Beads.

[Roshi]: Right. So they are beads. The Japanese name for this is juzu. The Sanskrit is mala. We might think that it is a rosary or we might think that they are beads that are used in mindfulness practice. I might tell you that these are Tibetan beads. I might say that these are 150 years old. Some of that might be true. Some of it might not. You don't really know but that is information about this in any case.

Now the information of course is not what this is. This is this [clear sound as Roshi moves the beads across the lectern]. We are also seeing it. We can describe it. We can smell it and we can taste it. We can hear it. There are all kinds of things that we can know about this but what is it and what is it that knows it ? This is the concern within practice.

So. We do have such things as the Abhidhamma, which is a categorization of different states that arise, because in order for us to penetrate into what Knowing in Itself is, we have to know where we are going. You know, we have to know how to open the door, go down the hallway, so on and so forth. So, while we might have different names for different states and many subtle states that is not particularly what we are concerned with. We are concerned with recognizing first of all, all of our experience to be arising within Knowing, that the body itself is a way of knowing, that thinking is a way of knowing, seeing is a way of knowing. Our world is Knowing Itself, through this experiencing and so on, so that we start to realize that Knowing is not just one particular way of knowing about things.

Everything we experience is a way of knowing about things, even dreaming, even sleeping, and as we were mentioning, many other subtle states too. But in our practice of Zen, we really don't give a shit about any of those things. What we want to know is what is it that is experiencing it? What is it that is dreaming? We don't want to analyze dreams and interpret dreams and so on and so forth. There is room for that. That can be a worthwhile thing to do - scientific modes of knowing about things, questioning into things, finding out how things work. That is certainly worth doing but that is not what we do within practice. This is something else entirely.

What we want to know is what Knowing in Itself is, what knows what it is that we are experiencing moment after moment, after moment, after moment. We find that things like logic are not sufficient because it is always too partial. Like we can say, "Michael has red hair. Michael is a man. Anzan roshi is a man. Therefore Anzan roshi has red hair", and you know that is not true. The other thing is that we could say "Michael has red hair. Michael is a man". Define your terms. What is a man? Who is Michael? Really?

You know, logic tends to break down if we start to look at the whole context of what it is being referring to. Now logic is a very useful thing. It is a tool. But it is a very small way of knowing about anything. Poetry is a way of knowing about things and it is a very small way of knowing about things too.

In order to know what our experience is, we have to experience it. So first of all, we have to see how we become confused about our experience and clarify it, because that clarification of confusion is the deepening of wisdom and we use wisdom to penetrate into what it is that Knows.

So: we talk about mindfulness.

First of all, mindfulness is bringing ourselves back to this moment, finding out what our experience really is. So there is this sense of effort, bringing ourselves back. When that is more spontaneous - that is to say you don't have to bring yourself back, you are simply here - and when a thought arises you spontaneously recognize it as a thought, and we can call that just simply attention. It is not mere attention - that is to say the attention that gets lost in a thought or that identifies with this or that - it's just bare attention. When this is continuous, actually more radical ways of knowing things start to come into play more and more.

For example, when you get lost in a thought, you wake up and you come back to the breath... And then there is a sound. Attention moves to the sound, so you are attending to one thing and then to another thing and then to another thing. There is a succession of things that you are attending to and it is shifting. What is in these shifts? What are you aware of in between those things? When that begins to become clear to you, then this is attentiveness. When you can use that kind of mind to penetrate more thoroughly into your experience and that is

more continuous, then we can call this "prajna", or "radical insight" or "wisdom". None of these things are states, trying to produce a particular state or trying to gather information about anything. It is simply attending more and more fully to our experience so that through this attention, though this attending, we can actually inquire into what attention in itself is, what Awareness in Itself is.

So is there anything else that anyone would like to talk about this morning? (By the way this juzu isn't 150 years old either. I just thought I would mention that.)

[Student]: Perhaps, Roshi, you can define for us what wisdom is. I think a lot of people have a lot of different ideas what wisdom is.

[Roshi]: Yes.

Well, usually we do think that wisdom means knowing something about something. This is knowledge, this is not wisdom.

We say the whole point of practice is Waking Up, it is wisdom. So if we believe that wisdom is a kind of knowledge, then we think that through penetrating some deep structure of mind, getting to some underlying strata of mind, you get fundamental information about the universe, you get the "Master Plan", you know, you get the little moral at the end of the story before you get to the end of the story so you have it all figured out, you know.

But information is only a description. Wisdom is not gathering information as we are mentioning. It is mindfulness developing into attention and then attentiveness and then radical insight. This term "radical insight" is a way of translating the term prajna. "Pra" means higher; "Jna" means "knowing". So it is a higher knowing, a knowing which has a very open vantage which can see everything clearly. It can see all of the details but fixates on none of them because it sees the details arising in their context. This is what we mean by wisdom. It is knowing what the body is, what the mind is, what experience is, where dreams come from, where they go, how it is that we see a wall, and what the wall is.

[Student]: At certain moments in my life I have had an intense intuitive feeling about something and at that point I have rejected it, subconsciously, I guess, denied it. Do you have any advice on how to detect when that happens and not allow it to happen?

[Roshi]: Well, again I think that is a matter of paying attention to what is going on.

First of all, we have attachments to certain ways of knowing about things because they usually work out for us - you know - that if we can name things and so on and so forth, keep them orderly and managed in a certain way, then that usually means that because we have managed things in a certain way, things are manageable for us. We can get up, we can go to work, and so on and so forth. But most of what we are knowing is in fact happening in what we could call an intuitive manner.

You walk into a restaurant and you pretty well know whether or not you are going to like it or not just at the moment of walking in. You know you don't really have to think about it or even look at the menu really. You sort of walk in, you get some sort of taste, some sort of flavour of what is going on. So the thing is that our first impression is often correct unless it is partial.

Now what can happen is, you see somebody and your first impression is based on some conditioning, some past pattern. They move in a particular way. They have a certain kind of voice, certain kind of smell and it reminds you of something in your past that you really liked. You had a lot of comfort from this particular kind of person or you loathed this kind of person because of something that they did to you. So that kind of first impression is always a narrowing. We always notice that our attention contracts when something of that nature happens. When we fall into that kind of first impression, everything narrows, becomes locked and frozen for a moment and then we start to think and figure it all out and we go "Well I don't like this person". The words actually come up.

In terms of that, what we are looking at is what we call the five skandhas - form, feeling, perception, formation, consciousness2 - which can be a way of talking about bodymind. Or it can be a way of talking about how our experience presents itself in that there is usually a first contact with something, it's "THAT" (subject/object/form). There is something there. Feeling, you start to try to figure it out and this is where we can have a moment of intuition and then perception: something starts to become clearer to us, the details start to become clear. Formation: this is where the patterning and conditioning is going to come in and then consciousness, where we think about it.

Now to use a kind of example of how this functions - and this is an example I often use because almost everyone has had something of this nature happen to them - you go upstairs, you walk into a room, you look and "Aghh", there is somebody there! You freeze and then you realize that it is a mirror. So what happens is you go into the room and there is freezing. Space itself freezes because there was something you didn't expect to be there and it is literally as if space crystallizes and freezes.

The space around the body becomes very hard and the body tenses and there is a moment of just almost blankness, which is sort of like taking a photograph of something. Click. Trying to hold on to it so that then you can figure what is in the photograph. There is this form. And then feeling. What is it? There is something there. You don't quite know what it is yet. there's just "Aghh"! There is something there.

And then perception - you start to go, "Oh it's about this tall, it's this, that, it has certain colours".

Then the fourth skandha begins to come in and you go "Oh, those details add up to something that looks like a human being" and then you start to check it out. "Is this person going to threaten me? Is it a friend? Is it a stranger? What is this person doing here?" And then you start to realize that it's your reflection and then consciousness: "Oh, it's a mirror. Oh." You know. So that moment of conditioning, which can often make us distrustful of intuition is recognizable because it happens as a contraction. Intuition, what we can call intuition, has a very open quality.

Now, one problem with an open quality is that we usually don't know what to do with it because we are used to having certain boundaries present. So when that open quality happens we try to fill it in some kind of way; we try

to put in some kind of boundaries to it. And so while we have some first impression, which is very open, very clear, we put it to the side and then try to start figuring things out.

If we are paying attention to what our experience is like - and this is the thing, there is no simple trick that we can do - but if we allow ourselves to attend to what happens when we have a first impression or we have an intuition and we attend to what happens, not just in terms of what the thoughts are like but what our experience is like, what our seeing is like, what our hearing is like, what our posture is like, then we begin to recognize when certain patterns are being played out.

We start to recognize that say, when anger happens, as I was mentioning, there are a certain set of factors that gather. When sadness happens, there are other factors that happen: the posture becomes a certain way, the breath becomes a certain way.

Something happens to our vision and our eye gaze tends to be placed in a certain way. On and on and on and we begin to be able to recognize it in a very immediate manner which will then give us time to allow that open recognition to be present without covering it over. First of all we have to have time to do so, which means we have to be there when it actually happens.

When we sit, moment after moment, we are experiencing what our experience is and what it's like. We have no opportunity really to play it out, to sort of get up and act out our various states. Instead we begin to see how these states act themselves out subtly, perhaps in the set of the shoulders, perhaps in the lower back starting to cave in, perhaps in the vision starting to narrow. Perhaps we are watching the breath but watching it from a kind of a distance, you know, On and on and on and we begin to see these various states so thoroughly, so intimately, in such exquisite detail, that we have a lot of time then to begin to see what it is like when anger comes up, when fear comes up, when hope comes up, when confusion manifests in any of its myriad forms, we can be there when it happens and attend to it closely, clearly.

Is that any help at all?

Okay, is there anything anyone else would like to bring up?

[Student]: Can you talk about the Precepts?

[Roshi]: I can, but it is a rather vast topic. In fact, we are in process of preparing transcripts of some Talks that have been done on the Precepts. I believe when it is all complete, because there is also the Kyojukaimon and so on, it will probably be about 300 pages.

So briefly, the Precepts are not any set of moral codes or ethics. Precepts are "kai", which means something like "aspects" or "facets". They are aspects or facets of the mind of practice and of wisdom. They are something that formal students might commit themselves to at certain points as a way of deepening their practice, of committing themselves to their practice. And of allowing themselves the opportunity to see just how wisdom happens and how confusion happens, by consciously intending the Precepts moment after moment and exposing yourself to

them so you can see that, say, slander is something that you are almost always doing; you know, you are slandering by not recognizing the truth of something, by saying only part of something, by being partial about something, on and on and on. So you begin to use that Precept as a way of understanding the various motivations and activities of self-image and attending to them because our experience itself is very vast and very open.

Any harmful state, any way in which we harm ourselves or others is based on a contraction. When we become angry, we narrow and we exclude most of our experience. When we are fearful we do the same kind of thing. All harmful states are contracted states. In order, as I mentioned, for there to be a contraction there has to be openness first. I can't make a fist without having had an open hand. So, while these harmful states, these ways in which we cause suffering for ourselves and others, tend to be almost second nature to us. They are not first nature. Our first nature is wisdom, is clarity, is compassion.

So the precepts are a statement of this. They say: "This is Buddha, this is Dharma, this is Sangha." They say: "Wrong action does not arise." It does not say: "Don't do bad things." It says "Wrong action does not arise. There is only the arising of benefit." In the recognition that there is Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, wrong action does not arise. There is no motivation for it. It simply doesn't come up.

[Student]: But it's there?

[Roshi]: What do you mean? What we mean is you are not producing wrong action

Student: [Inaudible]

[Roshi]: That's right. There is no killing first of all means that life does not kill. Life never kills. Everything dies but life never kills. Killing is when we distance ourselves from something. "Killing" is when we stand apart from something and use it as equipment, use it as something that we are simply trying to get something "from" or do something "to" without any recognition of the mutuality of what this thing, what this person, what this event is. So. Killing means "killing time", it means not being present. Killing means looking at a spider in your bathtub and going whump [pantomimes killing the spider] as if it didn't have right to be there - you know, as if it wasn't doing whatever it was doing in its own life. So when you see the spider, it means taking a piece of toilet paper or a piece of paper, sliding it underneath the spider and putting it outside the window. It also means that if there are roaches in your house and they are infecting the food so that you could get sick and you could spread the sickness to many other people and this sickness could go on and on. Therefore you call an exterminator and have the roaches killed. Because there is the recognition that death is part of life. Death is part of how life lives, but killing is when you create unnecessary death, when you create suffering.

Now, as we were saying, the motive to kill something is based on separation, based on "this" and "that", subject and object. If for you there is no subject or object, if for you there is no this and that, if for you in your experience there is really nothing that you can call a body, nothing you can call a mind, nothing that you can call a world because everything is what we can call Buddha or Awareness in Itself, then you have no motivation to kill. You can't separate yourself from anything and so you can't kill anything. You can't distance yourself in that kind of way.

So we say there is no killing for that kind of mind. So then that means we have to look at all the ways in which we do kill, all the ways in which we do produce wrong action. At that point we are saying there is no killing, perhaps in the sense that - I'd better not because it's bad, it causes suffering, it causes harm and I can recognize though that it's bad because it does not accord with the nature of reality. It is a refusal to recognize mutuality. It is a refusal to recognize the vast interdependence of everything which is and that everything which is arising within Awareness and that Awareness is presenting itself as each and every being, that that which is arising as you is arising as all beings. A refusal to recognize this is killing.

So we start to recognize that when we kill, kill time, kill whatever, there is a contraction present. There is an inability to experience our experience clearly and openly and so we open that. So this is a matter of working with killing or stealing or anything of this nature not from a purely moral stance or an ethical stance, but working with it directly within our experience. So having worked with it in that way quite thoroughly we see all the motivations for killing, say, or stealing or lying or sexual misconduct or slander or miserliness or anger, so on and so forth - the ways in which we defile our experience of the Three Jewels of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha or Space, Activity and Knowing.

Seeing those, and having seen them so thoroughly, we can't convince ourselves of them anymore. Those motivations simply do not arise for us anymore. So that is another facet of understanding this Precept 'there is no killing.'

Then, though, if we penetrate yet further into what Awareness in Itself is and live as Awareness in Itself, then for us there is no killing because there is nothing to be killed;there is no one to kill; there is simply nothing. So how we are going to work with it is going to depend on the depth of our practice. Whether we formally take the Precepts or not, the issues that the Precepts speak of are fundamental issues for everyone who is alive and so certainly for everyone who is practicing. Receiving the Precepts also means not only committing oneself to that, but basically committing oneself to being responsible for one's life and being responsible for manifesting the Dharma.

So in that sense, receiving the precepts is also a matter of entering into the Lineage of the Transmission of the Teachings. Those people who have taken the responsibility of making sure that the Dharma is available for beings who choose it. And so when a lay person takes the Precepts, this is something like entering the Teacher's household or family rather than being just a kind of cousin or friend or something of that nature. You are starting to enter more closely into the Teacher's Lineage. Taking say, lay monk's vows or monk's vows is perhaps stepping a little bit closer. This doesn't mean that your practice is necessarily better than anyone else's, but that you are realizing just how vast, how deep practice is, and that you want to make sure that you can practice it and that other beings who wish to practice it, can. You are starting to take more responsibility for the Dharma being present.

Being a monk doesn't mean that your practice is better that a lay person's. It is just different because intimately involved in your practice is the responsibility for Dharma to be present for lay people to come and practice it. When we talk about entering into the Teacher's family in that way we are not talking about favorite sons and daughters or this or that but just, you know, people who sort of have to do the housework, you know, this kind of thing. So the Precepts are a very multileveled issue which is why, as I say, when we do have that publication on it which is called "Cutting the Cat into One", it will tend to be quite long or it will be published in several sections.

Is there anything else anyone would like to talk about at this time?

May I see the time? All right so if there is nothing else: up against the wall.

1.

A reference to the "Jijiyu Zanmai Doka", in Chanting Breath and Sound, Great Matter Publications.

2.

Soon after this, Roshi consulted the root meanings of the Sanskrit terms and revised his translation of these terms to: form, basic reactivity, symbolization, habitual patterning, and consciousness.

Cultivation of the Ground of Mind

Teisho Presented by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

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So the rain soaks into the earth and the earth is vibrant with life. The soil is rich and black. Rain beads on the petals of flowers and the leaves shine with a deep green. The mind is vibrant with life: the feeling of rain in the hair and on the cheeks, running down the nape of the neck. Seeing the flowers, breathing the air, taking a step, giving rise to a thought...

Practice has been called "cultivating the ground of mind". The ground of mind is as it is, no matter what grows there: crops, flowers or weeds. The ground of mind is the ground of mind. In order to cultivate the ground of mind, we must first clear this ground that is growing thick with undergrowth and brush and so we say: to uproot blind passions.

Blind passions are simply those moments of compulsive grabbing, grabbing at itself and other, grabbing at time and space, grabbing at objects which appear to be outside of us, grabbing at thoughts and feelings, which appear to be inside and define us. To uproot these means simply to take firm hold and expose the root.

Whatever arises, arises within this ground of mind and the ground of mind is itself groundless, itself formless, shapeless, without colour, without any characteristic whatsoever, except for this quality of knowing. To uproot blind passions, means simply to recognize this formlessness. To "take firm hold" does not mean "to grasp" because when something, whatever it is, arises within the mind, it is itself ungraspable. Hearing a bird, where can you grasp this hearing? A thought arises. The moment that it is noticed, that it is seen, it is gone. Even if it is not noticed, if it is not seen, even if it simply slides into the next thought and the next thought and the next, there is still only the arising of this thought and then the next and then the next.

Whatever arises within the mind, arises as the display of impermanence, arises as the display of tracelessness and so is ungraspable. Taking firm hold means to simply expose this ungraspability and to allow whatever arises to self liberate on its own ground, to allow it to self liberate by expressing its own nature, as being Unobstructed, as being Luminous, as being Traceless.

Cultivating this ground of mind, clearing it of underbrush, does not mean to simply leave this ground blank, because this ground is vibrant and alive, rich and deep, but it can grow anything, just as this moment can be anything. In this moment you can be jealous, in this moment you can be petty, in this moment you can be compassionate, in this moment you can be wise. Any kind of thought can arise, any kind of feeling, and you have no idea what you will think or what you will feel, no idea of what you will experience, because our experience is beyond our ideas, beyond our models, beyond our concepts. And yet, we do have a choice.

When thought or attention becomes disposed and localized towards contracted and unwholesome states, when life is lost by focusing upon only a small part of our lives, then we choose to become confused. When we attend to the whole of our experience as it is, then we recognize this experience to be beyond concept and can express our life clearly and freely. In the same way, this ground of mind can simply grow brambles, poison ivy and weeds and these weeds can grow and choke each other; or we can cultivate flowers, we can cultivate crops, we can use this ground of mind to benefit beings.

We can bring benefit by expressing our own natures as they actually are. We are always so afraid of ourselves that we feel that if we were to express ourselves as we are, we'd embarrass ourselves, we'd embarrass others: we'd do something really foolish, we'd be angry, we'd be selfish. And yet expressing ourselves as we are is not a matter of "self expression" because self expression is simply the compulsive acting out of whatever patterns or habits we have gathered together as a self, through the arising of experiences.

Expressing ourselves as we are, expressing the nature of mind, means to express the nature of experiencing itself, which is not any particular experience but which expresses itself as this experience. Expressing ourselves as we are means to realize our lives to be beyond concept, it means to express this basic wealth, this basic richness of the ground of mind. It's open possibility.

Examining clearly through direct insight and experience what anger is like, what fear is like, what self judgement and criticism are like, we find that these states, these patterns, can only arise as contractions, can only arise when we distort our experience. When we attend to our experience as such and experience it fully, then the fullness of this experiencing expresses itself as dignity, as clarity, as compassion. So, to cultivate this ground of mind, in some way is just to leave this mind as it is and not to try to fabricate something, not to try to fabricate some buddhalike state, but simply to see, hear, touch, taste, smell, think and feel.

In the text “Gyoji”, or "Continuous Practice", in “The Shobogenzo” or "True Eye of Dharma", Dogen zenji cites many examples of how the Lineage Ancestors of the past, the Dharma Ancestors and Buddhas, expressed their own natures through each and every thing, each and every event.

Continuous Practice means to practise our lives as they are and to experience and manifest the actual nature of experiencing. Practice means to cultivate our own natures, which means to dig deep into the soil of who and what we are. And so practice is a penetration into this moment as it is, not looking for some other moment in which we

might realize that we are Buddha, but to experience and express, to manifest being Buddha now, in this moment of practice.

One example that Dogen zenji cites is that of Linji Yixuan or Rinzai. Dogen zenji says:

The Great Master Huizhao of Linji Monastery was the legitimate heir of Huangbo. He spent three years in Huangbo's community following the Way single-mindedly. Following the encouragement of his Dharma-brother Chen of Muzhou, he asked Huangbo three times about the great meaning of the Buddha Dharma, and altogether he was beaten sixty times with the staff. His sincerity was undiminished. When he visited Dayu and had a great awakening, it was due to the two Zen Masters, Huangbo and Muzhou, who sent him there. It has been said that the heroes of the Ancestral seats were Linji and Deshan, but how can Deshan be put in the same category with Linji? Truly, Linji was without an equal in the whole crowd. Even those of the crowd of those days were extraordinary compared to those who are outstanding today. It is said that his conduct was pure and simple and his continuous practice was extraordinary. No speculation about the instances and manner of his continuous practice could ever hit the mark.

When Linji was in the community of Huangbo, while he was planting some cedars and pines one day with Huangbo, Huangbo asked him, "Why are we planting so many trees here in these deep mountains?"

Linji answered, "First, to improve the scenery around the monastery. Second, to serve as a guide for those who come after us." Then he struck the ground with his hoe twice.

Huangbo raised his staff and said, "I've already given you thirty blows."

Linji made a sighing sound.

"My Teaching will become widely known in the world in your generation," said Huangbo.

In this little story about these old bald men in black, we hear about Huangbo and Linji planting trees in the monastery grounds. Huangbo said: "Why are we doing this?", which was a kind of bait to draw out Linji's own practice and his own ability to express his realization in practice; and Linji answered: "First, to improve the scenery around the monastery, second to serve as a guide for those who come after us." Every activity of body, breath, speech and mind is our opportunity to manifest ourselves as we are, to manifest Buddha. The most ordinary thing, "eating rice and drinking tea" as Dogen zenji would say, or "bread and water" is, at the very moment that we perform it, the most important thing because it is what we are doing right then. There is nothing else being done, there is nothing else to do but what we are doing at that moment.

In this moment of seeing and hearing, this seeing and hearing is all that is and so, to do this as completely as is possible without looking for anything else is to express this moment of seeing and hearing. To express this Buddha does not necessarily mean to do something extraordinary, but to see that what we take to be the usual matters of our life, are not. When we think of our life, often we think of that which we are doing in our life, our career, our family and so on, but our life is our life as it is. This moment of seeing and hearing, touching, tasting,

smelling, thinking, feeling, this is our life. To express our life means to express just this: to just see, to just hear and to know what this seeing is, what this hearing is, which is not apart from the seeing and hearing but is not the seeing and hearing. To express Buddha in every circumstance means to understand that every circumstance is not what we have taken it to be; it is not usual, it is not part of our life, it is our life as it is now.

And so Dogen zenji says: "Linji's idea was that ordinary events are not imitations". Nothing symbolizes anything else. Each thing is what it is. This holding up a hand, this scratching, this sitting, this waking, sleeping and dreaming are not symbols of something else, are not symbols of our culture or our conditioning. They are what they are. Nor are they symbols of the Ordinary Mind, of Ordinary Experience, free of all of those extraordinary things that we use to cloud it. Each moment that arises, that expresses itself, is not a symbol of the Original Face nor is it the Original Face, but is how this Original Face expresses and manifests itself dynamically. Our life is not a pale imitation of anything.

After hearing this Huangbo looked at Linji. Linji held up a hoe before Huangbo's face and twice struck the ground forcefully with it. What is this? is Linji's gesture, showing it, this hoe, this staff, this breath, this eye, this ear. This experience as it is the direct manifestation of Buddha, of our own enlightened natures.

Huangbo raised his staff: "I raise my staff thus, but haven't you already tasted the thirty blows?" Striking students, first of all in order to make them feel what they feel, but also to show them that one must be completely dynamic in one's practice, completely without hesitation, completely without expectation and completely free, was a method often used by the Chan masters of the Tang dynasty. Huangbo holds up the staff and says: "Haven't you already tasted the thirty blows?". He is not threatening Linji with the staff now, he's saying: by the time that you hold up the hoe, that you hold up the staff it's already too late. Here you pick up your hoe and slam it down on the ground and yes, this is vigorous, this is dynamic, but it's too late. What is it that wields the hoe? What is it that wields the staff? What is the staff? What is the hoe? And so he is saying: further, further ... Linji made a sighing sound but remained silent. So Huangbo did not pass Linji on this expression, but he did say: "My teachings will become widely known in the world in your time. Through your efforts, the Dharma will manifest and bring benefit to beings". Huangbo deeply appreciated the sincerity of Linji's practice.

We, as well, must be continually sincere. Continually sincere means to realize that our life as it is, is already exposed. Whatever we think we can hide, whatever thought or feeling, shows itself clearly in how we are and we cannot hide from that. And so sincerity means, again, to express ourselves as we are, not self expression, but to manifest the moment as it is, and if we're confused, we're confused, if we're sad, we're sad. Without trying to get away from that. What is it that is sad? What is it that is confused? What is it that sees and hears? Is the seeing and hearing sad? Is the seeing and hearing confused? To take whatever feeling is present, whatever thought is present, whatever sight, whatever sound and gather it all together within the whole of our life, within the whole round of experiencing, is true sincerity and is the cultivation of the ground of mind.

To uproot blind passions does not mean to feel nothing, it means to uproot, to expose the root, it means to overcome this blindness and we overcome this blindness not through struggle, but through simply opening our eyes. Simply by taking a direct look, and again and again looking, and looking fresh each time, with complete sincerity.

Please enjoy yourselves.

Cutting the Cat Into One: the Practice of the Bodhisattva Precepts

by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

[note: this brief essay was composed in 1985 and forms the first part of a much longer text with the same title comprising Dharma Talks and classes on the study and practice of the Sixteen Bosatsu-kai]

I

Kai, jo, e. Sila or precepts, samadhi or complete practice, prajna or wisdom. Call them what you will, these are the basis and the ground of healthy practice. They are also the Path itself. And the results? Well, they are also kai, jo, and e.

True practice can never even begin without a good foundation. A solid understanding of what it means to practice must be rooted in our actual living experience of what is wholesome and what is unhealthy, what is open or closed. Without this it is impossible to have the integrity and insight that will enable us to practice beyond the limits of convenience and to practice as is necessary in each moment. Beyond our fascination with intriguing whispers and dramatic rumours about "satori," beyond the exotica of subtle mental states and robes and yogic or spiritual self-imagery, beyond our romance with practice, stands practice itself.

Practice itself can sometimes mean pain, loneliness and confusion, but in any case it means honesty: honesty with our bodymind, with the pain and confusion and joy and sanity of beings. This honesty is, even without any talk of enlightenment or the Bodhisattva's path of opening to Openness, so rare, so precious that it, in itself, might justify this path. Yet even so, the Way of Awake Awareness does not stop at this, or anywhere for that matter. As this is so, it is crucial to start right and to stay right.

In traditional Buddhist cultures the mode of progress for anyone--layperson, monk, or nun--began with the precepts as a means to cultivate a simpler, less complex person and living situation. Once some of the coarser, more confusing attitudes and behaviour styles had been tamed somewhat, it was possible for the person to "cultivate samadhi" and equip him or herself with the constancy of stability and insight necessary to penetrate the roots of confusion and, through this, to actually sever the roots with wisdom.

In this culture and time, however, we distrust the idea of precepts. Our distrust might come from several perspectives: we might be reacting against what we feel to be only another form of authoritarianism or conformist dogma (such as commandments, or civil laws, or a father who wouldn't let us borrow the car so that we could go and hang out and drive aimlessly around and around and around). Or we may have intellectual notions about, or even some sense that, Awakened mind, the mind of the Buddhas, is not bound, not prone to mere conformity, being clear Suchness itself. Not quite sure what that might mean, we are nevertheless sure that precepts have absolutely nothing to do with whatever that may be.

We might look at the traditional monastic regulations of the Theravadin or Mukasarvastavadin lineages and recognize that this is another place, another time; that anyone living this way would put those around them to a great deal of trouble just to support their lifestyle. Or we might just not want to be bothered. We may be too

comfortable just playing with Zen when it makes us feel good and the rest of the time just playing with whatever else makes us feel good.

Somehow however, the more we practice, the more that we see gaps between our intentions, our actions, and what practice has shown us we really are. If we are honest, we can see that our intelligence, integrity, humour and compassion bleed away through these gaps. That is why these gaps are traditionally known as asrava or "outflows". If we are honest, we can see that when we completely connect with practice, when we just sit, just walk, just eat, just work, just think, just help, just enter into dokusan with our Teacher, then no gaps are possible. The Fukanzazengi by Dogen zenji says, "The thing is, if there is the slightest gap, sky and earth are ripped apart. If you give rise to even a flicker of like and dislike, you lose your mind in delusion".

It also says that the basics of realized-practice are found in the mind which is Before Thinking or hishiryo. What is this mind? One answer is: I don't know. This "don't know" is itself hishiryo. "Don't know" doesn't back away from the issue, shrug its shoulders and give up. "Don't know" is being free of images. It is complete honesty and openness. It is complete penetration into the whole moment itself. It is the mind, Way and activity of the Buddhas and the lineage Ancestors. Being honest with ourselves, we see that we need to live our lives seriously, with interest and humour. Being honest with ourselves, we see that the mind of wholehearted practice is the root of the possibility of living sanely.

The mind of the Buddhas is present now, wearing your eyebrows. This is Buddha Nature. But this is just talk, unless we can prove it for ourselves in our own lives. The Bodhisattva Precepts are the proof.

The mind of the Buddhas is completely beyond outflows because it sees what is flowing and how, and it has no inside or outside. In this mind there is no possibility of deceit or cheating or slander or murder or sexual obsessiveness. This is the root of the Precepts, the kai. It is itself jo, samadhi. It is itself e, wisdom.

II

Precepts are basically ways to simplify our interactions with thoughts, emotions and situations in order to evoke a mind which can respond cleanly and clearly, free from indulgence in obsessive self-service.

Many different precept forms and lineages have developed at various times in various cultures. In Theravadin countries, there are precepts for bhikkus, for novices, five daily precepts for laypersons and eight precepts for social memorial days or intensive practice sessions. The precepts for bhikkunis (nuns) have unfortunately long since died out in these countries, although many women practice as nuns while maintaining eight or nine precepts. Tibet , Nepal and Bhutan inherited the Mulasarvastavadin school's precepts from Kashmir . The main difference between these two lineages is found in how some precepts have been broken down into several or combined into one.

These kinds of precepts can all be considered to be what are called Hinayana or Narrow Path precepts, which deal with taming one's actions and relationships. These precepts arose as situations occurred within the monastic and lay community or Sangha, purportedly in the time of the Buddha Shakyamuni. The basic precepts of non-killing, non-lying, non-stealing and so forth arose rather naturally. Others dealt mainly with monastic etiquette such as not making obnoxious sounds while eating in order to avoid offending patrons, or not covering up the goodies in

your begging bowl so that you can get more goodies. However, these precepts of etiquette are not really our concern here.

Along with these sets of pratimoksa there arose the Bodhisattva Vows or Precepts. These are presented in variant forms in sutras and sastras such as the Bhramajala sutra (Bonmo-kyo). These Mahayana Precepts spread widely throughout India and the Himalayan regions and were carried to China and Korea by early translator-Teachers. From there they made their way to Japan.

In Dogen zenji's time, it was possible for a monk or nun to be trained in either or both of the Hinayana or Mahayana Precepts. As well, there were standards for C'han monasteries (shingi), said to have originated with Baizhang. In any case, ceremonies developed that transmitted the Bodhisattva Precepts to laypersons (jukai) or to monks and nuns (shukke tokudo).

III

When Dogen zenji translated the Precepts (both literally and culturally) from China to Japan , he did so with attention to the root of the Precepts, to Buddha Nature itself. These Precepts can be said to be beyond the Hinayana and the Mahayana and to be the Precepts of the Buddhayana. Thus the Precepts which are transmitted from Teacher to student in this lineage are not presented in terms of "do not", but as "there is no" , such as "there is no killing" .

To appreciate this approach, we could look at the first of the Ten Grave Precepts from three perspectives, or scopes of ability.

The first is the Hinayana viewpoint, that of an immature practitioner (again and always--don't confuse Hinayana with the Theravadin school as such). Immature, in this sense, means that one's ability to realize the Way is limited by a need to cut off certain styles of behaviour and to keep them cut. The aggressiveness and energy of this need limits the practitioner's practice. From the viewpoint of the Narrow Path, there can simply be no killing because it is wrong and this extends to all intentional acts of taking life: Do not kill.

The second is the Mahayana or medium viewpoint. This viewpoint is a little more spacious, a bit more complete. Spacious does not mean that there is room to get away from the Precept, but rather that it includes more. Having faced that in oneself which would kill, one knows that there is no possibility for such an action to arise because the motivation has been worn through with insight. For such a person, for such a mind, there is no killing; there is only the preserving of life.

The third viewpoint is that of Buddha Nature itself, of realization. This does not deny or demean the first two views, but brings them into fullness. No killing, no one to kill, no one to be killed. There is only seamlessness, this Vastness and clarity where all that is arises, dwells and decays. (By the way, I thought I'd mention that this Vastness is not a place. It might be this coming and going themselves. Or maybe not. What do you think?)

IV

Although these Precepts are beyond the Hinayana and Mahayana, they are still known as Bodhisattva Precepts. This is because the Bodhisattva is beyond yanas, standing in the Open Space, displaying his body freely throughout the ten directions and the three times. These Precepts are intimate with the mind of the Bodhisattva whether she is a monk or a layperson.

When I transmit these Precepts to formal students, I usually do so in three stages. The first stage is receiving the Precepts of the Three Jewels , traditionally called "refuge" or homelessness in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. At this time, it is understood that you will as well keep the Precept of preserving life and that you have recognized that there can be no settling down in the buying-and-selling mind that seeks for goals, wealth, fame and gain. When you take the Precepts of the Three Jewels , you receive a Dharma name that reflects your basic nature and the medium through which your practice can complete itself.

In the second stage, you take up the rest of the Sixteen Precepts and begin to train with them. This is called jukai. Since the Meiji era, many Zen Teachers began to give rakusu to lay students who received jukai. We don't do this simply because we try to avoid too many robes and trinkets for laypersons, monks and priests altogether, and so monks and priests in the Zen Community primarily wear the rakusu , rather than the long and cumbersome wrap-robe form of kesa . Laypeople, laymonks, and postulants for monastic vows will make a simplified kesa called a wagesa as part of their preparation to receive the vows. The wagesa is a simple strip that rests on the back of the neck and falls onto the chest like a collar. This is worn by laypersons at Fusatsu.

The third stage evolves over time as your practice matures, and involves the full transmission of the Lineage of oral Teachings on the nature of the Precepts and, often, a special set of koan to deepen your ability to express the Precepts in your daily life.

In the time between your asking for the Precepts (or being asked to take them), and your receiving them, you might be asked to study certain texts, practice a number of Great Bows, chant the Four Great Vows or the Sange Mon a certain number of times and so on. As well, you are encouraged and required, as always, to ask as many questions as necessary and to encounter your own motives and states of bodymind as fully as possible.

The Precepts are not a status symbol or an achievement. They come in a person's practice at a time which is optimal for that person. Just because someone has only received Refuge, or has not even taken that, means nothing. Bow to that person as someone who has given you a chance to see your pride and expose your self-imagery.

V

In all there are Sixteen Precepts. These are in three categories as follows:

The Precepts of the Three Jewels

This is Buddha,

This is Dharma,

This is Sangha.

The Three Pure Precepts

Wrong action does not arise.

There is only the arising of benefit.

There is only the benefit of all beings.

The Ten Grave Precepts

There is no killing.

There is no stealing.

There is no sexual misconduct.

There is no lying.

There is no trafficking in delusion.

There is no slander.

There is no slander for one's own benefit.

There is no miserliness.

There is no anger.

There is no defilement of the Three Jewels.

The Precepts of the Three Jewels contain the other Thirteen Precepts in essence, and in essence the Three Precepts of the Three Jewels are contained in the First Precept of proclaiming (or admitting) that you are Buddha or "Awake".

Traditionally these Three Precepts are called "taking refuge," but what this really means is that all refuges have been taken away and one vows to stand exposed to experience as it is. In "taking refuge" we find our stability, our resting place, in the fact that there is no point in consoling and indulging ourselves with hope and fear. Taking refuge is a formal commitment by the student to oneself and one's Teacher that one will uncover and unfold and work with what is, rather than be motivated by and disposed towards the three klesas of passion, aggression and stupidity. There is no refuge to be found in gods, money, history, the future, entertainment or bliss-states. Instead, there is a commitment to working free from images, fully recognizing limitations and limitlessness. In this, there is already an awakened quality, a quality of standing free from dreaming and habitualness. This standing free is like a blank space in which anything can happen.

Receiving the Three Jewels , the student is expressing and recognizing his or her own nature as a Buddha, as an Awakened one; recognizing that, in this waking up, there is a freshness, a sense of possibility. If one can see this Nature exactly as it is, then this possibility would be complete in itself and unfold itself in actualizing Buddha Nature as one's life. But since there is a gap between the possibility and the way that we tend to live our usual moments, there is a need for the Dharma, the teaching and practice which exposes this gap completely to us and allows us to transform it into spaciousness, into further Awakening. In order to be able to expose our little charade of self-image fully, we have to recognize that there are others who have been through this and can guide us, who will practice alongside us, who will feed us, who fight with us, who give birth to us, who bury us, who fill the ten directions. Sangha here means many things: monks, priests, laypersons, Teachers, but also you, me,

family, strangers, rocks, trees, buildings, smoke, flesh, blood, bone, thoughts, perceptions, boredom, joy. Sangha means "harmonious community" and in taking Refuge in this we acknowledge the inter-relatedness of what we are (form, basic reactivity, symbolization, habitual patterning, consciousness) and not to create struggle and conflict within ourselves. In taking "refuge", we stand forth as whole beings, as all beings.

The First Precept of proclaiming the Buddha is aligning ourselves with our enlightened Nature and is the root of who we are and what we do. Dharma is the way to work fully with this. Sangha is whom we do it with.

Dogen zenji wrote in the "Kyojukaimon": "In the Three Jewels are the three merits. The first is the true source of the Three Jewels; the second is the presence of the Buddha in the past; the third is his presence right now."

Ordinary Mind is the source. The two thousand and six hundred year old Lineage of Teachers and Teachings that began with Shakyamuni Buddha are the resources on which we draw in order to work on ourselves now. The Sangha is the presence of the Buddha in this spot, right now. He also writes: "The highest truth is called the Buddha-jewel, original purity is called the Dharma-jewel, harmony is the Sangha-jewel." Complete Awakening to Ordinary Mind is what is; all that is, is recognized and teaches what is; harmony is how this is lived.

From Awakened mind, Ordinary Mind, arises whatever action is necessary to the situation, and these are described by the rest of the Precepts. The Three Pure Precepts are, once more: Wrong action does not arise. There is only the arising of benefit. There is only the benefit of all beings.

Originally, these three were transmitted in Mahayana Buddhism as, "Do not commit wrong action. Do only good. Do good for others". However, in this Lineage, as transmitted to me by Yasuda Joshu Dainen daiosho and from me to you, the dualism of strategy, of acting from the point of view of eliminating one thing and building up another, has been dropped. All that is left is the purity of the Ordinary.

In the mind of a Buddha, wrong action, that is, action that is motivated by self-grasping, simply does not arise. Action that is motivated by separateness, by convenience, by indulgence, is inappropriate to the way things are and harms ourselves and others by its pettiness and cruelty. In training, since we do not have enough experience of and confidence in Buddha Nature, wrong action does indeed arise. We are Buddhas, but we are incompetent, inattentive, sloppy Buddhas. We can, however, be strengthened in our practice by knowing that we do not have to be. We needn't be aggressive, hostile, defensive, grasping, greedy, dull, bored, unwilling. It is not an inescapable fact of human nature to be petty, manipulative, aggressive cowards. We can wake up. Every moment gives rise to a new perception, a new action, a new awareness, a new self. For a fraction of a mind-moment nothing is conditioned yet; anything is possible, everything is workable. As a situation arises and our bodymind meshes with it and within it, we can recognize that moment, that choice, that freedom.

Beyond this is the fact that, no matter how much we like or dislike, or are hurt or maimed by a thought, action or event, our attitudes do not colour the event itself, only our relationship to it. As this is so, no matter how much we stomp or shout or cajole or whine, reality is what it is. In this is sacredness and dignity.

This can extend into territory we might not be comfortable with. Our personal ambitions and dreams and hopes and fears are meaningless, just sounds that don't even find an echo in a universe that extends forever, in all

directions. An earthquake that kills ten thousand people is not evil; it is just plates of rock shifting. A bullet is not evil. The universe is simply not conditioned towards our personal convenience. The person who pulls the trigger that kills the mother of three is original purity. But at the same time, we recognize that person as being evil, as being tainted or deranged. There is horror at the memory of Bergen-Belsen and Auschwitz and Hiroshima , of the fact that the molestation of a child is probably occurring somewhere at this moment. Yet even there, there is intrinsic purity. This is how it is. No one said (at least among the enlightened) that purity is necessarily what is pleasant. The fact that everything, every event, is intrinsically pure does not eliminate the fact of our responsibility. We can't just say. "Oh it's all Buddha Nature", and kick the cat. The fact is Buddha Nature, complete freedom from birth and death; the opposites of samsara and nirvana can both be transcended right here, now, but without that realization and in fact even more so after a good glimpse of it, the issue at point is meaning , and living in a way that honours this fact.

There is a famous koan about a Chinese Chan master called Nanquan or Nanzan, who cut a cat in two in order to teach his students about grasping. It appears in many different koan collections and is the ninth case of the "Shoyoroku" :

"One day the monks of the western and eastern halls of Nanquan's monastery were squabbling over a cat. When Nanquan saw this going on he seized the cat and held it up before them and said, 'Say one true word or I'll cut it.'

"No one could say anything. Nanquan cut the cat in two."

Dogen zenji saw this as an immense failure; he saw it as a Teacher with bloody hands standing before embarrassed, horrified, and confused students. He said that Nanzan may have been able to cut the cat into two, but had no realization at all of being able to cut the cat into one. Bringing together body and mind, self and other, time and space, bringing everything back into its original wholeness and bringing all that we are aware of into Awareness itself through cutting away separateness with the sword of insight, the thin blade of this moment, is cutting the cat into one.

At first kensho, the student sees into Ordinary Mind. So what? If you can't live here, there is no point in standing outside in the flower bed, peering in between the window blinds. It is not a matter of taking some particular moment of practice and setting that up as the entirety of the path. Realization must be embodied and unfolded completely. If you refuse to take responsibility for your body, breath, speech and mind, and unfold each moment as this Original Nature itself, then get the hell out or I'll throw you out. We can't excuse ourselves from true wholehearted practice just because we have a note from our Teacher saying: "Congratulations. Here's inka-shomei, you're a Sensei." How much more so if we have only had one or two satoris and have read too much Alan Watts, or D. T. Suzuki out of context, or buji zen ("doesn't matter zen").

Great Faith is abiding in True Nature as the root of practice so that practice acts to expose us to this True Nature always and in every moment. No experiences, no attainments define or limit this Way. Everything is this Way. Great Doubt shows us the outflows in our practice clearly. Great Practice is coming back to just this, again and again.

The Ten Grave Precepts reflect this. "There is no wrong action" is followed not by "nothing matters", but by "There is only the arising of benefit". Acting fully and responsibly from Awakened Mind, from that which sees

tracelessness, is the Buddhaway. From such a mind, not only can wrong action not arise, all that is becomes of benefit to all beings.

Having taken your suffering and delusion seriously, opened it to see what's inside it, you work thoroughly with everything that arises as the world in which you live. As this is so, you recognize that this suffering is true for others, that this dignity and clarity are true for others. Thus, the bodhisattva brings forth benefit clearly and with open hands. A thousand eyes and hands are one's whole body. Free from the klesas of passion, aggression, and ignorance, one's action is clear and truly spontaneous -- not governed by impulse (which the usual mind likes to believe is spontaneity). "There is only the benefit of all beings". The universe in which the bodhisattva lives is "all beings", he or she is "all beings", rocks and air and nostril hair are "all beings". Kannon's "thousand eyes and hands" are the whole universe itself.

This benefit is not a matter of self-congratulatory goody-two-shoed-ness, or deprecation of another's essential dignity through pity. It is simply a raw and open heart that does what needs to be done. It does not force others to be what it wants -- it is only a heart, it doesn't want anything. It does not seduce or console or convert. It is simply a raw and open heart.

Traditionally, there are said to be four ways in which the Bodhisattva manifests dana paramita: material benefit; giving what each needs to promote well-being; giving freedom from fear; giving the Teachings. Actually there is no number or limit to this benefit. There is only the benefit of all beings.

The Ten Grave Precepts elaborate upon the manifestation of Awakened mind.

"There is no killing."

We've spoken of this precept earlier in terms of Hinayana, Mahayana and Buddhayana. This is how we should view all of the Precepts, but because any discussion of the Precepts can progress endlessly to unfold all of the Teachings, I'll just touch on various aspects of each of the Precepts.

"There is no stealing."

The "Kyojukaimon" says: "The mind and its object are oneness. The gate to enlightenment stands open" . There is nothing that can be held on to, nothing that can be grasped, nothing is lacking. Who is it that sees a lacking, a coveting, something to be taken?

"There is no sexual misconduct."

For some, this might mean celibacy, particularly for monks of the Northern Mountain Order. In other cases, not. The point is that all is original purity and dignity. In the light of this, how can we seduce or coerce another against their will? How can we sink our awareness into obsessiveness over glands and glamour? Sexual love arises clearly and purely between two persons. It is openness and warmth and communication. How can we choose to defile

such an act with pettiness? How can we take something so simple and attach to it images of coersion, dominance and power and submission (and latex and whips and hard-core)?

"There is no lying."

What is, is.

What is it?

"There is no trafficking in delusion."

This precept originally referred to avoiding employment in the trading of alcohol and drugs and also to the complete abstention from their use. This can be appropriate and good, but essentially it is a question of who is using whom. Does the bottle drink you dry? Do you breathe out your clarity in a cloud of hashish smoke? Beyond that, we should be aware of the mind being numbed by too much television, reading too long at one stretch, indulging in the thick warmth of daydreams. We should also take this precept to mean that we should not delude ourselves or others in any way; we should not add to the confusion. It is our responsibility. The "Kyojukaimon" says: "There is nothing to be deluded about. If we realize this we are already enlightenment" .

"There is no slander."

This means that one does not say what one does not actually know to be true or does not mean. Do not say anything that will cause needless harm, even if it is true. Do not create divisions between people, but foster harmony. One only affirms the Dharma which is all truths, all beings.

"There is no slander for one's own benefit."

One does not put oneself above others. Who is who? The "Kyojukaimon" says: "Every Buddha and every Ancestor realizes that he is the vast sky, the boundless universe. Realizing their true body, nothing is within or without. Realizing their true body, they are nowhere to be found".

"There is no miserliness."

There is no hesitation in doing what needs to be done, in offering what needs to be offered. "There is only the benefit of all beings."

"There is no anger."

The "Kyojukaimon" says: "There is no staying, no going, no truth, no lie. A brilliant sea of clouds, a dignified sea of clouds."

"There is no defilement of the Three Jewels."

Bodhidharma said: "If the thought arises that you and the Buddhas are separate, you have violated that". We do not defile ourselves, we do not defile others. All is stainless, traceless. Trying to grasp either end, the middle falls away. There is only this Way. What is it?

VI

As we have not entered fully into this whole moment, as we hold back and define ourselves only as students rather than fully accepting our responsibility to live as Buddhas, since we qualify ourselves as this or that, we do not allow ourselves to fully manifest the Ordinary Mind of inherent Radiance. And so we break these Precepts. Inevitably.

We get angry. We become self-indulgent. We become lustful. We engage in strategy when we practice. We get lonely. Even for someone matured in this Way, these things can arise as karma continues to unwind, as deep rooted and long-lived tendencies surface, in order to be purified and released. We cannot say that because our practice advisor appears angry and impatient, because another practitioner gets depressed or drinks too much or was unmindful, because we feel frustrated or lustful, that these people are not true to this Way. As long as these people are honest with themselves about these things, are working as fully as they can with them together with the Teacher, then the Way is fully manifest and fills the ten directions. We need condemn no one, or rationalize their actions as upaya or skillful means. We need only affirm own commitment to work fully with our own worlds and in this way.

One way to do this is to chant a set of verses called "Sange Mon" or the "Formless Gate of Repentance". When we know that we have broken a Precept, that is to say, have broken with ourselves, have severed the clarity of the Way, then we need to be honest. We can't just say "Oh well, I'll try harder next time", and pass this over without attentiveness. We have to recognize fully the states of body, breath, speech and mind that arose with the breaking of the precept, and the result from that breaking. In severing a precept we cut into our own heart. In order to bring this fully onto the Path, we chant these verses:

All wrong action from beginningless time,

stemming from passion, aggression and ignorance,

arising through body, breath, speech and mind,

I now repent having committed.

All wrong action from beginningless time,

stemming from passion, aggression and ignorance,

arising through body, breath, speech and mind,

I now release into purity.

All wrong action from beginningless time,

stemming from passion, aggression and ignorance,

arising through body, breath, speech and mind,

I now recognize as purity.

After this, align yourself with the Four Great Vows. Repentance is not an occasion for self-loathing. Repentance in the context of our practice is humorous, gentle, easy. It is coming back, again and again, to just this.

VII

In terms of daily practice, it is good to take one of the Ten Grave Precepts and emphasize it for a month. Each Precept contains all the other Precepts, but focuses our relationship with all that is in a particular light. So for example, take the Precept on slander. Use it as a screen on which habitual patterns of speech, thought and behaviour can play themselves out. Notice the localization and insincerity that gives rise to slanderous actions and words. Affirm the harmony within each situation. Notice the bodymind and its postural, emotional and conceptual tones as it engages in both slander and harmony. Penetrate the whole moment.

VIII

These Bodhisattva Precepts are intimate with the mind of the bodhisattva and display the intimacy of all beings. Receiving the Precepts is an acknowledgement of the complete stainlessness of your Ordinary Mind as fruition and as the means by which this stainlessness is uncovered. Receiving these Precepts completely, practising them fully, you transmit them openly.

1: Introduction and reading of the text; Commentary on Danlin's Preface

by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

Daijozan, January 15, 1989

Good morning.

The snow fell last night to cover the trees, the rooftops and the ground. Coming to the Zendo earlier this morning, I'm sure that when you took a step into that snow, you saw that there were no footprints yet. And there was perhaps a certain delight at stepping into the snow, taking a step, feeling the step, being aware of taking a step. At that moment, taking a step comes alive. At that moment, the snow comes alive.

Now this morning, the black of the branches is still lined with white. And the morning is alive, and the grey sky is lit by the sun. Just as you felt taking that step in that fresh snow, just as there was that sense of wonder and joy, attend to this breath, take this breath completely. Hear this sound completely. Awaken to your life completely, and your life becomes alive.

If you were alive to taking that step in the snow this morning, at that moment there wasn't even any thought of how early it was or of where you were going. There was just enjoying that step. And your life was completely there and whole. In this moment, please uncover the whole bodymind, live the whole bodymind. You have never taken this breath before. You have never heard this moment of birds singing before. You have never been here before. You have never seen this wall before. This is such a tremendous opportunity. Every moment has this tremendous opportunity. When we meet it and explore it with this whole bodymind, then we find that this whole bodymind and this moment are seamless. This whole bodymind is the mind of snow, the mind of sky, the mind of breath and step, the mind of stars, sun, and starving millions. Becoming alive with this whole body, our practice has just begun. What is this living? How is it that there is this stepping, this seeing and hearing, this breathing out, this being born and dying? This is the essence of our practice.

Many centuries ago, an Indian monk named Bodhidharma arrived in China after a long journey. Coming to that land he presented the essence of the Buddha Dharma, the essence of the way of waking up. And so we call him Bodhidharma daishi - which means Great Master, Great Founder. Our Lineage began at the moment when Sakyamuni Buddha looked up and saw the morning star, and in that seeing, saw all the way through. The transmission of this experience of Buddha was passed from Buddha to Buddha, Dharma Ancestor to Dharma Ancestor, until it reached Bodhidharma Daishi, who then carried this, with his whole bodymind, to China. Where of course it always already was. Just as it is always, and always has been, and always will be, in every land, in every drop of water, and in every breath. And yet there is a need to point this out, and so Bodhidharma made this long journey.

This morning we are going to begin to consider a text called Two Entries and Four Practices, or the Errusixing lan which is attributed to Bodhidharma. There are many texts and many teaching stories which are attributed to Bodhidharma, and yet many of the facts, almost all of the facts of his life and teaching, are lost in history.1 And while that really doesn't matter, because what matters is the present transmission to each and every one of you, of each and every one of you, still it is good to hear from our old friends. It is good to listen to their Teachings, because their Teachings point to listening itself, to seeing itself, to living itself. And so this morning, we will hear first from the disciple Danlin, who composed a preface to the text. It is indeed possible that the text itself was authored by Danlin, based upon Huike, or Bodhidharma's Dharma Ancestor's, presentation of Bodhidharma's original teachings, which Danlin then compiled together in this form. It is doubtful that Bodhidharma actually wrote this text because it is in rather polished Chinese, rather literary Chinese, which would be rather difficult for an immigrant such as Bodhidharma to master. And yet in this very simple text, many of the essential points of the Teachings are to be found. Perhaps they are a representation of Bodhidharma's actual teaching style, of things that he actually said. But in any case, the text discusses things that are of primary importance in the practice of each and every one of you.

Two Entries and Four Practices2

Errusixing lan (Erh-ju-ssu-hsing lan); Nishu-nyu by Bodhidharma daishi

Translated by Yasuda Joshu Dainen roshi and Anzan Hoshin roshi

Preface by the Disciple Danlin

The Dharma Master Bodhidharma came from a country in southern India. The third son of a great Brahmin king, he was of bright intelligence and understood whatever he was taught. Aspiring to the Mahayana, he set aside the white robes of a layperson and took on the black of a monk so that he might transmit the tradition of the sages. His mind deepened into stillness, his understanding penetrated the events of the world. His wisdom was both inside and out and his virtue was beyond common standards.

His compassion and concern ached at the decline of the True Teaching in this obscure corner and so, crossing mountains and seas, he came to teach in this distant land of Han and Wei. Those who had stilled their minds had immediate faith but those who grasped at forms and fixed views despised him.

At this time only Daoyu and Huike were with him. These monks had strong determination though they were young and, having had the great fortune of meeting the Dharma Master, served him for many years. Respectfully requesting teaching, they studied deeply the Master's essence. Responding to their whole-heartedness, the Dharma Master taught them the Path of Truth. He taught them the pacification of mind, the development of practice, according to circumstances and skillful means.

This is the teaching of mind in the Mahayana. Practice it without deviation. The pacification of mind is this "wall-gazing" (biguan). The development of practice is these Four Practices. According to circumstances is freedom from slander. skillful means is the dropping of attachment to fixed forms. This is my summary of the text which follows.

The Treatise

There are many Dharma gates but they are all of two kinds: entry through the Nature and entry through conduct.

Entry through the Nature means the realization of the truth of the Teachings. The basis of this is Great Faith in the Actual Nature of all living beings, usual people and sages both. The reason it is not manifest is only due to it being wrapped in external objects and deluded views. If you abandon the false and turn to the true and practise this samadhi of "wall-gazing" (biguan), you will find no "self" or "other" and that the usual person and the sage are of one essence. Abide in this and you will not be swayed. You will then be free from "words" because you will be intimately merged with the Nature and free of conceptual distortion. This is to be at ease, free from activity. This is called "entry through the Nature."

Entry through conduct refers to the Four Practices which embrace all activities. These are: knowing how to answer enmity, according to circumstances, being free of craving, and being in accord with the Dharma.

What is meant by knowing how to answer enmity? Finding oneself in adverse circumstances, one who practises the Way should consider: From beginningless time I have wandered in countless states, concerned only with the

branches and missing the root. Thus I have given rise to numberless instances of hatred, anger, and wrong action. While I might not have committed violations in this lifetime, the fruits of wrong actions of the past are being harvested now. This suffering has not been given to me by gods or by humans and so I will patiently accept all ills that occur without grudge or complaint. As well, the sutras teach that when situations are penetrated with prajna (radical insight) the basic root is known. Awakening this thought, one will be aligned with prajna and use enmity by bringing it into the Way. This is called knowing how to answer enmity.

According to circumstances means: There is no self in whatever arises as the play of causal conditions. Feeling good or feeling bad are both born from previous activities. If I wind up with name and fame this is in response to past actions; when the momentum of these conditions gives way, whatever I might presently enjoy will decay. Why rejoice about it? Win or lose, let me work with whatever conditions may arise. Awareness itself does not increase or decrease. I will not be swayed by the winds of fortune for I am intimately aligned with the Way. This is called according to conditions.

Being free of craving means: The usual person, through basic ignorance, fixates on one thing and then another; this is called craving. The sage however, understands truth and is free of ignorance, mind abiding evenly in non-action, and body moving in accord with the principle of causality. All dharmas are empty and there is nothing to crave or grasp. Merit and darkness follow each other. These three worlds (of desire, form, and formlessness), in which we have strayed altogether too long, are like a house on fire; all that is conditioned is dukkha (suffering) and no one knows true peace. Realizing this, be free from fabrication and so never grasp at the various states of becoming. The sutra says, "Where there is craving, there is dukkha; cease from craving and there is joy." Know that being free of craving is the true practice of the Way.

Being aligned with the Dharma means the intimate knowing that what we call Dharma is in essence stainless, and knowing the emptiness of all that arises. It is undefiled and without attachment, and has no this or that within it. The sutra says; In the Dharma there are no sentient beings because it is free of any trace of being. In the Dharma there is no self because it is free of any trace of self-nature. The sage realizes and maintains this truth and is aligned with the Dharma. As in the Essence of Dharma there is no cherishing or possessing, the sage always practises generosity of body, life and property, and never grudges or knows the meaning of ill-will. With perfect understanding of the threefold emptiness of giving (no giver, gift, receiver), one is unswerving and free of grasping. One uses forms to free beings of stains, to embrace and transform them; one is unattached to fixed forms. This is benefiting oneself and others and adorns the Path of Awakening. As with the paramita (transcendent activity) of dana (generosity), so with the other five paramitas. The sage practises the six paramitas to exhaust deluded views and yet has nothing to practise. This is called being in accord with the Dharma.

And so this very brief text comes to us from the beginnings of Zen in China, before Zen was called "Zen", before koan, before katsu. In this brief text, we see little trace of the broken nosed barbarian Bodhidharma, in his smelly tattered robes and his earring, scowling at Emperor Wu and saying, "Don't know." There is very little in the text that smacks of what we often consider to be Zen, in that it's somewhat heavy handed, somewhat conventional. But since it does speak clearly of issues that arise in the lives of all Zen practitioners, this text has much to tell us.

So to begin to understand the text, first let us consider briefly the various kinds of Teachings. I have spoken in the past of Tathagata Zen and Ancestral Zen, or the Gradual Teachings and the Direct Teachings.3 Zen itself is of course essentially the Direct Teachings, directly pointing to the mind of each and every one of you; directly pointing to Buddha, without taking shortcuts. It grabs you by the throat and says, "Well? Well?" This is the Direct Teaching. Tathagata Zen, or the Gradual Teachings, try to explain things to you, try to lead you through step by step, saying, "Well first you do this, and then you do this," and "It's okay. Don't worry. It'll all work out." The

Direct Teachings say, "There is nothing to attain, because nothing has ever been lost. This is Buddha." The Gradual Teachings tell you how you can "become" Buddha.

But as I have pointed out in the past, there is no necessary conflict between the Gradual Teachings and the Direct Teachings. There might be from the point of view of the Gradual Teachings in that they would say, "What do you mean 'this is Buddha?' You have to become Buddha." But from the point of view of the Direct Teachings, there is the direct pointing to what is present in this moment, to the arising of this moment, and to actualizing this moment. Which means not just a sudden burst of insight but standing up, sitting down, breathing in and breathing out, and actualizing being Buddha, taking responsibility for being Buddha, through seeing all of the ways in which one hides from being Buddha and opening each of those ways and finding Buddha inside. And so just because this text contains not a single katsu, not a single curse word, not a single fist upraised, a single broken leg, it is still a Zen text. Bodhidharma himself, in this text, presents both Direct and Gradual Teachings - speaking of directly realizing the Way, and gradually cultivating the Way through conduct.

We will begin with the preface. So Danlin tells us about Bodhidharma, that he was from a small country in southern India, and was the third son of a great Brahmin king (although the phrase "king" was rather loosely used in those days, and could refer even to a kind of tribal leader). But in any case, it seems that Bodhidharma came from a fairly auspicious segment of the populace. Leaving that though, he entered practice, first as a lay person, and then, wishing to completely marinate himself in the Way, he put aside the white of a lay person, and took on the black robes of a monk. The text says, "His mind deepened into stillness. His understanding penetrated the events of the world." The first thing I would like to point out is that the mind deepening into stillness and having an understanding which can penetrate the events of the world, are not two separate things. And it is not that only when you sit and only when your sitting is "good" can you have an understanding which penetrates the events of the world. Prajna and realization are not only matters for the cushion. It is through the mind deepening into stillness, into clarity, that one gets out of one's own way. And in that stillness opens the clarity which penetrates all dharmas arising, dwelling, and decaying as one's world. The mind deepening into stillness means to penetrate this breath, to penetrate this body, penetrate this mind, this wall, this floor; to penetrate into one's world. And then when one gets up from the zafu and walks, one is still walking in one's world. All beings that are met, all events that arise, are one's world, and this penetration into one's world is the essence of practice. It is often so easy for us to think that our practice is completely separate from the world, but our practice is entering into our world, to see how mind arises as world and world arises as mind.

The text goes on to say that through such deepening and such understanding, Bodhidharma's wisdom was both inside and out, and his virtue was beyond common standards, and blah, blah, blah, these little praises here. And then it goes on to say that his compassion and concern ached at the decline of the True Teaching in this obscure corner, and so, crossing mountains and seas, he came to teach in this distant land of Han and Wei. It is interesting that Danlin refers to China here as "this obscure corner", since in China, the word for the nation was "the middle kingdom" or "the centre of the world," and everything else was of course merely an obscure corner. I think this is why Buddhism wound up being persecuted so much in China during these years. Chinese Buddhists just couldn't take China seriously enough. But there is something about practice that makes it very difficult to take such things seriously; makes it very difficult for us to take nations seriously. Very difficult for us to take our own games seriously, our own strategies seriously. There is something about practice that won't allow us to rest on our assumptions of being the centre of the world. In any case, when Bodhidharma reached China, he had a bit of a hard time. Whereas previously, monks and translators from India, or Chinese monks and teachers, would fasten upon a particular text, and lecture on it day after day without end and encourage the building of monasteries and stupas, the copying forth of texts, the performance of meritorious actions, Bodhidharma came to teach sitting. In China, there were other schools that placed emphasis upon practice, such as the Tientai school's zhiguan which literally translates as samatha and vipasyana, or calming and insight. But the practice that Bodhidharma came to

bring was somewhat different, it was biguan, "wall gazing"; which refers not even to the fact that one sits facing the wall, just that "wall gazing" means [strike] this. No calming, no insight. [strike] This. Look.

But people then as now are often more interested in things to see rather than in looking, rather than in seeing. They would like some bright shiny ball, to console them for the horrible and awful fact of having being born. They would like some justification for their existence. They would like to build themselves up by being in a relationship with something greater than themselves, something holier than themselves, so that they can crawl around at the feet of this idol and feel special because they are in relationship to it. And we search moment after moment in our practice for something to make ourselves feel better. We search for something to see, something to entertain us, something to make us better people. But Bodhidharma says, "Look! What is it that sees? What is it that hears? What is it that searches and craves? Who are you?" It is said in fact that Bodhidharma was poisoned several times, and that his nose was broken and some of his teeth knocked out by jealous lecturers. Or perhaps it was simply irate pilgrims and so on who might have come see this monk who had traveled all the way from India, and instead of being given a blessing or something of this nature were simply asked: "Who are you? What is this?"

The text now mentions that he had two students, Daoyu and Huike. Other texts name other students, but it seems that Bodhidharma never had a very large following. He simply worked with only those who would work very seriously with their lives. These two monks, Daoyu and Huike, served and studied under Bodhidharma and learned and realized the pacification of mind, the development of practice according with circumstances and skillful means. This pacification of mind does not simply mean calm and quiet. We can perhaps begin to understand what this pacification of mind means when we remember the koan concerning Huike's meeting with Bodhidharma. Huike was standing outside in the snow as Bodhidharma sat in the cave near Shaolin temple, facing the wall. When Bodhidharma finally paid some attention to Huike, he more or less just asked him, "What the hell do you want?", and Huike said, "I am diseased. I am confused. Please pacify my mind." And Bodhidharma says, "Show me this mind." Huike said, "I cannot find it." And Bodhidharma says, "The mind is pacified." Danlin says, "This is the teaching of the pacification of mind in the Mahayana. Practise it without deviation."

Please, without swerving from this breath, from this moment, enter into your practise most completely. Enter into your lives most completely. Take each step, breathe each breath, meet each person completely.

Please, enjoy yourselves.

1.

The teisho series Bodhidharma's Eyes presented by Roshi from October through December 2000 at Dainen-ji goes into great detail on the history, legends, and many koan associated with Bodhidharma.

2.

Originally published in Zanmai 4, Winter/Spring 1990.

3.

Nyorai-Zen and Soshi-Zen.

2: Entry Through the Nature (as basis of both the Direct and Gradual paths)

by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

Daijozan, January 22, 1989

The birds are singing that it is a good morning, and it is a good morning because the birds are singing. It is a good morning because there is this breath, there is this seeing, this hearing, touching, tasting, smelling, thinking. It is a good morning because there is this world, arising in this moment. Sitting in the midst of this, is practice. And so this morning, we will continue to hear from Bodhidharma Daishi in this text on the Two Entries and Four Practices.

"There are many Dharma gates but they are all of two kinds: entry through the Nature and entry through conduct."

Right here in this phrase, long before the debate arose as to whether enlightenment was sudden or gradual, Dogen zenji, Huineng, Keizan zenji, and other Dharma Masters have presented a Direct Way which goes back to Bodhidharma's expression in this text, "entry through the Nature and entry through conduct." There is a direct method, and a gradual method. There are many Dharma gates but they are all of these two kinds. Practising the Direct Way means to pay attention directly to what is arising in Awareness now, waking up to this arising, recognizing that this arising is the display of wakefulness, and practising this moment after moment is the expression of this realization. So in terms of the Direct Path, there is nothing gradual about it. There are no stages. It is just this. The direct method says, "This is Buddha." The Gradual Path, on the other hand, says, "You must become Buddha, and this is how you will do it."

But this effort to "become" Buddha, if we're going to be honest about it, is really just another way of trying to put off being Buddha; just stalling for time. What are you waiting for? How is it that you hear these words? How is it that there is hearing, that there are words? What is it that is aware of this?

This moment has nothing gradual about it. It doesn't sort of inch its way in and then exert itself and then slip out. Its coming and going is the dynamic arising of this experiencing. In Bodhidharma's teaching here, he speaks of entry through the Nature, which means entering into that which has no gate, which has no barrier, which has in fact no entry. "Entry into the Actual Nature." We can call it Buddha Nature, enlightenment, Things as They Are, but fundamentally it is who and what you are.

And then Bodhidharma says there is entry through conduct. Entry through conduct means to cultivate one's enlightenment through practice, to gradually become Buddha. But if we practise in this moment, and as this moment, then we continually, with each breath, with each action, conduct ourselves as Buddha. We continually enter into Buddha. Bodhidharma, recognizing that many beings are trying to put off being Buddha as long as is possible, takes this view into account and describes entry through conduct. And yet, within his description of these stages, within his description of these four practices of entry through conduct, he continually points back to entry through the Nature, as we will see as we continue to discuss this text.

So the text continues:

Entry through the Nature means the realization of the truth of the Teachings. The basis of this is Great Faith in the Actual Nature of all living beings, usual people and sages both. The reason it is not manifest is only due to being wrapped in external objects and deluded views.

Entry through the Nature means to realize the Teachings, not to study the Teachings, not to think about the Teachings, but to realize the Teachings. And the Teachings of Buddha Dharma point directly to the mind of each and every one of you; point to this breath; point to this wall, to this stepping, to the arising of this thought, of this moment of fear, this moment of joy. The basis of this, Bodhidharma says, is Great Faith1 in the Actual Nature of all living beings.

Great Faith is not a belief in something. Great Faith is not a conviction. Great Faith is not a point of view. Great Faith is practising being Buddha. We say "Faith" because it has this heart quality. And "Great" because it is unconditional. It is not based on being convinced of something. It is as direct as feeling the cold in wintertime. It is as direct as breathing in and out. Great Faith is the basis of realization of the truth of the Teaching.

"Great Faith is entry through the Nature, the Actual Nature of all living beings, usual people and sages both." You don't have to be particularly wise. You don't have to be particularly good-looking. You don't have to be particularly successful, or particularly artistic, or particularly anything. You just have to be to be Buddha, to be unconditionally free.

"The reason it is not manifest," Bodhidharma explains, "is only due to being wrapped in external objects and deluded views."

"Only, or merely." Not truly.

A thought comes up, and we think that we have thought it, even though we don't know where that thought has come from, or where it goes. We pretend that we have thought the thought. We pretend that we are the thinker. And we are coloured by the contents of that thought, as we propagate the next thought, and the next thought, and the next thought, and continue this game of dancing around pretending that we are the thinker, pretending that we are the contents of the thoughts. We bind our experiences together into lumps and heaps, into piles of junk.

We get up in the morning, and once we get over that moment of panic of the first opening our eyes and realizing that there's a world there, and we collect together all of our thoughts and feelings for the day. We start to ramble around inside of our head, feeling a grudge about this, feeling anxious about that. We wake up in our usual bed, in our usual way, get out of bed into our usual room, and wander around through our usual world for the day, looking for some kind of satisfaction someplace, something interesting to happen to cut through this usualness, this pettiness. Desperately searching for something to make us happy, or at least give us some sense of being alive.

And yet, things are not bound together, nor are you tied. Sounds come and go. Thoughts come and go. The world comes and goes over and over and over again. When a thought comes up it is instantly gone. It is impossible for

you to hold onto a thought. It is impossible for you to hold onto a sound. It is impossible to find any place to hold on, let alone to be able to pile things up in ugly heaps.

The world is not usual. The world is amazing. The world exerts itself as world, simply for the fun of it. In our search for something to make us happy, we pass over this basic joyfulness that is existence. And so the reason it is not manifest is only due to being wrapped in external objects and deluded views. We have a deluded view if we think that the world is the same moment after moment. We have a deluded view if we think that we can hold onto anything. We have a deluded view if we think that we are anything at all. We have a deluded view if we believe in time and space and body and mind and self and other. We have a deluded view if we think that we have to become Buddha. We have a deluded view if we think that we are not Buddha. We wrap ourselves in external objects when we hope that something will make us happy. Wrapping ourselves in external objects does not just mean collecting cars, and houses, and mink coats. Giving up wrapping ourselves in external objects is not as easy as selling your property and going off to live in a cave. Ceasing to wrap oneself in external objects means to come out into the open, to stop hiding, and to come out and play.

Bodhidharma goes on: "If you abandon the false and turn to the true and practise this samadhi of wall-gazing (biguan), you will find no "self" or "other" and that the usual person and the sage are of one essence."

True samadhi or zanmai is complete practice. It is not fixating on a particular state. It is practising as hishiryo, not just shiryo, thinking, or fushiryo, not thinking, cutting off thought, blanking out into some concentration state. But being hishiryo, before thought, is samadhi, is zanmai.2 It is to stand at the heart of all worlds, to sit as sitting, to live this life, to know this living, to be this living that exerts itself as free of strategy, as free of intention, as free of goal, as a flower opening, as the wind rising. This is samadhi. It is not that we will find no self or other if we simply ignore them through hiding within minor meditational states that might arise in one's practice. Finding no self or other means to recognize Things as They Are, to recognize the radical impermanence of this existing, of this living. To realize and actualize practising the samadhi of wall-gazing you will find no "self" or "other" and that the usual person and the sage are of one essence. This essence is the actual Nature, and it is an essenceless essence. Entering into this Nature, one finds that all forms are formless. There is no self or other to be found, no time, no space, no body, no mind. There is nothing at all.

"Abide in this and you will not be swayed", says Bodhidharma. "You will then be free from 'words' because you will be intimately merged with the Nature and free of conceptual distortion. This is to be at ease, free from activity. This is called 'entry through the Nature."

Being "free from words" here means, free from trying to talk oneself into waking up, trying to talk oneself out of confusion, trying to think one's way out of thinking. To be free from words means to see what the words of the Teachings point to. In this freedom, there is intimate merging with the Nature, so intimate that there is no merging. There is just this. And this is at ease, free from activity. There is no need to do anything, because nothing has ever been done. There is just this breathing, this seeing, this hearing, this wall, this world. So "no activity" means "complete activity." It means doing what needs to be done, because there is nothing at all. This is the practice of the bodhisattva. This is called entry through the Nature.

To practise is to enter again and again into our lives. To enter into the open space in which we realize there's no place to hide, and it is the moment of realizing there is no need to hide. Practice is entering again and again into this moment. Practice is hearing the birds singing. It is the singing of the birds.

The birds, the wall, the altar, the floor, and I, all wish you a good morning.

1.

Daishinkon.

2.

Roshi is referring to Dogen zenji's phrase in the Fukanzazengi, "It is not a matter of thinking or not-thinking. Be before thinking."

3: Entry Through Conduct: How to Answer Enmity; The Wheel of Birth and Death

by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

Daijozan, January 29, 1989

Good morning and welcome to the January 1989 sesshin.

This is our first sesshin of the year, but it is not the first sesshin for any of you sitting here. So there's nothing new. We've all done this before. And yet everything is completely new. The birds are singing outside, and across the road black squirrels are jumping from tree to tree. Sitting on your zafu, thoughts and feelings and sleepiness are jumping, leaping, shifting and changing. Cricks in your back, blurry vision.

But good morning. Because this is the first time you've ever breathed this breath. This is the first time that this thought has ever arisen. So here we are again, where we always were. Right in the midst of our lives.

Sesshin, this "gathering together of the heart," "gathering together of the mind," is entering into the heart of our lives, practising the heart of our lives. And sesshin is the heart of our practice. It is the place in which we come face to face with ourselves. Sesshin is where we can truly allow ourselves to hear the birds cry outside the window, allow ourselves to truly feel a step. To see how we tie ourselves hand and foot with patterns of behaviour, patterns of attention.

Coming into this moment we often see how we are living our lives from the past, a past that is nowhere to be found, waiting impossibly, perching on the edge of this moment, waiting for something to happen, sometime in the future. And yet, no matter how many patterns might arise, no matter how bound we might feel, no matter how much of the past or the future we might carry around with us as we lurch from step to step in kinhin, we are right here. Right here for the very first time.

Each time that we realize that we are here, we begin to recognize an inexpressible freshness, a vividness; nothing extraordinary, but something beyond price, something beyond boundary. We begin to sense being alive. We begin to come into contact with this livingness, this being. And yet even this is not enough. We must go yet

further into our own hearts, into our own minds and bodies, further into this moment, to find what this living is. Not what this living "means", but what this living is, what this wall is, what this body is, what this mind is.

Bodhidharma advises each and every one of you to practise biguan, wall-gazing, to sit like a wall, like a blank wall. Not to make your minds a blank, but to just sit with the thoroughness of a wall. A wall does not isolate itself from anything. A wall supports the ceiling. A wall extends. A wall doesn't need to move in order to be so useful. It's just [strike] there. So sit here, facing this wall, feeling this breath, hearing this sound, for the very first time, and again and again for the very first time. Sit.

This practice of zazen is beyond measure, beyond understanding, beyond concept, beyond strategy. This zazen is the manifestation of the mind of the Buddhas. Realizing this posture of zazen, this posture of body and mind, this posture of wall, of floor, this posture of Zendo, perhaps we can hear the posture of the bird's song, the presentation of bird as bird, song as song, and hearing as hearing. What is it that presents itself to us in this way? What is this presenting? Birds cry out in this warm January morning. No matter how you are this day, sit like a wall, see how you are, without reactivity, without hiding, without pretences of holiness, or pretences of profanity. Each and every one of you thinks that you are the best and the worst here, but you're not fooling anyone. So let's stop all this and sit.

This morning we will continue to hear from Bodhidharma, from his treatise Two Entries and Four Practices. Having discussed the entry of no entry, or entry through the Nature, we will now go on to discuss what Bodhidharma calls the second entry, "entry through conduct."

Entry through conduct refers to the Four Practices which embrace all activities. These are: knowing how to answer enmity, according with circumstances, being free of craving, and being in accord with the Dharma.

"Conduct", in this sense, means this endless doing which arises moment after moment, this breathing in and breathing out, this stepping and walking, this meeting and leaving. Conduct means the deportment of this bodymind. And so these Four Practices embrace all activities.

To truly practise, to practise completely, we must do whatever we do completely. We must realize and embrace our lives, and embrace each and every activity completely, thoroughly. So please, take care of everything. Give care, thoroughly. Care for your zafu and zabuton when you fold it and place it against the wall, for your oryoki set, for your neck and shoulders, for your neighbour, for your breath, for the wall, for each and every step you take, for each and every feeling or thought that arises, dwells, and decays. Be very careful. Care completely; so completely that there is no limit to this caring. There is just an open heart which embraces all activities because it knows that whatever is done, it is doing.

Bodhidharma goes on:

What is meant by knowing how to answer enmity? Finding oneself in adverse circumstances, one who practises the Way should consider: From beginningless time I have wandered in countless states, concerned only with the branches and missing the root. Thus I have given rise to numberless instances of hatred, anger, and wrong action. While I might not have committed violations in this lifetime, the fruits of wrong actions of the past are being

harvested now. This suffering has not been given to me by gods or by humans and so I will patiently accept all ills that occur without grudge or complaint. As well the sutras teach that when situations are penetrated with prajna the basic root is known. Awakening this thought, one will be aligned with prajna and use enmity by bringing it into the Way. This is called knowing how to answer enmity.

In this first practice of the second means of entry, the entry through conduct, Bodhidharma brings together both the gradual and direct approach, and merges them. The gradual approach trying to be better than we are through giving rise to patience with whatever situation we might find ourselves in, to free ourselves from struggle, jealousy and anger, and yet at the same time to realize that all situations can be penetrated with prajna, and the basic root known right there.

Now I'll repeat myself once more. If you penetrate any cloud in the sky, no matter how dark, or large, no matter its shape, penetrate any cloud and you reach only the sky. The sky which is beyond grasping, that extends in all directions, and that appears as clouds of many different shapes, that folds in upon itself and plays with itself as clouds. But penetrate any of these clouds, even a sky overcast and grey and heavy, penetrate that in any place and you find only this sky.

Concerning the gradual approach, Bodhidharma recommends that, finding oneself in adverse circumstances, you should take a look at the situation. You should realize that from beginningless time there has been this wandering in countless states.

Here Bodhidharma is talking about the rising and falling of bodies and minds through the wheel of birth and death. The wheel of birth and death, though, arises in this lifetime, in this body and mind, in this moment, as you wander through the hell-realm of claustrophobia and anger, through the god-realm of bliss and momentary ecstasy, through the hungry-ghost realm of poverty and self-consciousness and hesitation. Wandering through all of these states one was lost and tangled in the branches and leaves, and missing the very root of things, the very root of your existence, the very heart of your life. And this has been beginningless; which means one can't find any particular situation to blame, any particular thing that you have done.

Bodhidharma says you can't blame anybody else either, gods or humans. Thoughts arise, dwell, and decay. Feelings swell and shift like tides. And you never know what thought is going to come up, what feeling will arise, because this process of grasping, of solidifying, of freezing, that we call self-image, is completely random. It has no reason; it follows no plan. It simply schemes and engages in strategies. So hatred, anger and wrong action, boredom, lust, fear, joy, kindness, any of these states might arise, and this is beginningless. You have no place for your blame to rest. You did not choose for this thought to arise, and so there is no blame. The arising of these one hundred thousand dharmas is completely free of blame, free of guilt, and yet we have this responsibility to live, this responsibility to pay attention.

So in the midst of this adverse circumstance, in the midst of confusion, in the midst of fear, in the midst of poverty, in the midst of aching shoulders and knees, ankles and minds screaming out in the afternoon, in this sesshin, there is no blame, no guilt. But there is responsibility. Everything that we have done makes us who and what we are, and yet there is so little that we have actually truly done, since most of our activity has simply been habit, simply a playing out of patterns of reactivity and endless interpretations.

This beginningless though also refers, I believe, to that place which is completely without beginning, completely without end. This beginningless is the heart of our lives, the Actual Nature of this moment of experiencing. It is that which experiences. It is this moment, which has no beginning, and no end. Because in this moment there is not a scrap or a shred of time to be found. In this moment the whole body arises and exerts itself, the whole world arises and exerts itself as this very moment.

So in whatever arises, practise thoroughly, which is the characteristic of the gradual path: thoroughness, step by step. And yet at the same time, with each step penetrate into the root, penetrate into the groundlessness of this moment, into the formlessness of form, into the forming of this formlessness, and its spontaneous passing. See that the wheel of birth and death revolves around a point that does not turn. Sit in that place, and you will understand the Way.

But whether you understand or don't understand, understand that it is this moment of your life. Practise this moment of your life and all understanding will open for you, as this moment opens, as this breath opens, as again and again you experience your life for the very first time.

Take care, and give care.

Please, enjoy yourselves.

4: Entry Through Conduct: According With Circumstances

by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

Daijozan, January 29, 1989

Good evening.

Some of you might feel relieved that it's evening, and there are only a couple of hours left in this sesshin. But please, do not waste your time by waiting for something to happen, even for this sesshin to end. Instead of waiting your practice out, measuring the time with your breath, breathe this breath, practise this moment, this moment of breath, of sitting, recognizing the mind of Awakening, coming back to the breath in this moment. Tender joints, tender mind. Even the aching of your ankles and knees seem to know something that your thoughts and strategies don't know. They know and they proclaim that it is this moment. So instead of avoiding your aches and pains, simply come back to them. Come back to feeling with the whole body, from crown to toe.

We will continue to hear from Bodhidharma daishi and Two Entries and Four Practices:

According with circumstances means: There is no self in whatever arises as the play of causal conditions. Feeling good or feeling bad are both born from previous activities. If I wind up with name and fame, this is in

response to past actions; when the momentum of these conditions gives way, whatever I might presently enjoy will decay. Why rejoice about it? Win or lose, let me work with whatever conditions may arise. Awareness itself does not increase or decrease. I will not be swayed by the winds of fortune for I am intimately aligned with the Way. This is called according with conditions.

In the previous practice of the entries through conduct, we spoke of knowing how to answer enmity, being open to our confusion, being open to our doubts and hesitations, being open to our fears, yet without being consumed by them, without becoming attached to them. This is the beginning of maitri or metta, fundamental warmth or friendliness, which is the basis of karuna, or Buddhist compassion.

Coming face to face with ourselves, we find ourselves often scurrying away into a corner just as we begin to get a glimpse. Coming face to face with ourselves often we find only a parade of costumes and tricks. But to see clearly means to see all of how we are, and it is difficult, because we've spent so much time refusing to see or to be seen as we fear we really are. Metta or maitri, this fundamental warmth or basic friendliness, is itself actually an aspect of wisdom, an aspect of clear seeing. It is seeing that gives rise to maitri, and it is maitri that allows deeper and more complete seeing. So maitri is recognizing a game for a game, and perhaps in the midst of the game, recognizing the groundlessness of all games, of all pretences, of all strategies, and the groundlessness of experience itself.

In the first entry through conduct, of knowing how to answer enmity, Bodhidharma advises you to free yourself from holding a grudge about your experiencing and to simply experience what is being experienced, and this is difficult for us, to let go of our attachment to our own pain; difficult for us to free ourselves from attaching blame.

In this next practice, which here is called according with circumstances, we are asked to let go as well of the various ways in which we congratulate ourselves, to let go of our attachment to fame, happiness, and joy. We are asked to let go of our pain, our fear, and also to let go of our ceaseless search for happiness, to let go of hope, so that we can see clearly what is present, completely without distortion, completely without jumping the gun or feeling backed into a corner.

According with circumstances, Bodhidharma points out, begins with the realization, or at least the understanding, that there is no self, no entity in either the observer or what is being observed, in the experience or in the experiencer. That is to say, there is no experiencer. There is no experience. There is simply the display of experiencing. There is no knower, nothing which is known. There is simply the unfolding and opening of this process of knowing: Knowing the Dharma, knowing a cup of coffee, knowing a friend, knowing the feeling of the sun on your cheek, and knowing that whatever arises is the play of causal conditions. That is to say that everything interacts, everything arises together, that each thing makes every other thing what it is.

And so having developed some ability to feel our own pain without avoiding it and without attaching to it, having uncovered the possibility of not being afraid of our fear, we must look very closely at what is arising. We must understand that just as we place blame, we also try to take or give credit.

People will take credit for the silliest things. They will say thing like, "Well, I've been able to grow a beard since I was twelve," as if they have somehow had something to do with that. They will place credit on somebody else for

making them feel good, for making them feel confident. They will think that it is they who are thinking the thoughts that are arising.

Whatever arises simply plays itself out. It simply, at some point, gives way. So Bodhidharma says, "Why rejoice about it? Why lament over it?"This doesn't mean don't pay any attention to it, hide yourself from it, become withered and dry by avoiding pleasure, avoiding joy, but simply give and take no blame, nor credit.

"Win or lose, may I work with whatever conditions may arise." The arising of these thoughts and these experiences, directly in this arising, directly in what we are experiencing now, we can unfold and experience the Way itself; we can establish our practice there. We can clarify these vital questions of: "Who is it?"" What is it?"

Directly, in whatever is present, the Actual Nature of experiencing presents itself, sometimes as wall, sometimes as breath, sometimes as floor, as attention skips from one to the other. But although attention might become lost in a thought, might be mindful, Awareness itself does not increase nor decrease. Just as no matter how many objects are shown to a mirror, this showing does not wear out the mirror, the mirror doesn't lose anything when it reflects a hand, and then a face, and then a field of swaying grass, and then the sun, and then a bird. It does not lose anything each time it reflects. It does not gain anything either. The reflections arise and then are gone. No matter how many clouds fill the sky, the sky is still open in all directions.

Bodhidharma says: "Why rejoice about it? Win or lose, let me work with whatever conditions may arise. Awareness itself does not increase or decrease. I will not be swayed by the winds of fortune for I am intimately aligned with the Way."

Being intimately aligned with the Way is to be intimate with our own selves, intimate with our own experience, meeting whatever arises fully, openly, with complete maitri. Can we be so intimate with ourselves, so intimate with our experience, so intimate with our world that we can live free of guilt and blame, and credit and searching? Can we simply live our lives that much? One doesn't need to hide in the lotus posture, facing a wall, in order to avoid the winds of fortune by searching for some subtle blissful state and attaching to that and being Buddha. Being Buddha is to realize the nature of the arising of all experience. To practise this is to align oneself with the Way, whether facing the wall in the Zendo, or facing a friend, facing one's own fear.

Sitting in this Zendo we sit in the place where we can allow ourselves perhaps to begin to experience this maitri, this freedom from hope and fear. So do not come here to hide. Come here to understand and release your deceptions. The ways in which you perhaps have been deceived by others, perhaps the ways in which you deceive others. But regardless of whether we regard our conditioning as social conditioning, or the conditioning that arises through our own habits, the truth is that there is simply conditioning. There is simply living one's life as one was, instead of as one is: living one's live on the basis of memory and expectation, and deceiving oneself about one's life.

Practice is simple honesty. Honesty with the breath, honesty with the moment, honesty with one's own motives, honesty with the coming and going of the ten thousand dharmas, honesty with the fact that this is Buddha, honesty with one's own fundamental freedom. Which can only be seen through being honest about one's myriad deceptions. As we sit, knees aching, mind aching, somehow our heart begins to ache. Somehow our heart begins to beat. Somehow our heart begins to break through its armour. And we can feel the currents of the open air. This

aching of the heart means opening the ways in which we isolate ourselves from others, the ways in which we isolate ourselves from ourselves. This ache is the recognition of the boundaries that we have drawn, that we have enclosed ourselves in. And this ache is the beginning of the recognition that there is no barrier.

Dogen zenji in Fukanzazengi says, "traps and cages spring open" when you realize that "there is only Dharma here." There is only this moment. There is only this seeing, this hearing, there is only Buddha is all directions. There is only the vast wealth and spaciousness of our lives. A vastness so without limit, so without boundary, that we felt we had to limit it somehow, we had to hide from it, because we didn't know what to do with it. And so we drew these boundaries. We set up these walls. We lost ourselves within hope and fear.

But the aching of our heart stirs in the midst of our confusion. And we begin to recognize, truly recognize, that the recognition of confusion is the germinal stirring of wisdom, of clarity. And that this clarity is present in just simply attending.

Through simply attending, we free our attention from structures and barriers and boundaries and habits. We can release projections and transference, blame and credit. And we can come into our lives as they are, and realize this single bodymind, right here and now, whole and healed. And when we can stand up and truly stand up, and sit down, and truly sit down, then we can also question into and unfold the actual nature of this body and mind, and realize that "Oh shit..." it's even vaster than we thought. We call this dropping body and mind.1

There is never any place to hold to in this practice. Every time that you think you've thoroughly penetrated, you've just begun. And so now, let's begin again. Don't wait. Don't wait for your knees to feel better. Don't wait for your mind to feel clearer. Don't wait for your life to come up upon you and give you a hand with your living.

Here is your life. Here there is this seeing, this hearing, this knowing which arises as this very world. To penetrate into the nature of this world, just see, just hear, just practise like a blank wall, blank because it is featureless, free of strategy, not because it is blank of thought, blank of experiences. This biguan, this shikantaza, this realization of the display of emptiness and Awareness, is as close as this breath.

So what are you waiting for? Perhaps you're waiting for your image of what this Actual Nature might be, just as you wait for something to come along and make you feel better, just as you wait your lives away.

Please, let's begin again, with the freshness of this breath.

Please, enjoy yourselves.

1.

Shinjin-datsuraku.

5: Entry Through Being Free from Craving: Flick of a Bird's Wing; Entry Through Aligning With the Way; The Paramitas

by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

Daijozan, February 26, 1989

Good morning.

Through the rice paper blind over the dokusan room window, I can see birds falling from the branches, jumping from the roof, into midair, and flick their wings, and vanish. Each moment of flicking the wing, a moment of flying, arises and passes. Each moment of flight, flight is gone and renews itself. And the sun shines this bright morning, on the branches, and snow and ice, and birds, and buildings. It's a beautiful morning.

This beautiful morning we are gathered here, the harmonious community,1 gathered together to practice. In this gathering together there can be no holding. When there is no holding, then things can truly come together in harmony, and this can truly be Sangha. And where there is Sangha, there is the proclamation of Dharma. And where there is the proclamation of Dharma, there is awakening to the realization that this is Buddha.

Each moment of our lives let us recognize this harmony, this Sangha. In each moment of our lives, let us attend to and proclaim the Dharma. And in each moment let us wake up to this moment, and penetrate into this moment.

To penetrate means to fully enter into, to not stand outside of. To fully enter into, so fully that there is no entering. Entering into this coming, this going; entering into this moment; penetrating this moment, we are nowhere to be found.

This unfindability is like the flick of a bird's wing. Entering into this is like leaping from branch into midair, sheerly for the joy of it.

And so let us gather together and practise joyfully. Enter into this moment joyfully. This joy is not a matter of cranking up any good feeling. This joy is simply the expression of the freedom of the moment itself. Let us express this moment, express this practice, and celebrate this practice on such a beautiful morning.

On this beautiful morning, my back is wracked with pain.2 If I move to the right or the left, there's pain. And this pain flashes out, like the flick of a bird's wing.

It is a beautiful morning, and a good time to hear from our Ancestor Bodhidharma daiosho, and so we will continue to examine this text Two Entries and Four Practices.

The text states:

Being free of craving means: The usual person, through basic ignorance, fixates on one thing and then another, this is called craving. The sage however, understands truth and is free of ignorance, mind abiding evenly in non-action, and body moving in accord with the principle of causality. All dharmas are empty and there is nothing to crave or grasp. Merit and darkness follow each other. These three worlds (of desire, form, and formlessness), in which we have strayed altogether too long, are like a house on fire; all that is conditioned is dukkha and no one knows true peace. Realizing this, be free from fabrication and so never grasp at the various states of becoming. The sutra says, "Where there is craving, there is dukkha; cease from craving and there is joy." Know that being free of craving is the true practice of the Way.

Previously, we spoke of according with circumstances, and knowing how to answer enmity, and spoke of how these were related to the development of maitri, or metta in Pali. Maitri is a fundamental warmth, a fundamental joy or friendliness toward whatever is arising; bearing no grudge against one's life, but seeing that one's life is one's life, and that there is this living, and attending to this living. Facing our fear of being alive. Facing our fear that our life is not truly our life. Facing the fear of that which we already deeply know somewhere, that this life is not our life. This is life. Maitri is the awakening of some sense of the vibrancy of this life, and compassion for our fear, compassion for our fear of being who and what we are in any case. Maitri is the realization of the groundlessness of this fear, and the groundlessness of life itself, death itself, existence itself, non-existence itself.

So first, it is often necessary for us to accept adverse circumstances as being the case. And this is very difficult for us, but not quite as difficult as letting go of that which we cherish, and this is what Bodhidharma is addressing here, this being free of craving.

Bodhidharma says, "The usual person through basic ignorance fixates on one thing and then another." This basic ignorance is the root of self-image, avidya, basic ignorance, ignoring the fact that one is already fundamentally free and pretending to be bound. In the midst of space, trying to carve out some territory, as if one could build walls out of the sheer air, as if one could tie knots in the air, nail clouds in place.

This tying of knots, this erecting of walls, this nailing things down, is this fixating on one thing and then another, grasping at thought, grasping at sounds and feelings, grasping at forms, and names. This is called craving.

And so the craving that we need to address in our practice is not just a matter of giving up our attachment to fashion or a beautiful house, a beautiful wife, a beautiful husband, beautiful children, a beautiful life in which there are no problems. Dropping that does not liberate, because all craving, all greed, all lust, all anger, are rooted in this fundamental strategy of self-image to contract and localize, to create boundaries within emptiness, to grasp at emptiness. And so we must understand this process of fixation as it arises, and it arises not in a beautiful house. It arises in this moment of seeing and hearing. It arises as mind moments display themselves, and as this display is interpreted to be self and other, time and space, body and mind. This is the craving that we must understand and release.

Bodhidharma goes on, "The sage however, understands truth and is free of ignorance, mind abiding evenly in non-action, and body moving in accord with the principle of causality."

This mind which abides evenly in non-action is like the phrase in the Diamond Sutra which calls for "giving rise to a thought which dwells nowhere." This is the immovability of Things as They Are. Dharmas arise, dwell and decay.

The moment arises, dwells, and decays. Birth and death, bodies and minds, arise and fall continually. Yet there is something which never moves. What is this? This "not moving" is not a matter of staying, not a matter of holding or grasping. This "not moving" is not any place. It is not any thing. There is this seeing and hearing going on. There is this body and mind. There is this life. But what is it that lives? What is it that knows all of these objects of knowledge? Realizing this, one has a mind which abides evenly in non-action and the body moves in accord with the principle of causality, the principle of causality being karma or cause and effect.

This moving in accord with the principle of causality arises free of effort, free of struggle, because it is simply the easy and natural flow of dharmas. But fixating simply on this flow one is simply riding along on the surface. One can only be truly without effort when one realizes this non-moving mind. This non-moving mind cannot be realized through any strategy of contraction, cannot be realized through concentration, cannot be realized through anything at all because this non-moving mind is realization itself, and cannot be realized through anything. Whatever arises, arises as the expression of this non-moving mind.

In our practice we must open all boundaries, see all structures of attention and release them, recognize all strategies of contraction through direct penetration, direct insight, radical insight. Dogen zenji says, "This practice is not gaining concentration by stages and so on. It is simply the easy and joyful practice of the Buddha." There is ease and joy in the recognition of the coming and going. This coming and going arises without effort. Practise in this way, in the midst of this coming and going, directly penetrating this coming and going, to realize this non-moving mind. And then you can act freely because there is nothing being done, nothing to hold you, nothing to be held.

Bodhidharma goes on, "All dharmas are empty and there is nothing to crave or grasp. Merit and darkness follow each other."

If one grasps at a moment of joy, this strangles the moment of joy. Whatever name or fame might arise for you go just as easily. Realize that in this moment all dharmas are empty and ungraspable, and you will realize that it is not even a matter of letting go. It is a matter of realizing that there is no holding.

"These three worlds [of desire, form, and formlessness], in which we have strayed altogether too long, are like a house on fire; all that is conditioned is dukkha and no one knows true peace."

The three worlds of desire, form, and formlessness, are all the permutations of possibility within self-image, and all of these possibilities are simply rearranging conditions in different patterns. To realize the unconditioned one must not operate within the realm of conditions, in a conditioned manner. These conditions are like a house on fire.3 There is no safe place because every time you try to hold on, the ungraspability of Things as They Are exerts itself. And the more that you are determined to hold, the more that you suffer. To exit this house on fire, to leave the realm of conditions, does not mean to go any place. It simply means to see without conditions, to see the conditions without conditions. And then one realizes that there are no conditions, that Awareness is not what it is aware of, that this unfindability, this ungraspability, this boundarilessness, is this life.

Bodhidharma says, "Realizing this, be free from fabrication and so never grasp at the various states of becoming."

These states of becoming are again these three worlds, or the six realms, or the twelve links of interdependent emergence, pratitya-samutpada, or the five skandhas of form, basic reactivity, symbolization, patterning, and consciousness. These various states of becoming are simply this process of fixating on one thing and then another. Trying to fixate on that so that one can maintain this, but since that is always coming and going, the sounds are always coming and going, this is always coming and going, always struggling to become something, to define itself in some kind of way, to locate itself, to prove to itself that it exists. But it doesn't. Being free from fabrication, free from complexity, free from struggle and strategy, is to accord with Things as They Are, and to realize that Things as They Are, are free of craving because they are free of being anything at all.

The sutra says, "Where there is craving, there is dukkha; cease from craving and there is joy." Know that being free of craving is the true practice of the Way.

Being aligned with the Dharma [the text goes on] means the intimate knowing that what we call Dharma is in essence stainless, and knowing the emptiness of all that arises. It is undefiled and without attachment, and has no this or that within it. The sutra says; In the Dharma there are no sentient beings because it is free of any trace of being. In the Dharma there is no self because it is free of any trace of self-nature. The sage realizes and maintains this truth and is aligned with the Dharma. As in the Essence of Dharma there is no cherishing or possessing, the sage always practises generosity of body, life and property, and never grudges or knows the meaning of ill-will. With perfect understanding of the threefold emptiness of giving [no giver, gift, receiver], one is unswerving and free of grasping. One uses forms to free beings of stains, to embrace and transform them; one is unattached to fixed forms. This is benefiting oneself and others and adorns the Path of Awakening. As with the paramita [transcendent activity] of dana, so with the other five paramitas. The sage practises the six paramitas to exhaust deluded views and yet has nothing to practise. This is called being in accord with the Dharma.

The six paramitas, or six transcendent activities of the bodhisattva, are how the bodhisattva manifests and actualizes the Dharma for all beings. What is transcendental about these activities is that they occur beyond the range of this and that, beyond the range of self and other, and so are completely ungraspable by the usual mind. And yet not truly "transcendental" because they are simply based upon how things are, based upon tathata4, on Things as They Are; based and rooted within the groundlessness of this life.

Entering into this life, directly, or through these four practices is fundamentally the same, because they are all based upon this life. Our practice is simply a matter of the direct transmission of realizing that this is Buddha, this is Dharma, and this is Sangha. And so fundamentally, we are not even transmitting any particular practice. We are not transmitting following the breath, or working with koan, or even shikantaza, as a practice. Fundamentally we practise no-practice, we practise this Transmission, by entering most directly into this life. Bodhidharma is said to have described this Lineage as "a fundamental Teaching, the essence of Dharma", because this Lineage, this practice of Zen, transmits to us the essence of who and what we always already were, always are, and always will be. And Bodhidharma has also said, "A Teaching outside the Sutras, directly pointing to the Mind." This pointing to the Mind of course also points to the body, points to the wall, points to the floor, points to this moment of knowing, and asks: What is this? Who is this? To receive this Transmission we must answer this question. In answering this question we have received this Transmission. And we will have had Transmitted to us nothing at all.

This nothing at all is simply our life. This nothing at all is a place without boundary. This nothing at all is each and every thing.

I thank you, dear friends, for listening. May you be well, may you liberate all beings.

Please, enjoy yourselves.

1.

Sangha.

2.

Roshi had slipped on icy stairs and fallen, injuring his back for a few weeks.

3.

In the Lotus sutra the Buddha speaks of samsara as being like a house on fire.

4.

Immo. Suchness or Thusness or Things as They Are.

Four Horses

by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

Daijozan, May 29, 1988

This is the May 1988 Sesshin and we have just this one day to practice. To practise the limitless reaches of this room -- of this breath, of this step -- of this body, breath, speech, and mind, breathing in, breathing out. The Zendo breathes this in and out. The altar breathes this in and out. The heat of the May sun breathes this in and out. Sesshin breathes this in and out.

Coming into sesshin we come back to this breath again and again. We get lost, and we come back. Each time that we come back, here we are. Each mistake that we make, is another opportunity to explore how we are. A moment of guilt is this moment. A moment of clarity is this moment. Holding neither to clarity nor confusion, here we are. And so for this one day let us explore completely. Let us be willing to allow ourselves to open to how we are in this moment and in every moment, and seeing how we are let us question into who is it that is this way, that is that way. Coming back to this breath, what is this breath? Hearing the sound of the jet overhead, what is it that hears? Seeing, hearing, moving, breathing -- let us find out, and finding out let us question yet deeper.

In the "Shime" chapter of the Shobogenzo, Dogen zenji discusses the "four horses," which is a metaphor used by the Buddha in the Samyukta-Agama sutra. This metaphor of the four horses speaks about how we are when we practice -- four, one could say, classes of students. The first class, the superior class, is like a horse that immediately obeys its rider's direction by merely feeling the whip's shadow. The second horse acts accordingly when the whip brushes its hair, the hair of its mane. The third, where the whip has actually touched its flesh. And the fourth, the lowest kind of horse, is the one who acts only when the whip reaches its bare bones.

Although we often would like to be like the first horse and to catch the point immediately, often our attempt to be like this first horse is what makes us into the fourth horse. We need to be whipped again, and again, and again,

because we try to avoid the whip. By having an image or ideal about practice -- by trying to be like this first horse, or the second horse, or the third horse, or the fourth horse -- by comparing ourselves to anything, we get away from the essential realm of this very breath, this very thought, which arises without any comparisons, without any categories. It is this breath, this thought , it is this world arising now. Practising within an image of practice, we never quite allow ourselves to touch practice. To touch practice, we must practice completely. We must allow ourselves to glimpse the shadow and we must allow practice to touch our hair, to touch our flesh, and to penetrate to our very bones.

Self-image itself -- that which we find blocking our every move -- wants to practice. It does, it really does. It realizes that its strategies, its confusion, are painful. And because it is inherently Buddha, it also realizes that it does not even really exist, that it is merely a pretence at existing. It is merely the effort to try to become something, it is merely a process of contraction and grasping. It is intelligence becoming lost within objects of intelligence, in what it is being intelligent about. But it is intelligent and so it realizes the futility of all of this, and so would like to practice. But it wants to practice on its own terms. The problem is that practice is much too large to fit into any terms, much too vast to be controlled. Practice is the very air, the shadows and light around us, our very hair, our very flesh, our very bones.

When Bodhidharma gave Mind-to-Mind transmission to Huike, he said, "You have realized the marrow of my bones." Practising with our very bones, our very flesh, our very hair, the very air we breathe in and out, we come closer to the marrow of practice, the heart of practice. Allow the practice to be this very air, hair, flesh, and bones. We ourselves receive Bodhidharma's Transmission with every sound we hear, every breath we take, every breath we release.

When we compare ourselves to others, or how we would like to be, we cut ourselves off from the marrow of our bones; we cut ourselves off from our bones; we cut ourselves off from this very moment, which is the whole of our lives. And so all these concepts, these strategies of how we would like to be, of how we would like to practice, of how we would like to control practice arise, don't be ridden by them. When an idea of first horse, second horse, third horse, and fourth horse come up, don't worry about it. Just ride it, just saddle up. See the horizon, see the energy of the movement of the gallop, as they form and structure awareness and attention. Sit tall in the saddle, sit straight. Breathing in and out. If you are working through a koan, realize each breath to be koan, each floorboard to be koan. Each blade of grass, each sensation of cool breeze touching your face in the midst of the heat of the sun, are koan. Come back again and again to this very air, this play of light, and shadow, to this hair, flesh, and bones -- come back again and again . . . .

Welcome.

oya 1998: Resolutions

by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

December 31, 1998, Honzan Dainen-ji

Bonsho (temple bell)

"I've got to try to stop being such a mean-spirited son of a bitch." [said in a growl]

"This year, everything is going to be different." [said in a wistful, prim voice]

"I've really gotta shtop drinking." [slurred]

"I've got to be more confident and stand up to people. I can't let them continue to take advantage of me like this." [said in a delicate tone]

On New Year's Eve, people make all kinds of resolutions. But on New Year's day, or at best the next day, the story of what they would like to change about themselves vanishes into all of their other stories about themselves and the world. It is not a bad tradition to make such resolutions, but regardless of what we might say, what matters is what we do. All of our actions arise from how we understand or misunderstand ourselves and our world. Who we are is beyond understanding. What this world is, is beyond understanding. The things that we would like to change about ourselves have themselves arisen because we have misunderstood that who and what we are is beyond understanding.

Lost in our stories, lost in our strategies, we have lost ourselves and we have lost the vivid richness which is present right now and in each and every moment and throughout each and every day and night and year. This moment is beyond understanding. When you understand this, then the moment opens before you and all around you and you realize that you are arising within this opening, this exertion, this vividness. But if you only understand this, you have still misunderstood because this body and mind, all beings, all worlds arise within who you and all beings and all worlds truly are.

There are many traditions about the New Year. In fact, the New Year takes place at various times for various cultures. And of course, this moment of midnight is occurring at different times around the globe. Does anyone know why we decided that January 1st will fall on the day that it does? I certainly don't. We just decided to start measuring things this way. Really, the old year and the new year begin and end at the point that we begin to measure. But this moment cannot be measured. It arises everywhere, as everything, right now.

Mountains are tall, valleys are low, but the moment has no height that can be measured. It has no breadth, no thickness, because as soon as it is here as this moment, it is gone as that moment.

Perhaps we might greet the new year with resolutions or with trepidation. Perhaps we might look back on the old year as something that we are quite glad is over. We have - oh, let's say, 108 delusions about ourselves and the world, about this coming and going, this rising and falling which exerts itself as this moment, exerts itself as December 31st, exerts itself as January 1st. We say 108 because, well, that is a lot, isn't it? You can try to picture, say, three things, five things. At ten things it starts to get a little fuzzy. Try to picture 18 things, 37 things, 108 things. Can't do it. So 108 means measureless, numberless.

Here, we say "New Years". In Japan they say "Joya." Well, actually, they don't. We say "Joy-a" because it sounds nicer that way. But it should actually be something like "jo-ya no ka-ne." [this last is said in a deep Toshiro Mifune imitation]

On Joya, the tradition is to strike a bell 108 times. It could go on all night, but - you know - we have better things to do than sit around banging at a bell all night. So these 108 strikes represent the measureless richness that is present as each and every moment. Our 108 delusions are resolved into 108 Dharma Gates or possibilities of opening to reality, not simply through banging away at a bell, of course, but through hearing the sound, through allowing ourselves to be intimate with the hearing.

In the Zen Community, our tradition is to accompany these 108 strikes on the kesu, or the rin gong, with 108 recitations of a mantra. The Japanese word for "mantra," or one of the Japanese words, is "shin-gon", which means "true word".

Now, there really is no such thing as a true word. Nothing that we can say is true. The truth cannot be spoken. We can try. I try. But all that I can do is mutter bits and pieces and fragments of what is true about who you are and what the world is. So the shin gon or true word that we chant is something that tries to say something that is true. We chant this in Sanskrit. We chant the mantra, or the Prajnaparamita Hrydaya sutra, the Heart of Perfect Knowing Discourse mantra. This mantra summarizes what the Prajnaparamita Discourses say over and over and over again in various ways.

Gate, gate, paragate, parasam gate, Bhodi svaha. Gate means "gone". The next gate also means "gone". This moment is gone. Because it is gone, there is room for this moment. There is a moment of confusion followed by a moment of recognition of confusion. This can be followed by a moment of being confused further and feeling bad about your confusion. Or it can be followed by not following it, by just letting go of it, by just opening up to the reality of seeing and hearing, touching, tasting, smelling, thinking and feeling as a whole. And that is para gate. Para means "to transcend", to "move past". It means "over". Parasam gate means, well, more of the same, really. Sam means "truly" or "very".

So let's see, where are we? "Gone, gone, big gone," or "really gone." Parasam gate - really very gone. Bodhi means "intelligence". It means to Wake Up. "Gone, gone, really gone - or big gone - really very gone, Wake Up".

Svaha. Svaha is an ancient word. In the Vedas, it is used as a kind of exclamation to be made when casting something into a fire offering. It kind of means "there" or "yup" or "okay".

So, what do we have? "Gone, gone, really gone (or big gone), really very gone, Wake Up! Okay"?

But you see, although this is called a Shin-gon or true word, what it is saying is not really true. Because who and what you are is always already Awake. Who and what you are is beyond confusion, clarity, delusion and enlightenment. Who you are presents itself in such a way that it is never merely something which is present. It is utterly ungraspable. Because it is ungraspable, to realize it all that you have to do is to release everything that you believe to be true, to release all of your understandings as well as your misunderstandings.

This releasing is what the process of Zen practice is. And so, our tradition in the Zen Community is to get off to a good start as the New Year begins by sitting, before we bang the bell, before we shout "Gone, gone, really gone, really very gone, Wake Up! Okay?"

I am so glad that we have the opportunity to do this together this evening. However, in order for this to be really worth doing, I think that we should undertsand that the only resolutions that really matter are resolving the mind into the body, resolving the bodymind into the Field of Present Experience, resolving the Field of Present Experience into That in which it arises: experiencing or Awareness in Itself.

Zen practice is taking responsibility for whatever we have understood about how and who we truly are. Even if that understanding is only a glimpse, still if it has ever happened the question is, what are you going to do about it? Zen practice is taking responsibility for the truth. And so, there is a little resolution I would like to make with you this evening. This is a gatha, or a verse, that I composed many, many years ago with your grandfather in Dharma, Joshu Dainen roshi. This gatha is used as part of the conclusion of our ceremony of Fusatsu, or Renewal of the Precepts:

We now resolve to enter into this Way

again and again without limit.

We now resolve to penetrate all delusion

and clarify all that is into wisdom beyond wisdom.

We now resolve to practice and teach without fail.

[the teisho ends with three strikes of the Hansaku]

Kwannon

A teisho by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

May 6, 1986, River Road Zendo

At the end of every morning or evening block of sitting we chant the Four Great Vows.

All beings without number, we vow to liberate.

Endless obsessions, we vow to release.

Dharma gates beyond measure, we vow to penetrate.

Limitless Awakening, we vow to unfold.

We vow to penetrate from mind moment to mind moment, we vow to attain the Great Way of the Buddha, the Great Way of Waking Up.

These Four Great Vows are very precious because they very concisely express what we have been doing for over 2,500 years from day to day, from moment to moment. Waking up in the morning, having a cup of coffee, going to work or a monk being woken by a wooden clap at 3:30 in the morning.

On Sunday we were chanting the mantra of Kwannon Bosatsu or Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva. Avalokiteshvara is the traditional symbol or embodiment of compassion and can be seen in many different forms. Guanyin, the little porcelain lady that you often see in Chinese stores is a form of Kwannon. Then, there is the form with three heads and eight arms that we read about in Dogen zenji's Uji or Being-Time. And there's also a form with eleven heads and a thousand arms.

But Kwannon doesn't just have eleven heads and a thousand arms. Kwannon is all eyes, all arms, all hands. It's nothing else. Just seeing. Just reaching out. Who is this embodiment of compassion? What are these eyes, these hands? They're your entire body. They fill the ten directions, the three times. There's nothing else but this. There can't be anything else but this when we realize our lives as the Buddha did.

Everywhere we turn, everywhere we look, there's so much confusion and suffering and deluded desires. People go up and down, and the world gets hungrier, and the world gets more bloated.

But when we say "compassion" we're not talking about running out and saving the world like some sort of fanatic missionaries. Instead, through looking at how we live our own lives, understanding our own minds and bodies from moment to moment, and through noticing the people that we know and the people that we meet we are beginning to unfold those hands, beginning to open those eyes of Kwannon.

As we continue our practice, our hearts begin to become a bit more tender, a bit more open. So the scar tissue of our defensiveness begins to fade. And so t he more that our hearts heal, the more open they are to wounds. Our confusion might become much more vivid so that we can recognize it as confusion. All of the things that we had thought to be us might begin clamoring a little bit more loudly, playing themselves a little bit more vividly, and might drag us up and close down a bit more frequently.

So the first place for these eyes and hands of Kwannon to open is towards ourselves. Seeing our confusion, seeing our strategies, our hopes and our fears, we begin developing some sort of patience towards them, some sort of understanding and wisdom and compassion. And then we can find ourselves standing free of judgements and condemnations and indulgences.

To be compassionate towards our habitual tendencies does not mean to accept them as inevitable, just as much as it means to not reject them. Compassion isn't soppy mindedness. It is mindfulness and insight, seeing clearly

what needs to be done. And doing it again, and again and again. No matter how lost we become in confusion, sooner or later we wake up again and again.

And so the eyes and hands of Kwannon begin to open. And the more that we see, the more we begin to recognize that all time and space are these hands and these eyes. Just reaching out, just opening up.

Upstairs, before the sitting we had been looking at a picture of the "starving Buddha". The picture is of a statue of the Buddha as a rack of ribs and bones with a little bit of flesh stretched over it, the veins standing forth on his brows, on his forearms. This is a depiction of the Buddha when he was still engaging in various typical Hindic ascetic practices, in this case extreme fasting. It's said that the Buddha explored and endured these exertions, due to his great compassion so that he could understand and transcend them. Just because he was so damned good at everything, he was a lot better at fasting than most of the other sadhus, and he was able to subsist on just a couple grains of rice and a sip of water. He was very, very good at this. But sooner or later, he recognized that no matter how good he became at this, there was no real purification going on. He was just endangering his body and mind. And if he died without waking up, then he would not have found the way to end suffering. And so eventually he began to eat. In fact, it's said that a woman named Sujata saw him and offered him some milk mixed with ghee and honey and he drank it and started to feel better. And so then he went off and sat up under the bodhi tree and woke up.

But the point of that picture wasn't that the Buddha was doing something wrong here, something "fucked up". The Buddha's exertion in compassion was such that he would do whatever needed to be done, without limit. So, all of those ribs standing forth, they're hands reaching out. All of those veins are eyes.

The compassion which we extend towards ourselves has to be without limit, has to be without preconceived strategies, without judgment. And the compassion with which we begin to reach out towards and understand others has to be in the same way. Working for their benefit, without pity, without a sense of being superior. Just a sense of one hand bandaging the other hand that's been cut.

Compassion isn't just a "bleeding heart". It's an intelligent heart.

During the Dharma Assembly on karma and death, we talked about compassion being inseparable from wisdom and wisdom being inseparable from compassion. But as Daian pointed out, when we begin to see that the ten directions and the three times are free of our biases, even if it is somehow an ethical universe, then it's a universe that doesn't operate according to our own personal ethics. Therefore, "compassion" does need to be stressed. We do not need to focus on and over emphasize "compassion" because it is a loaded word for people. True wisdom, true seeing, porajnap is itself compassion and true compassion is itself true seeing.

If we see an habitual tendency and see it clearly, then there's just that seeing. There's no judgment. There need be no sense of anxiety about it. There's no need for embarrassment. There's no need to chalk up a white mark or a black mark as the Tibetan Kadampa masters used to do. It's just there. There's just seeing. The more than that seeing is surrendered into then the more wisdom arises, the more compassion arises. The clearer we become, the clearer the environment that we create for others becomes. From moment to moment, we liberate all beings. All of the thoughts and images and preconceptions within us are naturally Kwannon.

The Three Pure Precepts say: there is no wrong action, there is only the arising of benefit, there is only the benefit of all beings. Who are these beings? Who is Kwannon? Where are these eyes and hands?

I would give a katsu but I think everybody is so foggy at the moment, it wouldn't particularly matter at this point. Can we be compassionate towards this fogginess, without judging it and without indulging it but just seeing clearly what it is, how it arises? Seeing how habitual it is? The word habitual isn't a condemnation. It's merely an acknowledgement of a fact. It's also a fact that we can stand free of this. But we can't stand free of the states we fall into by trying to suppress them or trying to pretend that they're not there. Standing free means to clarify them from within.

As practice deepens then every time they come up, there's seeing. This seeing itself transforms confusion into wisdom. The Buddha is born nowhere but from the womb of the three kleshas, from passion, aggression and stupidity. It's only here. Otherwise being Buddha would be a stranger to you, an impossibility for you. Buddha is here as this seeing, this hearing, this very deportment of the bodymind.

The more that we begin to recognize clarity, the more we begin to recognize its taste, the more the bodymind begins to unfold. The body begins to unfold its own natural dignity.

Again and again and again, confusion arises, laziness arises, resentment arises, lust arises. And again and again and again, we wake up.

You know, this moment of waking up to reality does not have to take too long.

Monkey in the House of Six Windows

by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin

Zazen-ji, June 10, 1990

Sun and clouds and rain. Thoughts and feelings and sights and sounds. Self and other. This and that. Experiences arise and present themselves, always shifting and changing. A blade of grass with a drop of rain dangling from its tip. The sun seen burning through a mass of grey clouds. Waking up in the morning feeling like shit, wandering around throughout the day, bumping into things, grasping at things, pushing things away, coming and going.

The Nirvana Sutra says that usual mind is like a monkey in a house with six windows. There's seeing and hearing, touching and tasting, smelling and consciousness. Through these six windows the world can be seen coming and going. The monkey sometimes thinks that it owns the house and so it just sits in the middle of the floor, waiting for something to enter into its territory, something to come and try to take its house away from it. Sometimes it thinks it senses something so it leaps up off its haunches and lands on a windowsill and peers out to see what's going on out there. Then it hears something and so it leaps off and hangs peering through the window of hearing. Then it smells something, it tastes something, it thinks something; it jumps around back and forth, bouncing madly from wall to wall until it becomes so exhausted it collapses into the middle of the floor again, where it can

see through each of the windows, but it can't see anything clearly. It is so exhausted that it goes to sleep for a while; and then something stirs and it's up leaping again from window to window.

Attention crouches inside the bodymind, leaping from sense to sense, grasping at this, grasping at that. In zazen, the bodymind sits; the house sits. The monkey thinks it owns the house and it is still jumping around but at least the house is where it is. From the house's point of view there's this thing inside of it, clawing, jumping, shrieking. Can you feel how seriously it takes itself?

A thought comes up. It is a thought about how the world is; the world is a hateful place, it's a bad place. There's a beautiful flower! I'm itchy. What's that sound? It sounds like a bird. My knee hurts.

The house can sit and allow its windows to be completely open to the world; instead of glass, instead of walls, the house then begins to see the world and realizes that the world is not something outside of it but that the house is arising within the world. We don't need to get rid of the monkey, we don't need to even tame the monkey. We simply need to take the walls of the house down. Then the monkey has nowhere to leap to, has no purpose, it is no longer enclosed. The monkey then realizes that it too is arising in the world.

Moment after moment, out of habit or pattern, attention pulls itself away from this moment of experiencing and leaps into a past moment, or pushes itself into a future moment of expectation, or grabs and clutches at only the smallest part of this moment, perhaps that which is seen, perhaps that which is heard, perhaps that which is thought.

Just leave the monkey alone! Let the monkey do whatever it wants to do. Practise like the house. The house always has its six windows. Can we slide the windows open, allow a fresh breeze to circulate through our rooms? Can we begin to ventilate the musty attic, sweep out the dusty basement? Can we see the ways in which the walls of the house are attempting to keep the world out and trying to keep something in? What's outside and what's inside? Well sure, there might be that monkey jumping around, but there's also a great deal of space; there's air, there's room. The fundamental quality of a room, beyond its four walls, ceiling and floor is that it's full of space. There's a vastness.

The air in front of your face, behind your back, and resting on top of your head is the same air that passes in and out of your lungs, the same air that stretches over mountain and valley, over the sea. It circles the earth, it embraces the blue of the sky and the shifting of the clouds. There is this bodymind; what is it that is inside the bodymind? What is it that is outside? Outside right now? There's a wall, and there are sounds, the feeling of the hands, and the hokkai-in, the Dharmadatu mudra of things as they are, resting in the lap. Is that inside or outside? Feel the thumbs touching lightly, fingers resting on top of each other like the petals of a flower. Are the hands inside or outside? There's the wall. You see the wall. Is that inside or outside? You see the wall with your mind, you feel the hands with your mind. What is the mind? Is the mind this succession of thoughts and feelings, or is it also seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling? That which is being seen, that which is being heard; is that inside or is that outside? Does this skin of the body enclose something, or does it simply arise, the same way that a sound arises? Is it simply being felt, being experienced, the way that a thought is experienced, the way that a song is experienced, the way that the world is experienced? In experiencing, is there an inside, is there an outside?

The windows, the walls, the house and the monkey all arise within this world. All of the things of your life arise within this living. What is this life? Is there an inside and an outside to life? Even death arises within life. Death is what life does. We breathe in and breathe out. Thirty ants dismantle a caterpillar. The flowers and leaves eat the sunlight. Even death is not outside of life; death is the activity of this living, being born is the activity of this living. But what is it that is born, what is it that dies? Is it separate from this living? What is it that is living each and every one of you? What is it that you are experiencing when you experience something? Whether it's your hand or someone's else's hand, whether it is standing up or sitting down, whether it is waking, sleeping or dreaming, whether it feels good or bad: what is it that you are experiencing? Is it possible for you to experience something outside of experiencing? Is it possible for you to know something without knowing it? Is there ever anything going on but this knowing, this space, this life?

In our practice we might try to do all kinds of things to the monkey; we might try to tame the monkey, we might try to teach it tricks, teach it how to put on a little suit, a funny little hat, learn how to do calculations. We might try to make the monkey chant the Heart Sutra. We might ask ourselves, "How did the monkey get in the house?" Or we might just simply open the doors, open the windows, take down the walls and let the monkey go free.

Zen is this life. Zen is facing yourself as you are. It is seeing how you are moment after moment, so that you can unfold for yourself, directly, who you are. Zen is meeting yourself face to face. Zen is the direct pointing to the nature of experiencing itself, to the nature of Awareness itself. When you meet the teachings you meet the practice; when you meet the practice you meet yourself. You encounter the teachings through words like this, through coming face to face with the teacher in the dokusan room. Can you meet the teacher as he or she is? Can you recognize that the teacher is just Awareness itself, presenting itself? Can you recognize that you are just Awareness itself, presenting itself? Can you meet the teacher as you are and as he is, so that there is only Awareness itself? This is Zen.

We speak of a direct transmission. The teachings and the teacher might point, but it is up to us to look. When we look, when we see, is there anything other than this looking, this seeing? Is there someone to receive transmission? Is there someone to offer it? Moment by moment, this moment expresses itself. What is it that you are aware of? What is it that is aware? Is there an inside or an outside to your experiencing?

The mind seems like a space with shifting surfaces of thoughts and feelings coming and going in it. Somehow a thought or a feeling can appear to be quite solid and if we attend to it, it seems to have a direction, it seems to locate itself some place. There is this space of mind, the spaces within the body, the space of the room in which this body is arising. Are these spaces separated from each other or is space just space? We tend to believe that space is that which is between objects, but what is the object? If we look very closely, perhaps we will see that it is space presenting itself as the object. If we look very closely here, very intimately, touch without barrier, perhaps we will find that all forms are formless forms. The Heart Sutra says "SHIKI SOKU ZE KU": form, in other words emptiness; "KU SOKU ZE SHIKI": emptiness, in other words, form. It depends on how you look at it, of course, but what is it that's looking? What is it that's experiencing?

I leave you with this experience. This moment of experiencing is completely open. The door stands so far ajar it comes off its hinges. Will you enter? Welcome.

No Consolation

Introduced by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

One of the questions that frequently comes up for students concerns the vast suffering experienced by people world wide due to war and other causes. A student brought this up recently in an email exchange, asking why there is so much contraction and how to practise with it. I asked Roshi if I could cut and paste some quotes from his own writing into my reply. Following that, he very kindly gave his permission for these quotes to be included in a text to be posted on our Website.

The first quote is copied from the issue of the eMirror that was sent out immediately following September 11th:

At Wednesday morning's formal sitting, Anzan roshi dedicated chanting the Komyo Shingon to "being mindful of the deaths of so many and this Great Matter of birth and death."

He has also said,

Birth and death are happening in each moment. This is always the case. Being mindful of this Great Matter of Birth and Death is not a matter of telling ourselves stories about it, but of being sensitive to the sheer vulnerability of ourselves and of all beings.

The events of Tuesday, September 11, 2001 are deeply shocking and truly terrible. But events of greater and lesser scale are always occurring every day. This is the world as it is. The states of aggression that have led to this violence occur to people in a greater or lesser scale every day. This is the world as it is. Passion, aggression, and stupidity are the three klesas, the three poisons that arise from the contraction of dividing our lives into self and other.

Our practice is to see through the contraction of self-image and release the gestures of attention that arise from it. We do this through the practice of whole-bodily mindfulness moment to moment.

The text that follows is an excerpt from an email exchange between Roshi and a student on the same subject.

Student: Since I heard that the US started air strikes on Afghanistan , a deep feeling of sadness keeps surging in bursts and waves of tears that swell up in the eyes.

Roshi: I have already wept for the millions that will die over the coming years on September 11. I wept again this afternoon. We have done the Komyo Shingon. Now I am writing to you.

Student: I don't have the tendency to be an overly emotional person and I don't have a tendency to indulge in these feelings in order to secure some solid states of feeling sad. There are just these surge of images of people scared, hiding, being bombed, kids, women, men, animals wounded, dying, screaming in distress. There are surges of tears and tightness in the stomach, in the chest, in the forehead region and behind the eyes. There is a

general tension and kind of anxiousness felt throughout the bodymind. Although I know that this kind of suffering occurs every day any week in many more than just one place in the world but this is the first time that I feel very closely involved in this.

Roshi: Then you have only really known that this kind of suffering occurs at all now. It is good that you have. There have been many peace protests, peace letters and petitions going around and as usual they have hardly any effect on our democratically elected leaders. This situation is sadly inevitable. It would not be enough for the West to withdraw from its long entanglement in affairs in Middle Eastern cultures that they do not understand and have no sympathy with.

The terrorists represent the implacable hatred for the enemies of God that saints and other fanatics feel. And they are saints, they are devoted to what they feel is good, and right, and true. They are also the extreme form of the dislocation that people brought up in basically a 15th Century worldview feel as their economies continue to decline, being outstripped by almost all other developing nations. Many people of Middle Eastern nations feel as strong a hatred of the West as do the terrorists but have not dedicated their lives to acting upon it.

Here is an absurd example of how bad it really is from a news item I sent out some time ago:

"Digitally composed pictures of Osama bin Laden (news - web sites) are flying through Pakistan's mobile phone network via SMS (short message sending) to become the most sought-after accessory in the country." Already an icon among certain Muslim groups, bin Laden has now become a digital icon as well. "'It was sent to me by a friend,' said Asif Azziz as he showed the grinning picture of the man blamed for the devastating September 11 bomb attacks on New York and Washington. 'It is cool, no?'

"The picture remains on the display of a mobile phone in a similar way to a screensaver on a desktop computer. Bin Laden's face can be manipulated to waggle his eyebrows, move his mouth and, in one particularly graphic rendition, explode dramatically."

In order for this "war" not to happen, everything about how everyone does every thing must change. And it will not. For a decade or so I have said that one of the best things that peoples of the West (and the East, although their histories are not so twined nor bitter) could do is to show an interest in the Middle East . I meant by this very, very simple things: hear their music, look at the beautiful traceries of their calligraphies, import their films. We have never really taken the Middle East seriously. (Except perhaps to buy a falafel or make hummus and feel virtuous because it wasn't meat and besides we're trying to lose weight). Any interest the West has shown at all until very recently was, for example, to translate the Qu'ran and other texts in order to inform Christian missionaries how to counter the culture of the people they were converting. Or to make possible a play in the Great Game played by Britain, Germany, and Russia even through the First World War. And since then there has been eighty years of manipulation of economies, states, and peoples (and collusion with such activities by this or that Middle Eastern state) by Western nations through the lack of knowledge and disinterest of their own people and short-sightedness of various officials.

The peoples of the Middle East are already deeply isolated. Being interested, being willing to listen to their voices, even in such simple ways, is still important and will still be important through these months and years. There will

be reprisals, there will be subterfuge, there will be an ongoing war that seems to have no point at which any one can say that they have "won".

And this is still true:

Dhammapada verses 3 - 5:

> "He abused me, hit me, beat me, robbed me"; for those who brood on this, hostility isn't stilled.
>
> "He abused me, hit me, beat me, robbed me"; for those who do not brood on this, hostility is stilled.

Hostilities aren't stilled through hostility no matter what. Hostilities are stilled through non-hostility alone. This is an old truth. Sadly, even peace protests tend to become angry events unless we let go of our stances. War is such a sad and awful process, the mass suffering of people is so unbearable and it is such a common occurrence in this world. It is unbearable. And it is this world as it is.

Student: Please shed some light and wisdom for me. I have very rarely felt so torn and sad.

Roshi: You might not like it. But it is true. As the Buddha pointed out over and over again: This is samsara, this is the closed cycle of conditioned experience. At best it will inevitably kill you and everyone you love. There is no other possibility. But there are much worse things possible. People not only harm each other and the world around them but kill. Deliberately. There is war, pestilence, and famine. This has always been so. As well as the millions of human lives that will be lost in these events over the coming months and years, as you have said, there are also the birds and cattle and goats and horses and dogs and cats and insects that will be killed by explosions and the famine and other hardships that will follow devastation. As well as this, it gets worse. People who make money by buying and selling money move their money here and there and industries and nations and people lose money because of it; people can no longer buy rice to make gruel for their babies. This too is very real. There is also every likelihood that no matter what anyone does now, unless everyone everywhere changes everything that they do about everything (and most of us also just vanish magically from the earth without leaving the plagues and pollution that would result from so many human bodies), all wildlife on the planet will be extinct within twenty years or so except what can live in cities and between the ploughed rows of fields such as raccoons, crows, and so on. This too is very real. And it gets worse because the list goes on.

None of this can be remedied, no matter the depths of rage and anguish and horror and sadness we might feel. You cannot fix it. I cannot fix it. We can try not to break it further. But in any case, life will go on, as it does, doing what it does: birth, eating, shitting, death. This is a very beautiful world, but it is not a safe place. It is not fair. It is not nice. And yet the nature of all beings and of each being is, and always has been, and always will be limitless luminosity, beyond birth and death and all conditions.

Realizing this freedom, embodying this, and making it available to others in every way that we can is the only thing worth doing at all. This has nothing to do with trying to make the world safe or wishing it was nice. It has to do with the continuous practice of radical questioning and the dynamic activity of releasing. So I cannot help you with your sadness except to say: Feel sad, if sadness is present. A broken heart is a reasonable thing in this world. But do not become the sadness but do not avoid it. Feel the hands, feel the feet, keep the peripheral vision open.

Don't talk to yourself. Don't vent to others and encourage them to vent. If you are watching the news on TV, practise. If you are speaking, practise. If you are listening, practise. And follow the instructions you have been given. Sit when you can, as often as you can.

From everything that I know and what all of the Buddhas and Awakened Ancestors have known, this is the most and in fact the only important or useful thing you can ever really do: practise the Way. This is the only light and wisdom I have to offer. It is not consoling but I think you do not really want merely to be consoled.

Practice, Pain, and Posture

from the Series: Bodymind of the Way:

Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries

on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Shinjin Gakudo"

Rohatsu 1988 Sesshin, December 1st

Evening Comments

At the end of this morning's sitting I mentioned that if during the seven day training session one's practice were consumed by pain and frustration to the point that one could not practice the posture, then one could move one's legs. To do this, one would come to gassho, but without inhaling deeply. Make only a slight gassho so as not to distract the attention of the rest of the Sangha and then shift the legs, perhaps to seiza position and then continue. One should do this no more than once in a round of sitting, and certainly not in every round of sitting. If you have to move more than once in a round of intensive practice, then perhaps you should take a different posture for the next few hours; perhaps you should do zazen in seiza or in the agura (Burmese) posture rather than a half-lotus or quarter or a full-lotus. If you cannot practice your posture, then find a posture that you can practice, rather than sitting in a particular way only because it looks or feels to you like the 'right' posture or because it looks or feels like a Buddhist 'posture'. Just sit.

The other thing about pain in the knees, pain in the back, pain in the thighs, pain in the neck, pain in the forehead and jaws; as we practice, we allow whatever is present to unfold itself- our confusion as well as our clarity. When we allow ourselves to come face to face with it, a lot of the tension that we hold in the body through the actions of the mind, through the moments of our life, through our days, manifest very clearly in our zazen posture, because our posture is one of practice, of aligning ourselves with the Way and practicing the body. And so tension does come up, pain does come up. Beyond that, sitting with one's legs crossed for many hours a day, naturally the legs will go to sleep. Naturally there will be pain in the ligaments and knees as they are stretched and folded.

And yet if we can allow ourselves to feel the pain without trying to 'relate' to it in any way, without thinking of it as being 'our' pain, something different happens. This is not a matter of discipline, this is not a matter of holding the posture in order to look good. Trying to escape from one's posture is exactly the same as trying to escape from our own suffering as a whole. When we open to what is present, when we feel what is present, if our legs hurt then our legs hurt.

When I practice my legs hurt, and I've been sitting for well over twenty years now - and my legs hurt. This is not a matter of discipline, this is a matter of compassion. When we can feel the pain and allow the pain to practice, just as we allow the breath to practice, just as we allow our confusion to practice, allow our clarity to practice - when we allow the pain in our legs to practice it is no longer pain. It is just alive sensation.

When our legs hurt, they just hurt. Through this pain, if you have to have any relationship to it at all, let that relationship be one of compassion. Through the pain in your body, begin to allow yourself to open to it so that you can understand the incredible pain of the beings throughout these six realms of existence. Through the pain in your legs understand the pain of a body dying of cancer. Understand the pain of anger, understand the pain of frustration, understand the pain of continually struggling and trying to escape where you are to get to some other situation in which thing are going to be 'better'. Understand your own pain, and thus understand that of others. Understand how contracted and narrow our experience becomes when we are living a pattern of avoidance. Allow the pain to practice. Don't avoid it. Don't indulge in it. Just simply feel it.

If you find the posture to be difficult, then sit in a different posture the next round. During this round, if you find the pain to be very difficult and you find yourself to be unable to allow the pain to practice, then simply and gently and compassionately come to gassho, become aware of what you are doing and shift the leg or move the back. Otherwise there should be no visible movement. In your practice of the posture you must realign yourself with the posture constantly. Finding and coming back to the balance point of the breath or the koan as the mind wanders into confusion or sinks into dullness, the posture is formed in similar ways. Recognizing the mind of sinking or wandering, one re-aligns oneself with the mind of the practice in this moment. In the same way, one realigns one's posture. And so therefore one might straighten the neck, drop the scapula, bring the mudra in closer to the belly. Other than that, there should be no visible movement.

The more truly that you practice the posture the more that you will understand shinjin gakudo, how to study the Way through bodymind, and the more that you will understand your own suffering and the suffering of beings. Understanding this, you will be able to open the heart of compassion, And in opening the heart of compassion, begin to open the heart of wisdom.

The more that you continue to practice, the more that you become sensitive to how the bodymind is in this moment, you will begin to find various phenomena arising. For example, waves of energy running and coursing through the body, through the mind. You might find a tight band of tension in the belly, and then suddenly it shifts into a flowering deep in the belly, deep in the heart. You will find the chest opening. You will feel the ribs cracking. You will find tension arising in the jaw and then opening, and then pressure on the cheeks and the forehead. And then this drops. Witness this display of bodymind. Study this bodymind most thoroughly because this is the practice. This is not a matter of some model of discipline, this is a matter of attention, this is a matter of compassion.

Again, technically, the more that you understand how intimately body and mind are related, the more that you will understand how the muscles, the bones, the marrow are intermeshed so that when there is a deep pain in the lower back or the upper back or the shoulders or the neck, you will find that through slightly moving perhaps the knuckle of the right thumb, the pain drops. That muscular contraction can slide away, not through shaking oneself or moving or shifting or squirming or wriggling, but through simply moving the thumb so slightly. The thigh is locked. Moving back the left shoulder, the thigh opens.

Please, attend to this bodymind, study this bodymind. Do not suffer, do not indulge. Simply practice as this bodymind.

I know that these might seem like many hours of practice to you and I understand that. And as I said this morning, I am deeply moved by the sincerity of each and every one of you. Yet still we must allow ourselves to become yet more sincere. We must come to the limits of our sincerity. We must come to the limits of our practice. We must come to the limits of that which we believe possible in terms of body, and in terms of mind in order to let go of all the terms, the 'deals' that we might make, in order to go past our compromises and become alive to our life. So please, practice this body, practice this mind, practice this posture, this breath, this moment, as sincerely as you possibly can.

This is not a self-help course. This is not a mythology. This is not a faith. The things that I say when I talk about dropping body and mind, or when you hear Dogen zenji and Bodhidharma and the entirety of our lineage display and discuss their experience of the nature of things - is not simply metaphor. We are not kidding.

So please, practice most thoroughly, as thoroughly as you are able to. Understand yourselves most thoroughly. Do what you are able to do, and yet please, allow yourself to go past that limit.

Here in this Rohatsu training session, we celebrate and acknowledge the beginning of our lineage through the practice and realization of Sakyamuni Buddha. It is up to each and every one of you to renew this practice, to renew this lineage, to receive this Transmission, to understand and study this bodymind. To drop this bodymind and understand and actualize that which is living each and every one of you.

So please, do the best that you can, and enjoy yourselves.

* Recommended reading: Anmo Tuina for Zen Knees, from Zammai 9-10 (PDF download, 16MB).

River of Memory

Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

March 21, 1991, at Zazen-ji

Anzan roshi sitting zazen by a river

Sitting here, right now, in this moment of zazen, we come face-to-face with ourselves. Coming face-to-face with ourselves in this moment means to see how we are and how we have been, because right now, in this moment, the past presents itself. It rivers through us, flowing as memories, thoughts, feelings, expectations, patterns of reaction, comparisons, denial, aversion, grasping. Sometimes this presents itself simply as wandering off into thought again and again; a laziness of mind, a torpor and dullness, a kind of stupidity, blank-eyed gaped-mouth, almost drooling, going through the same old rituals again and again, liking this, disliking that.

Sometimes attention folds in upon itself, like a child burrowing beneath the covers, perhaps to avoid getting out of bed in the morning; perhaps to hide from the sound of its parents' raised voices, the sound of flesh hitting flesh. Perhaps we hide within ourselves, out of fear; perhaps just out of reluctance. Sometimes the past presents itself as this thrumming of a memory, a slippery image that begins to spool itself out into a succession of visions, of faces, of sounds, of colours and smells. Sometimes it is just a knot in the belly or in the chest. The whole bodymind is wired with the past, tied within itself. Muscles loop together. Thoughts strung one to the next, because self-image is always living out its past --- now. It is always playing the same old movies, listening to the same old song, making the same old comments. Nobody is listening but it keeps muttering to itself.

As the flow, the river, the samsara of conditioned experience flows through this moment, sometimes we feel overwhelmed by it. It is as if we are fish, swimming in the midst of the current of habit and conditioning. Sometimes there is a strong pull of aversion, a quick sweep of desire. Surrounded by the water, everything is distorted. Our lives are lived in suffocation. Nothing is accurate. We can't judge distance properly. We can't tell what is near or far because everything is distorted and filtered. Our movements are slow, heavy. Everything is painful, but so painful that it is numb; so numb that it feels normal.

But we are not living within the current of habit. The current of habit arise within us and we arise within this moment. Can we see the trickling of these habits? Can we see their movement, like sunlight shining upon water? Can we see that the patterns that are formed by these habits mean no more than the momentary images that arise in the dancing of light on the waves?

Practising this present moment in zazen does not mean absenting ourselves from our memories. It does not mean denying them because despite the fact that self-image lives only in its memories, it lives in denial of most of those memories. It edits them. It sections them off. It divides them, fragments them.

In order to realize who and what we are, we must go beyond all images of ourselves and of our world and of each other because these images are only memories. And yet, memory is how we know how to take a step. It's effortless. Memory is how we know how to cook our food, how to serve it to others. Memory is how we learn from our mistakes. And memory is also how we clarify our habits and patterns.

Mindfulness, 'smirti' in Sanskrit or "sati" in Pali, means to 'bring oneself back', to 'remember the moment'. From wherever one has been, one finds oneself back here. This is the action of smriti, of satti, of mindfulness --- remembering the present. And in the present, all memories unfold. Applying mindfulness moment after moment so that it is always this moment, then it is no longer necessary to remember the moment. Instead there is simply insight. There is simply direct and unhindered seeing. Through mindfulness, through insight, whatever has been buried, whatever has been locked away, must be opened in order for us to be whole.

Does that mean, then, that we must look through our memories, look through the holding patterns of tension that we sense in the back and in the jaw, the elbows and thighs? Must we then search for what is hidden? No. We need only to open whatever is present. We need only to attend openly. If there is a moment of fear then there is the knowing of this. If there is a moment of hesitation there is the knowing of this. If there is a childhood memory of a lonely terror, of a petty disappointment, of a secret cruelty, then it is known. It is known as memory. It is known as a thought. It is known as an image, as a texture of contraction. It is known as a flickering that is arising

within this whole moment of seeing and hearing and touching and tasting and smelling and thinking and feeling. It is known to be what it is. It is known that it is not what we are, but what we have been.

We do not need to inspect our memories and take inventory of them. But we need to see clearly whatever is arising, whatever blocks us, whatever boundaries are present, whatever is carrying us, whatever is overpowering us, whatever is arising within us. Whatever arises within our practice is arising to be opened, is arising to be liberated. It is liberated through open attention. As mindfulness opens into insight and insight opens into wisdom, as self opens to world and as world opens to experience, whatever we need to open will present itself. Therefore, there is nothing that we truly need to do. We need only to live this moment fully and completely, to live this moment in mindfulness, to live honestly.

Otherwise we are living a lie. We are living out our hesitations, our fears, our patterns, our denials. We are living out our avoidance of our own freedom, our own dignity, our own clarity. And we drown. Perhaps it takes us thirty years, fifty years, seventy years to drown in that river of memory, that river of habit, but surely we do and surely each moment of those seventy years is merely a kind of death.

In this moment, allow yourselves to come alive. Intensive practice is not necessarily dependent on sesshin. There is a sesshin this weekend, but what about right now? You must practise each moment as if it were your last because this moment… is the last. It can be the last because you are simply living it from the point of view of the past, or it can be the last because what you are in this moment rises and falls and each moment is the last moment and the first moment.

[Roshi shouts:] You have never been in this moment before. You have never been alive now, before. You have never breathed this breath, heard this sound, felt this touch. Freedom, liberation --- It’s so simple, so straightforward, so easy. It is just knowing things as they are.

Please, this evening, this moment, enjoy yourself.

Sleeves Tied Back

Commentaries on Dogen zenji's Tenzo kyokun

by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

Vanier Zendo, October-November 1986

transcribed and edited by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

These three classes were presented in 1986 by Roshi following zazen at the Vanier Zendo, the White Wind Zen Community's second centre. The classes were very informal so they should not be regarded as teisho. Anzan roshi was still working on a draft of the translation of "Tenzo kyokun: Instructions For the Tenzo" that he had done with Joshu Dainen zenji and so he used the translation published in "Moon in a Dewdrop" edited by Kazuaki Tanahashi. Had he been working from his own finished text, the classes would no doubt have been quite different. I have edited the text by inserting Roshi's translation which was published together with Dogen zenji's "Fushukuhanpo: How to Use Your Bowls" in 1996 as "Cooking Zen."

Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, February 23, 2004

Class 1: Sleeves Tied Back

by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

October 28, 1986 at the Vanier Zendo

This week we are going to begin taking a look at a text by Dogen zenji called "Tenzo kyokun" or "Instructions to the Chief Cook". It will probably take us several classes to work with this text and even so we are just going to go through it in a fairly introductory manner because this is a text which was composed separately from the 95 chapters of the "Shobogenzo". It is one of the texts contained within the "Eihei Shingi", or "Monastic Rules" which Dogen zenji composed for his monks at Eihei-ji and so a lot of the content of the text is intended directly for monks and priests and so on and so forth and their particular lifestyle and their particular way of doing things. But nonetheless this text has turned out to be one of the more "popular" of Dogen zenji's texts, shall we say, in the west, along with Genjokoan, Fukanzazengi and Uji. Several translations of "Tenzo kyokun" have come out and so obviously people seem to find something in the text; and what is in the text are instructions on how to cook as practice, how to take care of oneself and others and of what one is doing as practice.

Practice is concerned with realizing Buddha Nature, realizing that we have Buddha Nature, and completely Waking Up to Buddha Nature, completely manifesting Buddha Nature, leaving no gaps in our practice. So often we feel that only sitting is practice or perhaps kinhin is practice, or perhaps chanting is practice. But we breathe in and we breathe out and we move. If we live a life of practice, then this is practice.

Within the Jewel Net of Indra, within the luminous interdependence of all that is, all of this coming and going, nothing is separate from anything else and yet, everything is distinct and vibrant and clear. Because it is distinct and vibrant and clear it shows its Face1 clearly. And by looking into the Face of what this moment shows us we recognize this Face to be our own face and any task that we do brings this Face before us. In the practice of this Way there is nothing which can be left out and there is nothing which can be left undone. And so a lot of this text is concerned with very precise ways of doing things and it is also concerned with telling the tenzo, or the chief cook, how important it is to plan out just precisely how much food will be needed for the monks, how many monks there are in the Zendo; if there is anyone in the sick room; are there any visiting monks, and so on and so forth so that there will be enough food with no wastage.

This can contradict some of the more popular notions of what Zen practice is about. Zen practice is about being spontaneous and just doing whatever comes up in the moment - knocking over tables and laughing madly and so on and so forth. And these romantic notions can be quite attractive, especially when we are trying to escape our own responsibilities. We would like to validate this escape by pretending that it is Zen, following the Dao, the Way of Zen. The Way of the Dao, the Way of this moment is to complete this moment. If you breathe in, you have to breathe out. If you take one step, you take another step. And so you don't leave things undone; you don't leave things that others will have to take responsibility for because within this Jewel Net of Indra you are not alone.

This reminds me of something I was reading just recently about certain actions that occurred around 1945. Some scientists had fashioned an object named "Trinity". Trinity was the first atomic bomb. The scientists had had quite a good time working on Trinity. There were all sorts of sweet technical details to work out, simply fascinating work. When they were finished they weren't sure whether this thing was going to work or not. So as the test date drew near, there were all kinds of speculations as to what might happen. Perhaps it wouldn't go off. There seemed to be an outside chance that an atomic explosion would cause the atmosphere to catch on fire and the entire planet would burn. But they thought they'd take that risk because they wanted to see if it would work. One scientist was taking side bets as to whether the State of New Mexico would be vaporized.

Perhaps it is me, but this seems to be a little short-sighted. But how often do we do this, do we do something regardless of the effect that it will have on others or on ourselves? How often do we do things which, later on, we are ashamed of? Why would we do something that would embarrass us? But we do these things.

The law of karma, the law of cause and effect holds. (Although if one looks closer at the law of cause and effect, if one looks completely at this whole moment, one recognizes completely the Great Mirror Wisdom and sees that even cause and effect doesn't hold because actually nothing has ever happened. There is just simply this seamless web.) Yet still cause and effect hold. A moment of ignorance makes room for more moments of ignorance. The more dreams you allow yourself, the more that you dream; the more that you steal, the easier that you make it for yourself to steal. Why would you do such a thing? Why would we limit ourselves in these ways? And yet we do, forgetting that if we breathe in, we have to breathe out, we have to complete everything that we do.

So, in practice, we even have formal ways of taking meals known as "oryoki", in which there are no bowls or chopsticks or spoons that a practitioner leaves behind for someone else who has to clean up after them. When we finish sitting we fluff up the zafu and rest it against the wall. When we see someone, we look into their eyes.

So with this introduction we can begin to look at this text:

From ancient times communities of the practice of the Way of Awake Awareness have had six office holders who, as disciples of the Buddha, guide the activities of Awakening the community. Amongst these, the tenzo bears the responsibility of caring for the community's meals. The Zen Monastic Standards states, "The tenzo functions as the one who makes offerings with reverence to the monks."

Since ancient times this office has been held by realized monks who have the mind of the Way or by senior disciples who have roused the Way-seeking mind. This work requires exerting the Way. Those entrusted with this work but who lack the Way-seeking mind will only cause and endure hardship despite all their efforts. The Zen Monastic Standards states, "Putting the mind of the Way to work, serve carefully varied meals appropriate to each occasion and thus offer everyone to practice without hindrance."

In times past such great masters as Guishan Lingyu, Dongshan Shouchu, and others have served in this post. Although this is a matter of preparing and serving meals, the tenzo is not just "the cook."

So first of all, a large monastery has six officers, six people put in charge of various functions. Besides the teacher there is the administrator or director and his assistant, a treasurer, a practice supervisor, a cook and a work

leader. None of these are simply people working on jobs. These are people fulfilling Buddha activity, the activity of Buddha, the activities of the monastery, except that these positions were held by accomplished monks who have Way-seeking mind. We have had classes on this Way-seeking mind of bodaishin. Bodaishin, this Way-seeking mind, is the beginning point of practice, when we have some glimpse, some possibility of recognizing some innate dignity, wisdom, compassion, and all-embracing humour within ourselves. This is actually the starting point of our practice. We might be quite confused; we might have a great deal of suffering that we hope practice will take care of, that practice will help us to clarify it, and this possibility of clarification is the beginning point of practice: The recognition that there is something wrong and that it can somehow be righted is the Way-seeking mind. But the Way-seeking mind does not seek the Way elsewhere; it seeks the Way within this moment, within this action. Each action is the Way-seeking mind. The full realization of this Way-seeking mind is Ocean Seal Samadhi,2 is entering into the whole moment. It is complete kensho. And yet it doesn't end, this complete kensho doesn't end. The Way-seeking mind does not end. Although it does not look for the Way elsewhere, it does not blind itself to the fact that the Way continues endlessly. So the Way continually seeks the Way. Kensho is seeing into our own nature. Waking Up to this inherent Buddha Nature is Waking Up to the possibility of Waking Up and Waking Up again and again and again, moment after moment, action after action, completely seeing Complete Nature moment after moment. Not stopping with feeling better, not stopping with clarity, not stopping with compassion or all-embracing skillful means but continuing: continually penetrating the ten directions and the three times, seeing this coming and going, recognizing time and space and selves to be merely the compilation of intelligence, the deportment of this bodymind, that this bodymind is the Way itself. Each action is the Way itself. Each action is the Way-seeking mind. To truly fulfill the function of tenzo, one must have such a mind.

When I was in Song China, during spare moments I enquired of many elder monks who had served in the various offices about their experience. Their words to me were from the bone and marrow of the Awakened Ancestors who, having attained the Way, have passed it through the ages. We should carefully study the Zen Monastic Standards to understand the responsibility of the tenzo and also carefully consider the words of these senior monks. The cycle of one day and night begins following the noon meal. At this time the tenzo should go to the administrator and assistant administrator and procure the rice, vegetables, and other ingredients for the next day's morning and noon meals. Having received these things, you must care for them as you would the pupils of your own eyes. Thus Zen master Baoning Renyong said, "Care for the monastery's materials as if they were your eyes." The tenzo handles all food with respect, as if it were for the emperor; both cooked and uncooked food should be cared for in this way.

Following this all of the officers gather in the kitchen building in order to carefully consider the next days meals with regard to flavourings, vegetables to be used, and the kind of rice-gruel. The Zen Monastic Standards states, "In deciding the morning and noon meals, the amount of food and number of dishes, the tenzo should consult the other officers. The six officers are the administrator, assistant administrator, treasurer, disciplinarian, tenzo, and head caretaker. After the menu is decided post it on boards by the abbot's residence and the study hall." Following this the morning gruel may be prepared.

Do not just leave washing the rice or preparing the vegetables to others but use your own hands, your own eyes, your own sincerity. Do not fragment your attention but see what each moment calls for; if you take care of just one thing then you will be careless of the other. Do not miss the opportunity of offering even a single drop into the ocean of merit or a grain atop the mountain of the roots of beneficial activity.

The Zen Monastic Standards states, "If the six flavours are not in harmony and three virtues are lacking, then the tenzo is not truly serving the community."

It says do not give away your opportunity. Each task that is presented to us is an opportunity to complete this task, to complete this moment, to realize this Buddha nature. So if we are given something to do this is not a burden, it is an opportunity. If someone yells at us this is an opportunity for us to see how we are at that moment and to recognize their mind as our own mind and somehow to evoke the dignity of Buddha nature within that moment. This is an opportunity, not an attack. When someone is hungry, to feed them is an opportunity, an opportunity to extend ourselves past our usual limits to enter completely into the real world.

Be careful of sand when you wash the rice, be careful of the rice when you throw out the sand. Take continuous care and the three virtues will be naturally complete and the six flavours harmonious.

The six tastes are sweet, salty, sour, so on and so forth.3 The three virtues are mildness, purity and dignity. So the food that you present to the monks is not slop. You treat each vegetable, each grain of rice completely, using it as an offering, an offering of your own practice to those in the Zendo who are practising. When we chant our brief form of the Meal Chant we go through the five reflections:

This meal arises from the labour of all beings,

May we remember this offering.

Greed arises from self-cherishing,

May we be free in moderation.

This offering sustains us, gives us strength

May we be grateful.

We use this strength

And attain the Way,

Prajnaparamita!

And so there is this sense of responsibility even in eating, in even being able to take a breath. Because all sentient beings throughout all times and all directions are sustaining and feeding and nursing and in turn, you feed and nourish and nurse them.

Wash the sand when you examine the rice. Wash the rice when you throw away the sand. Be careful.

There is the story of Huineng and Hongren. When Huineng, the Sixth Ancestor was studying at Hongren's monastery, his main work there was to mill the rice. And after he'd shown some promise Hongren approached him and asked him what he was doing and he said, "I am sifting the rice. I am sifting the chaff from the rice."

And Hongren said, "Is it complete?"

Huineng said, "I am still sifting the rice".

He was still completing his practice with each grain of rice, still clarifying his mind moment to moment to moment. Although he'd shown great promise he did not take this promise as a credential, he continued his practice through the work of sifting grains of rice.

Xuefeng once practiced as tenzo under Zen master Dongshan. Once when he was washing rice, Dongshan said, "Do you wash the sand away from the rice, or the rice away from the sand?"

Xuefeng said, "I wash them both away together?"

Dongshan said, "Then what will the community eat?"

Xuefeng overturned the washing bowl.

Dongshan said, "You should go and study with someone else. Soon."

Senior students, from ancient times, always practiced with the mind which finds the Way and so how can we of later generations not do the same? Those of old tell us, "For the tenzo, the mind which finds the Way actualizes itself through working with rolled up sleeves."

Working with the sleeves tied back. - A monk's koromo, the formal robes, have very, very long sleeves which tend to get in your way, knocking over incense burners and so on and so forth, truly helping one to be quite mindful. But in order to do any task, even to write a letter and certainly to work in the kitchen, you draw the sleeves back, you tie them behind your back so that they stay. So this is truly rolling up your sleeves and getting to work.

You yourself should examine the rice and sand so that rice is not thrown out with sand. The Zen Monastic Standards states, "In preparing the food, the tenzo is responsible for examining it to ensure that it is clean." Do not waste grains of rice when draining off the rinsing water. In olden times a cloth bag was used as a filter when draining the rinse water. When the rice is placed in the iron cooking pot, take care of it so that rats do not fall into it or idlers just hang around poking at it.

After cooking the vegetables for the morning meal and before preparing rice and soup for the noon meal bring together the rice pots and other utensils and make sure that everything is well-ordered and clean. Put whatever goes to a high place in a high place and whatever goes to a low place in a low place so that, high and low, everything settles in the place appropriate for it.

There is no "high" or "low", one just puts things where they go. No vegetable is better than another vegetable. No person is better than another person. No moment is better than another moment because it is always this moment and whoever you meet, you meet this person.

Chopsticks for vegetables, ladles, and all other tools should be chosen with great care, cleaned thoroughly, and placed well.

After this, begin work on the coming day's meals. Remove any weevils, lentils, husks, sand, and pebbles carefully. While you are selecting the rice and vegetables, the tenzo's assistants should chant the sutras to the shining being of the hearth. When preparing the vegetables or ingredients for the soup which have been received from the office do not disparage the quantity or quality but instead handle everything with great care. Do not despair or complain about the quantity of the materials. Throughout the day and night, practice the coming and going of things as arising in the mind, the mind turning and displaying itself as things.

Sincerity. Sincerity is the root of our practice. It is how we practice, body, breath, sincere with the breath, working with the koan, questioning sincerely and completely and whole-heartedly. This one word: "sincerity".

Put together the ingredients for the morning meal before midnight and begin cooking after midnight. After the morning meal, clean the rice cooking pots and soup pots for the noon meal. The tenzo should always be present at the sink when the rice is being soaked and the water measured. Watching with clear eyes, ensure that not a single grain is wasted. Washing it well, place it in the pots, make a fire, and boil it. An old teacher said, "Regard the cooking pot as your own head, the water your own life-blood." Place the cooked rice in bamboo baskets in summer and wooden serving buckets in winter and set these out on trays. While the rice is boiling, cook the soup and vegetables.

The tenzo supervises this personally. This is true whether the tenzo works alone or has assistants to tend the fire or prepare the utensils. Recently, Zen monasteries have developed positions such as rice-cook and soup-cook who work under the tenzo. The tenzo is always responsible for whatever is done. In olden times the tenzo did everything without any assistance.

In preparing food never view it from the perspective of usual mind or on the basis of feeling-tones. Taking up a blade of grass erect magnificent monasteries, turn the Wheel of Reality within a grain of dust. If you only have wild grasses with which to make a broth, do not disdain them. If you have ingredients for a creamy soup do not be delighted. Where there is no attachment, there can be no aversion. Do not be careless with poor ingredients and do not depend on fine ingredients to do your work for you but work with everything with the same sincerity. If you do not do so then it is like changing your behaviour according to the status of the person you meet; this is not how a student of the Way is.

Strengthen your resolve and work whole-heartedly to surpass the monks of old and be even more thorough than those who have come before you. Do this by trying to make as fine a soup for a few cents as the ancients could make a coarse broth for the same amount.

The difficulty is that present and the past are separated by a gulf as great as between sky and earth and no one now can be compared to those of ancient times. However, through complete practice of seeing the nature of things you will be able to find a way. If this isn't clear to you it is because your thoughts speed about like a wild horse and feeling-tones careen about like a monkey in the trees. Let the monkey and horse step back and be seen clearly and the gap is closed naturally. In this way, turn things while being turned by them.

When you are practising there is the wild horse and there is the monkey, galloping and climbing throughout the bodymind. You don't whip them, you don't beat them. You simple ask them to look at themselves, to recognize themselves and through this comes sincerity; through this comes clarity; through this comes whole-heartedness.

Clarify and harmonize your life without losing the single Eye which sees the context or the two eyes which recognize the details.

The single Eye is the eye which sees oneness. The two eyes see multiplicity - see the difference between a grain of rice and a lentil.

Taking up a vegetable leaf manifests the Buddha's sixteen-foot golden body; take up the sixteen-foot golden body and display it as a vegetable leaf. This is the power of functioning freely as the awakening activity which benefits all beings.

Having prepared the food, put everything where it belongs. Do not miss any detail. When the drum sounds or the bells are struck, follow the assembly for morning zazen and in the evening go to the master's quarters to receive teachings.

And so the tenzo has an awful lot to do and yet does not neglect his own practice.

When you return to the kitchen, count the number of monks present in the Monks' Hall; try closing your eyes. Don't forget about the senior monks and retired elders in their own quarters or those who are sick. Take into account any new arrivals in the entry hall or anyone who is on leave. Don't forget anyone. If you have any questions consult the officers, the heads of the various halls, or the head monk.

When this is done, calculate just how much food to prepare: for each grain of rice needed, supply one grain. One portion can be divided into two halves, or into thirds or fourths. If two people tend to each want a half-serving, then count this as the quantity for a single full serving. You must know the difference that adding or subtracting one serving would make to the whole.

If the assembly eats one grain of rice from Luling, the tenzo is the monk Guishan. In serving a grain of that rice, the tenzo sees the assembly become the ox. The ox swallows Guishan. Guishan herds the ox.

There are references to two koan here. Rice from Luling is a very expansive and wonderful, tasty kind of rice and in answer to the question, "What is the meaning of Buddha Dharma?" one Zen master says, "What is the price of rice from Luling?"

The other koan involves Guishan who told his monks that in his next lifetime he would come back as a water buffalo. On one side of the buffalo's chest would be written, "I am the monk Guishan". So at that moment, is it Guishan or is it a water buffalo? The water buffalo looks at Guishan; Guishan looks at the water buffalo. There is complete mutuality when the tenzo brings in the rice, serves the monks, he sees the water buffalo, he sees Guishan. When the monks look at the tenzo they see the water buffalo and they see Guishan. The monks see the monk. Mutuality sees mutuality in the rice.

Are your measurements right or are they off? Have those you consulted been correct in their counting? Review this as best as you can and then direct the kitchen accordingly. This practice of effort after effort, day after day, should not be forgotten.

When a patron visits the monastery and makes a donation for the noon meal, discuss this with the other officers. This is the tradition of Zen monasteries. Other offerings to be distributed should also be discussed with the other officers. In this way, the responsibilities of others are not disrupted nor your own neglected.

And so I believe we will leave the text at this point, but there is still quite a bit to go. Are there any questions or any comments that anyone would like to make about this text or any related matter?

I did not think there would be.

Sometimes this kind of text can seem not quite as exciting as Uji or Genjokoan, and yet in many ways, simple and straightforward instructions like these are the most precious because they are the ones so difficult to complete. He is saying sit there and follow your breath. It sounds very simple but it involves the entire bodymind. Every action involves your entire bodymind. We can hear about various koan and so on and so forth, but perhaps the most precious instruction we might receive from our teacher is how to walk during kinhin, how to bow. Completely bowing, completely walking, completely sitting, completely cooking, completely eating. This is the completion of the Buddha Way which never ends and always completes itself.

And so we will end with gassho.

1.

Roshi is referring to "honrai memmuku", the Original Face of Awareness.

2.

Kai-in Zanmai.

3.

Bitter, sour, sweet, hot, mild, salty.

Class 2: "If Not Now, When?"

by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

November 4, 1986 at the Vanier Zendo

We will continue from where we left off in the "Tenzo kyokun".

When the meal is ready and set out on trays, at noon and morning put on the wrap robe, spread your bowing mat, offer incense and do nine great bows in the direction of the Monks' Hall. When this is done, send out the food.

These nine-fold bows are done by the tenzo because his work, as tenzo, is an offering to the Sangha of monks and nuns and priests, an offering to practice. The practice of his work is offered to the practice of sitting.

Day and night, the work for preparing the meals must be done without wasting a moment. If you do this and everything that you do whole-heartedly, this nourishes the seeds of Awakening and brings ease and joy to the practice of the community.

Although the Buddha's Teachings have been heard for a long time in Japan, I have never heard of any one speaking or writing about how food should be prepared within the monastic community as an expression of the Teachings, let alone such details as offering nine bows before sending forth the food. As a consequence, we Japanese have taken no more consideration of how food should be prepared in a monastic context than have birds or animals. This is cause for regret, especially since there is no reason for this to be so.

When I was staying at Tiantong-jingde-si, a monk named Lu from Qingyuan fu held the post of tenzo. Once, following the noon meal I was walking along the eastern covered walkway towards a sub-temple called Chaoran Hut when I came upon him in front of the Buddha Hall drying mushrooms in the sun. He had a bamboo stick in his hand and no hat covering his head. The heat of the sun was blazing on the paving stones. It looked very painful; his back was bent like a bow and his eyebrows were as white as the feathers of a crane. I went up to the tenzo and asked, "How long have you been a monk?" "Sixty-eight years," he said.

"Why don't you have an assistant do this for you?"

"Other people are not me."

You are you, I am I. He is recognizing there is no separation between us until our work is done completely for others, all of the beings which arise within our bodyminds, all of the thoughts that we have, all of the colours that we see, all of the sounds that we hear - offering realization to these beings, offering the work of tenzo to the beings in the Zendo. Although there is no separateness, each thing is distinct: red is red and blue is blue; rice is rice and soup is soup. We don't mix them up but we don't split them apart.

"Venerable sir, I can see how you follow the Way through your work. But still, why do this now when the sun is so hot?"

"If not now, when?"

Don't try to leave your practice to some other time or to someone else. Don't try to leave it to the Teacher; don't try to leave it to fate. Don't absorb yourself in the breath; don't abstract yourself in the breath. When following

the breath, follow the breath completely. When a thought comes up, penetrate completely. When a sound comes up, penetrate completely. Don't delegate your authority within practice, practice completely.

There was nothing else to say. As I continued on my way along the eastern corridor I was moved by how important the work of the tenzo is.

In May of 1223 I was staying aboard the ship at Qingyuan. Once I was speaking with the captain when a monk about sixty years of age came aboard to buy mushrooms from the ship's Japanese merchants. I asked him to have tea with me and asked where he was from. He was the tenzo from Ayuwang shan.

He said, "I come from Xishu but it is now forty years since I've left there and I am now sixty-one. I have practiced in several monasteries. When the Venerable Daoquan became abbot at Guyun temple of Ayuwang I went there but just idled the time away, not knowing what I was doing. Fortunately, I was appointed tenzo last year when the summer Training Period ended. Tomorrow is May 5th…

The day on which Bodhidharma died.

but I don't have anything special offerings for the monks so I thought I'd make a nice noodle soup for them. We didn't have any mushrooms so I came here to give the monks something from the ten directions."

"When did you leave Ayuwang shan?" I asked.

"After the noon meal." "How far is it from here?" "Around twelve miles." "When are you going back to the monastery?"

"As soon as I've bought the mushrooms."

I said, "As we have had the unexpected opportunity to meet and talk like this today, I would like you to stay a while longer and allow me to offer Zen master tenzo a meal."

"Oh, I'm sorry, but I just can't. If I am not there to prepare tomorrow's meal it won't go well."

"But surely someone else in the monastery knows how to cook? If you're not there it can't make that much difference to everyone."

"I have been given this responsibility in my old age and it is this old man's practice. How can I leave to others what I should do myself? As well, when I left I didn't ask for permission to be gone overnight."

"Venerable sir, why put yourself to the difficulty of working as a cook in your old age? Why not just do zazen and study the koan of the ancient masters?"

The tenzo laughed for a long time and then he said, "My foreign friend, it seems you don't really understand practice or the words of the ancients."

Hearing this elder monk's words I felt ashamed and surprised. I asked, "What is practice? What are words?"

The tenzo said, "Keep asking and penetrate this question and then you will be someone who understands."

Here Dogen zenji missed the meaning of his own words, the speaking of his own words, to penetrate the mind which speaks at that moment. This is the meaning of practice. This is the meaning of the words of the ancient masters of koan, the complete display. Penetrate one mind moment and you will find it is as vast as the world itself. It is Sagara Mudra Samadhi. It is Ocean Seal. One mind moment contains the three times and ten directions.

But I didn't know what he was talking about and so the tenzo said, "If you don't understand then come and see me at Ayuwang shan some time. We'll talk about the meaning of words." Having said this, he stood up and said, "It'll be getting dark soon. I'd best hurry." And he left.

In July of the same year I was staying at Tiantong shan when the tenzo of Ayuwang shan came to see me and said, "After the summer Training Period is over I'm going to retire as tenzo and go back to my native region. I heard from a fellow monk that you were here and so I came to see how you were making out."

I was overjoyed. I served him tea as we sat down to talk. When I brought up our discussion on the ship about words and practice, the tenzo said, "If you want to understand words you must look into what words are. If you want to practice, you must understand what practice is."

I asked, "What are words?"

The tenzo said, "One, two, three, four, five."

I asked again, "What is practice?"

"Everywhere, nothing is hidden."

Right here: this is the origin of practice. This is root of practice.

We talked about many other things but I won't go into that now. Suffice it to say that without this tenzo's kind help I would not have had any understanding of words or of practice. When I told my late teacher Myozen about this he was very pleased.

Later I found a verse that Xuedou wrote for a disciple:

"One, seven, three, five.

What you search for cannot be grasped.

As the night deepens, the moon brightens over the ocean.

The black dragon's jewel is found in every wave.

Looking for the moon, it is here in this wave and the next."

What the tenzo said is expressed here in Xuedou's verse as well. Then it was even clearer to me that the tenzo was truly a person of the Way.

Before I knew one, two three, four, five; now I know six, seven, eight, nine, ten. Monks, you and those to follow must understand practice and words through this and from that. Exert yourself in this way and you will practice the single true taste of Zen beyond words, undivided into the poisonous five flavours. Then you will be able to prepare food for the monastic community properly.

These numbers are all dharmas; all dharmas are these numbers. At first it is one, two, three, four five and then these are completely gone. And then it's five, six, seven, eight.

There are many old stories we can hear and present examples of monks training as tenzo. A great many teachings concern this because it is the heart of the Way.

What is this "one taste" that we are cooking up within our practice, that we are cooking up within our body and mind? What does this moment taste like? What does this sound taste like? What does the feeling of the tongue against the roof of your mouth taste like? Chew this taste to penetrate.

Even if you become the Abbot of a monastery, you should have this same understanding. The Zen Monastic Standards states, "Prepare each meal with each detail kept clear so that there will be enough. Make sure that the four offerings of food, clothing, bedding, and medicine are adequate just as the Generous One offered to his disciples the merit of twenty years of his lifetime.

This, of course, is from the Mahayana myth that the Buddha had an allotted life span of 100 years but he sacrificed the last 20 years of his life in order to offer it to all beings so that they would have a bit more time to practice and perhaps Wake Up. But in any case, it is an example of generosity.

We ourselves live today within the light of that gift because the energy of even a white hair between his brows is inexhaustible.

As well, the Buddha had a hair that curled clockwise between his brows. If you had a certain kind of mind you would see it as a hair. If you had another kind of mind you would see it as light.

It also says, "Just think about how to best serve the assembly without being hindered by thoughts of poverty. If your mind is limitless, you enjoy limitlessness." This is how the abbot serves the assembly.

And I too, would add, do not be limited by happiness.

In preparing food, it is essential to be sincere and to respect each ingredient irregardless of how coarse or fine it is. There is the example of the old woman who gained great merit through offering water in which she had rinsed rice to the Thus Come. And of King Ashoka creating roots of wholesomeness through offering half a mango to a monastery as he lay dying. As a result of this he realized the deathless in his next life. Even the grandest offering to the Buddha, if insincere, is worth less than the smallest sincere offering in bringing about a connection with awakening. This is how human beings should conduct themselves.

So, give what you can and receive what you can. Offer completely. Do not pretend that you cannot be Buddha. Buddha is born from the womb of the three klesas and so we give what we can and practice as we can. We exert ourselves as we are and without images of what our practice should be like. The practice is exertion in the midst of hope and fear, although complete exertion is free of hope and fear. But by facing hope and fear completely, we discover complete exertion. We do not have to get rid of the three klesas to realize that we are Buddha. We have to understand and penetrate the three klesas of passion, aggression and ignorance to realize that we are Buddha. If you wait until the three klesas are completely gone in order to be Buddha, when will this happen? What is the mind that gives rise to the three klesas? To say that we can't be Buddha because we just don't feel like Buddha? But what does Buddha feel like? What does Buddha think like? Who are you?

A rich buttery soup is not better as such than a broth of wild herbs. In handling and preparing wild herbs, do so as you would the ingredients for a rich feast, wholeheartedly, sincerely, clearly. When you serve the monastic assembly, they and you should taste only the flavour of the Ocean of Reality, the Ocean of unobscured Awake Awareness, not whether or not the soup is creamy or made only of wild herbs.

Within Ocean Seal, all dharmas penetrate all dharmas and yet no dharma is eliminated by all of these other dharmas. In the Jewel Net of Indra, each jewel reflects every other jewel and yet it is still a single jewel. Each mind moment reflects the three times and the ten directions. This bodymind is itself the entire Jewel Net of Indra. This Jewel Net of Indra is the entire bodymind.

In nourishing the seeds of living in the Way rich food and wild grass are not separate. There is the old saying, "The mouth of a monk is like a furnace." Bear this in mind. Wild grasses can nourish the seeds of Buddha and bring forth the buds of the Way. Do not regard them lightly. A teacher must be able to use a blade of wild grass to benefit humans and shining beings.

This means that food fuels the bodymind. We eat in order to fuel our practice. Nothing gets as hungry as Zen monks or hungry ghosts. And since food is fuel we do not search for fine tastes or reject that which is not a fine taste. We eat penetrating the taste. We eat, exerting practice of the moment when we eat without completely

localizing on the food. Usually when people are served food and they like it they completely blank out everything else that is going on and they become absorbed in some sort of trance state and absorb themselves into the food, reinforce themselves with the food, become blinded by the food. If they don't like the food, they ignore it and just shovel it in. To find strength in food does not mean to ignore the taste but simply to realize what it tastes like.

Do not discriminate between the faults or virtues of the monks or whether they are senior or junior. You do not even know where you stand, so how can you put others into categories. Judging others from within the boundaries of your own opinions, how could you be anything other than wrong?

If you cannot even know what categories you fall into, how can you know about others? So let us not judge other people's practice. We see someone whose back is bent, we don't have to think that they are not sitting correctly. We see someone get angry, someone being scoffed at, we cannot criticize them for that. They are as they are and if they realize what they are doing and truly are trying to be wholehearted, then this is practice. We can only practice as we are. When we manifest through practice, we do so as we are, not according to images that we have about what we should be like when we practice so we should not have images about how other people should practice. We should not judge other people's practice because we cannot do practice for other people. We can only do our own practice. This is actually the essence of Sangha, this "harmonious community" of people gathered together in the Zendo and practicing together, but each person follows their own breath, works with their own koan, faces the wall with their own eyes. And so while we are mutually together in this Zendo we are all completely and utterly alone.

Although there are differences between seniors and juniors, all are equally members of the assembly. Those who had many faults yesterday may be correct and clear today. Who can judge "sacred" from "common." The Zen Monastic Standards states, "Whether foolish or wise, the fact that one trains as a monk provides for others a gift that penetrates everywhere." If you stand beyond opinions of right and wrong, you bring forth the practice of actualizing unsurpassable Awakening.

If you do not, you take a wrong step and miss what's there. The bones and marrow of the ancients was just the exertion of such practice and those monks who train as tenzo in the future realize the bones and marrow of the Way only through just such exertion. The monastic rules set forth by great master Baizhang must always be maintained.

Baizhang was a Zen Master in the Tang Dynasty after the Sixth Ancestor, who composed the Regulations for Zen Monasteries. This was a time when the Patimokkha of Indian forms of Buddhism were found to be not completely functional in China and so new modes of behaviour and practice had to be formed. So Baizhang was apparently the first to compose a set of rules for the conduct of monks within the Zen monastery. Actually, his text has been lost. There have been a lot of texts called the rule of Baizhang but the actual texts itself has been lost.

After I returned to Japan I stayed at Kennin-ji for around two years. They had the office of tenzo there but it was only nominal because no one actually carried out the real activity of this training post. They did not understand it as the activity of Awake Awareness so how could they have been able to use it to express the Way? Truly, it was very sad. The tenzo there had never encountered a living one who could use the office of tenzo as the functioning of Awake Awareness and so he carelessly idled away, breaking the standards of practice.

I watched the tenzo there quite closely. He never actually worked at preparing the morning and evening meals but just ordered about some rough servants, lacking in intelligence and heart, leaving to them all the tasks whether important or not. He never checked on whether they were working well or not, as if it would be shameful to do so like peeping into the private quarters of a neighbouring woman. He just hung about in his own rooms, reading sutras or chanting when he wasn't lying down or chatting. Months would go by before he would even come close to a pot, let alone buy utensils or make out a menu. He did not understand that these activities are the exertion of Awareness.

How can you know without doing them?

The practice of donning the wrap robe and offering nine bows before sending out the food was something he would never have even dreamed of; it just wouldn't have occurred to him. As he himself did not understand the office of tenzo, when it came time for him to teach a novice how to carry out the office what understanding could be passed on? It was very regrettable. Although one might have the fortune to hold this post, if one is without the mind which uncovers the Way and fails to meet with one who has the virtue of the Way, it is like returning empty-handed after climbing a mountain of treasure or entering an ocean of jewels.

We all have these opportunities, moment to moment with every task that we face, every breath that we take, to completely realize Ocean Seal and to completely penetrate the three times; to completely realize ourselves as Buddha. But moment after moment we seem to come away empty handed. Dogen zenji's Transmission is empty hands, holding onto nothing, but holding surely, completely, and letting go completely. With each breath, with each moment, with each task, with each thought we can see this coming and going clearly, realize this coming and going to be the nature of the Buddha's Awoken self.

Although you might not have the mind which uncovers the Way, if you meet one manifesting the True Person you can then practice and unfold the Way. Or, even if you cannot meet with one who is the display of the True Person, by yourself deeply arousing the seeking for the Way, you can begin the Way. If you lack both of these, what is the point?

In the many monasteries of the mountains of Song China that I have seen, the monks holding the various offices train in these posts for a year at a time, each of them in each moment practicing by three standards. Firstly, to benefit others benefits yourself. Second, make every effort to maintain and renew the monastic environment. Third, follow the standards set forth by the examples of excellent practitioners of past and present and come to stand with them.

You should understand that foolish people hold their practice as if it belonged to someone else, wise people practice with everyone as themselves.

An ancient teacher

This is actually Xuedou here.

said, "Two-thirds of your life has passed without clarifying who you are. Eating your life, muddling about in this and that, you don't even turn when called on. Pathetic."

From this verse we can see that if you have not met a true teacher, you will just follow the lead of your tendencies. And this is pathetic. It's like the story of the foolish son who leaves his parent's home with the family treasure and then throws it away on a dung heap. Do not waste your opportunity as that man did.

Considering those who in the past made good use of their training as tenzo, we can see that their virtues were equal to those of their office. The great Daigu woke up while training as tenzo and Dongshan Shouchou's "Three pounds of flax," occurred while he was tenzo.

When he was tenzo, in answer to the question, "What is Buddha?" "What is the meaning of Bodhidharma's coming from the West?"

The only thing of value is the realization of the Way, the only time that is precious is each moment of realizing the Way.

Examples of those who long for the Way are many. There is the story of a child offering the Buddha a handful of sand as a great treasure. Another is of someone who made images of the Buddha and had reverence for them and thus had great benefit follow them. How much more benefit must there be in fulfilling the office of tenzo through actualizing its possibilities as have those excellent ones who have practiced before us?

I think we will leave the text now.

Is there anything anyone would like to talk about? Any questions?

Well until we look at this text again, we will just cook ourselves thoroughly.

Class 3: Senshin

by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

November 17, 1986 at the Vanier Zendo

So tonight we are going to finish this series of talks on the Tenzo kyokun. Dogen zenji says:

When we train in any of the offices of the monastery we should do so with a joyful heart, a motherly heart, a vast heart.

These three minds are known as senshin. The first, joyful mind, is "kishin"; motherly mind is "Roshin" and vast mind is "Daishin". And so that is what we are going to be discussing this evening basically - three modes or aspects of compassionate activity. Dogen zenji says:

A "joyful heart" rejoices and recognizes meaning. You should consider that were you to be born in the realm of the shining beings you would be absorbed in indulgence with the qualities of that realm so that you would not rouse the recognition of uncovering the Way and so have no opportunity to practice. And so how could you use cooking as an offering to the Three Jewels? Nothing is more excellent than the Three Jewels of the Buddha, the Teachings, and the Community of those who practice and realize the Way. Neither being the king of gods nor a world ruler can even compare with the Three Jewels. The Zen Monastic Standards states, "The monastic community is the most excellent of all things because those who live thus live beyond the narrowness of social fabrications." Not only do we have the fortune of being born as human beings but also of being able to cook meals to be offered to the Three Jewels. We should rejoice and be grateful for this.

We can also reflect on how our lives would be were we to have been born in the realms of hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals, or jealous gods. How difficult our lives would be in those four situations or if we had been born in any of the eight adverse conditions. We would not then be able to practice together with the strength of a monastic community even should it occur to us to aspire to it, let alone be able to offer food to the Three Jewels with our own hands. Instead our bodies and minds would be bound within the limits of those circumstances, merely vessels of contraction.

So this thing about being born in the realm of the gods - I think I have discussed it various times: the six realms of birth or the six modes of being, starting with the hell realm. In the hell realm it is said that beings are completely encompassed, completely engulfed with anger or hatred, so much so that it is like fire or like ice and it is extremely claustrophobic. There is no way out of this heat or this cold. This is a state of mind we often find ourselves in. When we are extremely angry our sense perceptions are quite dense and chunky. We are not able to see very clearly. It is almost as if we are being crushed by our own feelings and there doesn't seem to be any way out of these feelings because they seem to be so overpowering, we have invested ourselves so thoroughly in them.

The next realm of being is that of the hungry ghosts or preta. The preta is a being completely consumed by the passion for consumption; someone who has such an overwhelming and massive sense of poverty that they are always trying to fill that poverty. So they are pictured as someone with an extremely large, distended, bloated belly, a pencil thin neck and a small pin-prick hole for the mouth. So despite the vast, overwhelming hunger that is rumbling around in their stomachs they are unable to feed themselves. They can't fit any food through there. And of course we are often in this state of mind. We want something to take away our sense of frustration, we want something to make us feel better, something that we can consume, which refers to trying to seduce other people into admiring us or giving us something, trying to absorb music - we are listening to music but we are doing so with a sense of restlessness. It doesn't let us even hear the music. But we want to pull that music into us, we want to dance, we want to do something just in order to get away from the sense of overwhelming pettiness and frustration.

The next realm of being is that of the animal realm. This realm is comprised of an attitude which can only see what is right in front of it. This might sound a little bit like being right in the moment, but what is actually going on

is that there are almost blinkers so that all that you are seeing is the next meal or whether something is going to threaten you. It is a state of ignorance, of stupidity, of dullness, of simply functioning at our lowest possible level.

The next is the human realm, and we will talk about that once we have talked about the next two realms.

The fifth realm is that of the asuras, or titans or demi-gods and these are states of mind that we can get into where we feel quite powerful but at the same time there seems to be somebody who is a bit more powerful than we. Or we are feeling quite good but not quite as good as we could and so there is an overwhelming sense of jealousy, a sense of trying to overcome something, trying to get back to something, trying to achieve.

And then the sixth realm is the realm of the gods. In the realm of the gods we are completely blissed out, we are completely absorbed in pleasure; this pleasure being perhaps very subtle states of mind gained through concentration or it might just simply be having a new car or "look at that beautiful sunset" and we don't see the sunset, we just get absorbed in our feelings about that sunset. So the main principle of the god realm is absorption within blissful states.

Now the common denominator of all of these states of being, all of these realms of being, is that one is completely engulfed in these things. One is completely engulfed in anger; one is completely engulfed in passion and so on. The human realm is said to have all of the characteristics of these other realms but to a lesser degree. So therefore, we are able to notice that they shift back and forth. Sometimes we feel good, sometimes we feel bad. Our states are being changed from moment to moment and because of this we have the possibility of seeing our situation clearly rather than being completely engulfed by hatred and anger we have some spark of intelligence which can recognize that anger. But even so we tend to circle through these realms throughout our day and every now and then we sort of stumble into the human realm, stumble into the realm of intelligence and get some sort of breath of fresh air. And this is when practice becomes truly possible.

So practice is basically concerned with, first of all, getting us to stay in the human realm rather than becoming completely absorbed in these states at the very least, without worrying about being a Buddha or anything, try to be a decent human being in the first place. And that is the working ground for recognizing the fact that not only are you a decent human being, you are Buddha. But without being in the human realm it is not possible to truly practice.

Now, of course, in traditional cultures these states of being are often considered to be actual modes of existence, actual worlds and if we are born into any of those worlds then it is impossible for us to practice because we will be engulfed by whatever the characteristic of that is. So having a joyful mind is taking a huge sense of joy in just being able to practice, in just being able to see when we are caught up in passion, when we are caught up in frustration, when we are caught up in jealousy. Taking a joy in intelligence and in the ability to practice so that we see all of the things which arise, dwell and decay within our various states of mind as being dharma, things which are teaching us, things which are workable. So this sense of joy is not congratulating ourselves and patting ourselves on the back. It is a matter of getting down to work and doing what we do as completely and fully as possible - when we see, to see as fully as possible, to just see; when we hear, to just hear. And it is from the precision of this quality of "just", this quality of "tada" or "just", that a sense of joyousness begins to come up because there is a sense of not doing anything unnecessary, not seeing anything unnecessary, but seeing what we are seeing and so this provides a sense of groundedness and spaciousness brought together in one moment, at one time. This joyfulness is our ability to work with this again and again and again. So, anything that we do that

arises out of this joyful mind furthers this joyful mind and we contact again and again an almost unconditional joyfulness, a joyfulness which is not based on whether we are feeling good or whether we are feeling bad, but a joyfulness of being willing to work with it, being willing to Wake Up, being willing to pull ourselves out of these states, not by grabbing ourselves and pulling ourselves out of them, but simply by working with it fully in that moment to the best of our ability.

Now, going back to making offerings to the Three Jewels. Anything which connects us with practice, with the possibility of working with intelligence and further intelligence of seeing clearly is something which should bring forth not a sense of awe or a sense of worship, but something which brings forth a very natural sense of gratitude.

The eight adverse conditions are situations that would make it difficult for us to practice. For example, never having heard the Teachings; being in a culture which has no reference points as far as practice goes - it is not practice, nobody has worked with these things. Nobody has Woken Up, nobody has seen mind moments, nobody has seen the unconditioned mind mirror. This makes it very difficult to practice because there is no Dharma available. Or we could be born in a country where there is Dharma but we haven't come into contact with it, we haven't come into contact with a teacher. We should also be grateful that we have our eyes and ears and legs that we can cross so that our knees ache when we sit. We should be grateful that all of our faculties function as well as they do.

This life we live is a life of rejoicing, this body a body of joy which can be used to present offerings to the Three Jewels. It arises through the merits of eons and using it thus its merit extends endlessly. I hope that you will work and cook in this way, using this body which is the fruition of thousands of lifetimes and births to create limitless benefit for numberless beings. To understand this opportunity is a joyous heart because even if you had been born a ruler of the world the merit of your actions would merely disperse like foam, like sparks.

A ruler of the world, a "wheel turning king" in Indian cosmology, a cakravartin-raja is someone who is born with not just a silver spoon in his mouth, but a silver ladle. He is someone of incredible strength, intelligence, dignity, beauty, he has incredible wealth at his disposal and beyond this, he's just a hell of a nice guy. And he is such a nice guy that he is able, say, run a government and everybody benefits. He can bring benefit to everybody. But it is all benefit in terms of what you are eating and what you are wearing and various social things of this nature, but really never penetrates to the basic question of birth and death. Although practice is not separate from what we eat and what we wear in our social relationships, it questions into what it is that has any sort of relationship at all. What is seeing? What is hearing? What is the basis of mind? What is the basis of existence? And if we don't get to that basis, then we are continually caught within the leaves and branches and never get to the root of what our life truly is. So even if you are someone of such great merit and virtue the things that you do are almost of no benefit because they have only surface value. So you should be damned glad that you are not stuck in that sort of context, that you can actually practice and get to the root.

A "motherly heart" is a heart which maintains the Three Jewels as a parent cares for a child. A parent raises a child with deep love, regardless of poverty or difficulties. Their hearts cannot be understood by another; only a parent can understand it. A parent protects their child from heat or cold before worrying about whether they themselves are hot or cold. This kind of care can only be understood by those who have given rise to it and realized only by those who practice it. This, brought to its fullest, is how you must care for water and rice, as though they were your own children.

The Great Master Sakyamuni offered to us the final twenty years of his own lifetime to protect us through these days of decline. What is this other than the exertion of this "parental heart"? The Thus Come One did not do this hoping to get something out of it but sheerly out of munificence.

This is the main thing about this parental mind: doing what we do, being compassionate, not so that we will be considered as someone who is compassionate and not because we consider ourselves as someone who is compassionate. We talk about the three purities of giving. This is the recognition that inherently there is no self who gives, there is inherently no self in that which receives that which is given and there is inherently nothing which is given. There is nothing to cling to. Just because you were nice to someone once, that moment is now entirely gone and you can't build anything on the basis of that. You can't try to create images of being a wonderful, kind, compassionate person. Instead, you simply must be compassionate from moment to moment and this is so in regards to how we deal with others and how we deal with our own minds and our own bodies. Having some sense of unconditional or unconditioned willingness to see how we are form moment to moment and we can work with that fully. It is not sufficient to just have some image of being compassionate towards ourselves or towards others, we must actually be so. When that moment comes, that is what we must do. We can't say, "Well, I am usually like this and I will probably be quite compassionate then, too." When the moment comes we have to make our choice and we have to do what we do. Once it is done, then there is the next thing to be done.

So when we prepare rice for the Sangha, we don't do so hoping that everybody will go, "Mmmmmm", but we do try to do the best job that we can.

"Vast heart" is like a great expanse of ocean or a towering mountain. It views everything from the most inclusive and broadest perspective. This vast heart does not regard a gram as too light nor five kilos as too heavy. It does not follow the sounds of spring or try to nest in a spring garden; it does not darken with the colours of autumn. See the changes of the seasons as all one movement, understand light and heavy in relation to each other within a view which includes both. When you write or study the character "vast," this is how you should understand its meaning.

So this "Daishin", this vast mind, is actually ultimate compassion. We start off with a joyful mind, the willingness to work with things moment after moment. And from that a kind, or parental mind begins to grow, a sense of doing things without a sense of gain or loss, but just doing it with an attitude of benefit which arises simply from who and what we are. And from this comes "Daishin", or vast mind, which is a mind which embraces everything, which is not based on accepting, isn't based on rejecting. Everything is already included in it. In this mind a pound isn't light and a ton isn't heavy. This mind is like a mountain or a great ocean. It cannot be moved because it is not based on anything. It just simply is how we are. It is a mind which includes all of who and what we are; all of what we see: colours, sounds, spring, autumn.

If the tenzo at Jiashan had not thus studied the word "vast," he could not have woken up Elder Fu by laughing at him.

The tenzo at Mount Jiashan once heard Elder Fu give many lectures on the Mahaparanirvana sutra and Elder Fu was quite good at this. He knew all of the terms, he knew all of the categories. But he had not himself uncovered his true Dharmakaya and so at this the tenzo left and this for some reason brought Fu into recognition of how baseless and petty all of his Dharma practice had been up until this point and so he actually set to work on his

actual body, breath, speech and mind, and actually Woke Up. So the study of the word "Vast" by this tenzo is simply that all-embracing whatever it is. This is how we study this word, "Vast". By seeing that which closes us down, seeing that which opens us up and seeing completely. Seeing it on the basis of great faith1 rather than on the basis of a belief in this or that, a particular logical structure or anything of that nature, but simply seeing it completely. Having great seeing.

If Zen master Guishan had not understand the word "vast," he would not have blown on dead firewood three times. If the monk Dongshan had not understood the word "vast," he could not have taught the monk through his expression, "Three pounds of flax." All of these and other great masters through the ages have studied the meaning of "vast" or "great" not only though the word for it but through all of the events and activities of their lives. Thus they lived as a great shout of freedom through presenting the Great Matter, penetrating the Great Question, training great disciples and in this way bringing it all forth to us.

The abbot, senior officers and staff, and all monks should always maintain these three hearts or understandings.

Written in the spring of 1237 for those of coming generations who will practice the Way by Dogen, abbot of Kosho-(Horin-)ji.

Is there anything anyone would like to bring up?

Our practice really is quite like making a soup - seeing all of the vegetables that we are going to need; cutting them, cleaning them, and then beginning to cook them. And when we are cooking the soup we can't just throw it on the stove and let it burn. We have to actually reach in there with a spoon and stir and as we stir all of the vegetables come to the surface, all of these various things come to the surface. If we let them settle to the bottom of the pot, they will simply burn. And so, thoughts, feelings, textures of mind, arise, dwell and decay and we stir them and we see them completely and we cook them thoroughly. Once we have cooked this soup of our practice then with it, we can feed all sentient beings.

We will end with gassho.

1.

Daishinkon. The recognition of fundamental clarity.

Snow

Presented by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

Zazen-ji, November 18, 1989

(Published in Zanmai 7, Winter 1991 Issue)

This morning the first real snowfall of the year has fallen. To understand snow, you just have to see it, to feel it. If you were to try to look up into the sky and into the clouds to try to discern just where a particular snowflake came from, all that you could do is speculate. The snowflake moves so quickly, twisting and dancing in the breeze, as it falls and settles. It's very difficult to keep your eye on one. But you don't even really have to. All that you have to do is just catch a glimpse of it as you see it spinning and twirling, and you'll have some understanding of a snowflake. You reach out a bare hand, the snowflake melts as it touches the palm.

Thoughts rise and fall. Feelings move like clouds and thoughts fall from these clouds. When we don't understand our thoughts we might look to find some particular reason why we have this particular thought. Some particular reason why we feel the way that we feel. We can never understand a thought or feeling in this way, we can only speculate. To understand the thought, glimpse it as it is. See its movement. See how the feeling moves, not just through the mind, but through the body. Arising in the belly, the back, the chest, the thighs, the calves, perhaps in how the hands are held. The angle of the shoulders. Whether your gaze is soft or hardened. How clearly you hear the sounds. How freely you move, or whether your movements are hindered by the discomfort that arises when the body contracts into the posture which symbolizes the mental state that has arisen.

If you want to understand these states, you must look directly, you must first put aside speculation. One of the first things that you begin to notice when you allow yourself to notice directly, is that thoughts and feelings spring from no particular place. We cannot find a thinker who is giving rise to the thoughts. The thoughts simply arise, the feelings simply arise. Sometimes the thoughts and feelings go together. We also begin to notice that along with the thoughts and feelings, there can be a sense of self, a sense of who and what we are, which tries to base itself on the thoughts and feelings. A feeling of sadness comes up and we start to wonder why we feel sad. Then we look around for some story to tell ourselves, to explain to ourselves why we're sad; or perhaps to justify being sad, or perhaps to make us sadder. Then we feel that we are really “sad” and we define ourselves by the sadness; instead of simply allowing the feeling of sadness to arise and then fall, we grab on to it and we freeze it. We make it as solid as is possible, through thinking about that feeling, instead of directly experiencing the feeling. Then we become weighted down more and more as that feeling becomes denser, as we pile thought upon thought on top of it, just as the snow settles on the flowing stream and the cold of the air begins to thicken the surface of the stream until it becomes quite hard. The snow continues to fall. It piles higher and higher, until you can't tell the difference between the stream and its banks; but still, underneath the ice, the stream is flowing. It moves quickly and it is surging with life.

Despite the weight and density that occurs when we allow our thoughts and feelings to pile up, they are still merely covering the quick and dynamic flow of our life, which is still exerting itself as this seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling as well as thinking and feeling. To understand our thoughts and our feelings, we must see them as they are. This understanding begins to change how they are. When you see a thought arise and see it clearly, then you also see it fall; and then the thought vanishes, the feeling vanishes. Another thought arises and it is seen clearly, and it also vanishes. When the snow falls in the early autumn and vanishes before it even reaches the ground, it can twist and dance in the sky, but it still vanishes before it reaches the ground. When we actually allow ourselves to directly glimpse the thoughts and feelings that arise, thoughts and feelings show their own nature of impermanence and openness even more clearly.

We then begin to understand that the thoughts and feelings arise for no particular reason, but simply exert themselves through the gathering of conditions and that part of their exertion is to vanish. Thoughts are not meant to pile up. We're not even meant to take them all that seriously. We can only truly understand the beauty of a thought when we can watch it in the same way that we watch that first snowfall, the same way that we watch the exquisite dance of the snow. As we watch the thoughts rise and fall we begin to sense the beauty and dignity of it, because the mind thinks just as the snow falls. There is nothing wrong with the thoughts, but when

our seeing is covered by the thoughts and our understanding is weighted down beneath the thoughts and feelings, then our life feels that it is crushed beneath that weight. It feels held still by the pressure. Our understanding is like a fire, like a great heat, like the light of the sun. When we bring this understanding to bear upon our life, then the brightness of our life extends in all directions. Whatever arises, falls. Whatever comes, goes. Then we begin to understand that each thought is always new. Each feeling is always new. Each breath is always new. Each moment has never been lived before. Just as the snowflakes dance and turn and vanish, so does this breath, so does this thought, so does this feeling.

When we practise, we sit with the legs, the knees, the feet, the hands, the belly and back, arms and shoulders, neck, tongue, teeth, ears, eyes and head; and we sit with our thoughts and our feelings. We sit with the breath and with the breath of all of those sitting around us; the sound of our breath and the sounds of those sitting around us; and the street sounds; and the delicate sound of snow falling outside the window.

We sit to understand ourselves. Not to tell ourselves stories about ourselves. Not to explain ourselves to ourselves or to anyone else, but to understand ourselves and through this understanding, to begin to understand our world. To begin to understand what it means to be truly human.

Please enjoy yourselves.

Standing in the Rain (Tangaryo)

Standing in the Rain (Tangaryo)

Zazen-ji, December 15th, 1988

Presented by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

Published in Zanmai 7 Winter issue 1991 as “Boredom”

Good evening. This is the evening of Thursday, December 15th, 1988; nine years to the day, after the cremation of my teacher, the Ven. Yasuda Joshu roshi. Tonight, I would like to pick up where I left off from Tuesday evening's teisho.

After I dried the cold rain from my hair I was given some soup. It was quite late at night at this point, and so I was instructed to roll out my sleeping bag and sleep in the pantry just off the kitchen. I washed up my bowl after Joshu roshi and the tenzo had left, rolled out my sleeping bag, and laid down to go to sleep. I was quite excited thinking, “This is it... this is it”.

Around 4:00 am the head monk woke me up. He told me it was time for me to sit tangaryo. Tangaryo is a tradition, a custom from the “old country”. When a monk came to a monastery and requested that he be allowed to stay there and study, he would sit for several hours or perhaps a whole day, kneeling on the steps of the monastery, with his sack by his side. He would be repeatedly told to go away, that there was no room for him. If he persisted, he would, at the end of the day, be invited in, given something to eat, and told that he would be allowed to stay overnight, but overnight only. In the morning, he might be chased out to wait again on the steps, or he might be led to a small, somewhat open room, where he would sit tangaryo.

Tangaryo is sitting inside the monastery, without truly being in the monastery yet. It is a testing ground, in which the teacher and the monastery test the potential monk, and the monk tests himself. The structure is to simply sit. You can change your posture as often as you like, you can get up and do kinhin for as long as you like, but you must be sitting whenever anybody comes by to check on you. So you can sit, or you can walk according to no particular order, no particular rhythm except the one dictated by your knees, back and mind. It seems like quite an open structure but, of course, the catch is that you have to be sitting whenever anybody comes to check on you, and it can happen at any time.

Because I was not yet a monk when I came to Hakukaze-ji, I was told that I would only have to sit two days in tangaryo. I rolled up my sleeping bag, secured it to the bottom frame of my knapsack and sat the knapsack in front of me, so that I sat facing it, as I had been instructed to do. This, too, is an important part of tangaryo. Right in front of you are your possessions. Right in front of you is the possibility of just getting up and going and not looking back. Right in front of you is the possibility of staying. If you go, go. If you stay, stay.

For the last two years I had been sitting three, four or five times a day, but I had never before sat for an entire day. The thought had crossed my mind, but only in the most romantic way; you know, sitting in that kind of painless way that only happens in our imagination. So I sat, and after a while I got up and walked, and then I sat again. After some time the head monk returned and showed me how to do oryoki. Tangaryo also provides an opportunity for the monk to learn the ways of that particular monastery, the various Shingi or modes of monastic conduct or deportment: how to walk through the doors, how to gassho and when to gassho, what an oryoki set is like, the dokusan procedures, and so on and so forth. The head monk left and I sat and I walked. I heard someone coming so I scuttled back to my zafu, staring at my knapsack. The tenzo came and gave me some soup, some rice, some pickles. I ate and then I sat and walked some more.

I toyed in my mind for some time with questions like “what is Mu?” or “what is the Original Face?”; and this was the most amazing thing: in my practice I was aiming at the ultimate and yet here was Zen bringing me face-to-face with the relative. It's a funny thing about Zen. It's so uncompromising. Whatever we want, whatever our expectations are, have nothing at all to do with Zen, just as they have nothing whatsoever to do with our lives, because Zen is about our lives. If you want to search for and realise the Ultimate Nature, Zen brings you face-to-face with your sore knees, your sore mind, your strategies and your grudges, your anger and your fear. If you want to obsess about the relative, about your anger, your fear and your sore knees, Zen always forces you to try to look at the ultimate. Either way, you can't win.

I found it so amazing that I was so thoroughly bored. I had never been so bored before in my life. I'd been bored in school, I'd been bored in church, I'd been bored at family suppers, I'd been bored sitting in my room on a Sunday afternoon, I'd been bored talking to friends, but I had never been so thoroughly bored of myself. This was amazing: I was so boring. All of the thoughts, all of the expectations, all of the fantasies, all of the fears, were so incredibly boring.

This boredom was like a heavy weight that settled and congealed around my head and shoulders, around the knapsack and the wall, around the floor, around the sounds coming and going. And so I began to be very interested in this boredom. When I did so, things began to change. The sounds of the birds ached in my belly and chest. The aching of my knees cut through the moment like something bright, something sharp. My posture was occurring in the midst of some great space. I couldn't find any “boredom” any more. I wasn't sure of what I could find any more, but there was the breath, there were the sounds, there was this scene, this posture. I got up and

walked and there was walking. I sat down and became lost in thought, became lost in self-pity, but after a time, I remembered how boring but at the same time how interesting they were.

Practice brings us face-to-face with everything that is personal about us and then pushes us past that, into intimacy, an intimacy so vast it cannot be personal. While this is not yet realization of the ultimate, still it is far more ultimate than the relative has ever been. The Sandokai, by Sekido Kisen, says “Ultimate and relative, like a box and its lid. Ultimate and relative, like two arrows meeting in mid-air”.

The first day of tangaryo ended and the second day went much the same: boredom, difficulty, interest and joy alternating, but all of it occurring right in front of me, right within me, right there. I began to lose all of my preconceptions about practice. I no longer had what I thought I had gained in my couple of years of practice. None of it was worth anything, because there was something beyond value, something beyond any price, going on right there in that moment of practising. I couldn't quite understand what that was, but I had begun to understand practice. A little later, of course, I would lose that understanding and gain a new understanding, and later on lose that one and gain another.

Practice reveals and opens unlimited meaning, a meaningless meaning, which is always open to going further. Practice itself is not settling into a firm posture, or settling into this breath, or settling into this moment. It is surrendering into this moment. It is the dynamic exertion of this moment itself, with no place to settle, no place to hold on to, no possibility of holding.

At the end of the second day, I was brought to have my first interview (Shokan) with Joshu roshi, in which I requested to become a student. I offered three great bows and some money I had in my savings account, and he accepted me as a student. Right now, I cannot express my gratitude for having met such a teacher. When I told him of my experiences in tangaryo, he gave me formal instructions in zazen. When I told him about the romanticism and the boredom, he whacked me on the shoulder with the stick and said: “Yes, of course, practice is here... practice is here.”

This man, my teacher, your grandfather in Dharma, was truly the only true human being I've ever met, and this is the essence of practice: becoming truly human in the midst of our various styles and strategies, which are described by the six realms: the hell realm, the ghost realm, the animal realm, and so on. Practice is to realise our humanity and in this humanity to cut through being anything at all. Then, as Dogen zenji says: “We uncover the true human body (shinjin ninka) which goes beyond the three bodies of the Buddha, beyond space and time, beyond self and other”. In our practice, we work directly with our confusion, with our clarity, with our thoughts, with our feelings, with our hopes and fears, with all that makes us what we are. And we realise that it is right here, in the personal and in the relative, that the ultimate manifests and may be entered into. NOT SOME PLACE ELSE!

We discover too that what we think we know, what we assume about reality, what we assume about what seems personal and relative, is not true at all. And so, that which we hold most dear, that of which we are most afraid, is not really here at all.

Practice is a mystery beyond our understanding, just as our lives are a mystery beyond our understanding. We must practise our lives and truly enter into this mystery. We must truly understand and truly not understand.

Being honest with this moment as it is, we must be honest with this seeing, this hearing, this mind and this body, and we must be honest to that which is seeing, hearing, feeling this posture, standing, sitting, lying down.

Joshu roshi slapped my shoulder harder and said: “Can you feel this? This is what practice is. That you can feel this. What is it that feels this?” he asked. Having received the Mind Seal Transmission from this teacher, Yasuda Joshu Dainen Hakukaze roshi, I have received nothing but empty hands. For this I'm most grateful. This I can never repay. I ask each of you now, in this moment, with this posture, with this breath, to actualize this Way, to practise your lives, to find that which is living. What is it that is born? What is it that dies?

Snow falls and covers the day, covers the night. Each flake is always filling the ten directions and the three times. The ten directions and the three times are always manifesting themselves as this single flake of snow. As this single breath. As this single thought. As this single bodymind. Dropping this bodymind, going beyond directions, going beyond times. Who is this, staring at the wall? Who is this, wandering into thought? Who is it that feels this, that hears this?

I thank you for your efforts. I ask you to continue these efforts, to exert yourself in your life. As long as there is breath, as long as there is a thought, as long as mind and body arise at all, practise this moment most fully, most completely. Enter again and again into your own lives, until you realise that there is no coming, no going, and no place to stay.

Please, enjoy yourselves.

The Eightfold Path

by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

An old painting depicting a mudra

1: "Complete View"

Daijozan, February 27, 1989

Good morning.

Welcome to the first day of the Winter 1989 Zen Training Session.1 We are gathered here sitting in the early morning of our lives, sitting in the early morning of our bodies. What is it like? How are you in this moment? This moment arises as this very moment of body, this very moment of mind. Moment to moment, there is this arising, embodied. And so here we are. But where is this? Who is this? What is this? During this Training Session I hope that you will ask yourselves these questions again and again. I hope that you will practise these questions and I hope that you will ask these questions and answer these questions again and again, deeper and more completely each time that you ask. So please, ask with this breath, question into this breath, into this sound, into this very moment of body and mind.

Intensifying our practice means simplifying. As we sit, things are very simple. There is just this breathing, just these sounds. We eat, we walk, we sit, we lie down and go to sleep, we go to the washroom. Training Session

brings us to the basics of what we do and of what we are and so a Training Session will be a good time for us to consider some of the basic or fundamental teachings of the Buddha Dharma. What we will be examining is the Teaching known as the "Eightfold Path", which was one of the Buddha's favourite ways of speaking of the practice of Buddha Dharma, the practice of realizing oneself as being Buddha.

The Buddha taught Four Noble Truths: that all conditioned existence is inherently dukkha. The Second Noble Truth is that this dukkha is not inherently necessary, that it has its roots within craving, within grasping, within localizing. The Third Noble Truth is that it is possible to realize inherent freedom from dukkha, from suffering, from confusion, that it is possible to Wake Up from the sleep and restless dreams and stories and games of samsara. And the Fourth Noble Truth is that this freedom can be realized through the Path and the Buddha used to describe the Path as an Eightfold Path.

Now, the Eightfold Path is not like the Seven Factors of Enlightenment which describe a progressive development and deepening of insight. The Eightfold Path is often pictured as a wheel, a Dharmacakra, the Wheel of the Dharma, with eight spokes. So the eight parts of this path are integral to each other, but they don't exactly follow a developmental sequence. The eight parts of this Path, the eight factors of this Path are:

Sammadicci, (Pali) "Complete View", or "Shoken" (Japanese).

Samasamcappa, "Complete Thought" or "Shoshi".

Samavacha, "Complete Speech", or "Shoku".

Samacamanta, "Complete Activity", "Shogu".

Sama-ajiva, "Complete Livelihood", or "Shomyo".

Samavayama, "Complete Effort" or "Sho-shojin".

Samasati "Complete Mindfulness" or "Shonen".

8. Samasamadhi, "Complete Practice" or "Shojo".

Here, "complete" is how I prefer to translate this word "sama", which has also been translated as "right" or "true". So, Right View, Right Thought, Right Speech. But it is characteristic of our practice to realize that what is needed is not to be "right", but to be complete and to look into how we might realize this completeness, this wholeness through seeing and developing insight into how we scatter and break this wholeness into fragments of hope and fear. And so we say "complete", which means unbiased, thorough, whole.

Interestingly, the Buddha begins his consideration of the Path through discussing the need for Complete View as the beginning of practice, rather than as the end. Complete View, whether as the fruit or the ground of our practice is truly a fundamental issue of our practice. In order to even consider practice, there must be some clarity present, some looking into one's situation, some questioning of one's assumptions. Questioning one's assumptions means to loosen the density with which we have tried to cover over our world. It means to begin to bring our life into question. Bringing our life into question, questioning into our lives , what do we see when we allow for a Complete View?

The first thing that we see is that it is very difficult for us to take a Complete View because we are always, again and again, taking on a point of view and as I often say, if we confuse the point of view with what is seen, then we

haven't really seen it. Beyond that, each and every point of view is like one degree of a circle, so each point of view is 359 degrees blind so it is very difficult for us to take a Complete View. And that is the first thing that we see. There is the tendency towards hope and fear which immediately distorts; there is passion, aggression and stupidity, the three klesas of the fundamental styles with which self-image tries to poison its world, drain the world of its vitality so it is not so threatening, so unpredictable. We find that it is difficult to take a Complete View because of our tendency to live from the past, to live out patterns and habits and tendencies. And so to realize a Complete View we have to examine these tendencies, we have to witness our self-deceptions. We begin to realize the possibility of a Complete View through hearing the Buddha Dharma, through encountering the Dharma in words and letters written on a page and then the words and presence of the Teacher and the Lineage, and then we begin to realize the possibility of Complete View when we start to actually apply what we have heard. This application starts, actually, at the moment of hearing. At the moment of hearing the Dharma there is also an understanding which arises, the recognition of what is being said. So sometimes it is difficult to say that anything is being "taught", it is more as if something is being drawn out of both the Teacher and the student.

If we simply try to adopt a Dharmic point of view, we misunderstand Complete View. If we simply try to adopt, say, the Teacher's point of view, then we misunderstand because the Teacher does not have a point of view. The Dharma does not have a point of view. The Dharma is simply this viewing, simply the direct presentation of Things as They Are.

Within our practice we begin to recognize the possibility of this Complete View through dokusan and teisho, through zazen, through breathing in and breathing out, getting lost in thought, waking up, coming back to the breath, coming back to the wall, coming back to this posture, coming back to this moment. And we begin to realize perhaps just for a second, perhaps just for a glimpse, the possibility of being here and that when we are here we don't know where we are because our sense of reference cannot encompass the vastness of this moment. We begin to recognize our panic and our tendency to try to reinstate these references and we do so; yet at the same time we also have glimpsed a basic dignity in just taking a step, just hearing a bird's song, just breathing in and breathing out, just attending to our lives as they are. And so, as we begin to see very clearly the ways in which we limit the completeness or wholeness of our view we also do indeed gain a glimpse of a whole view, a Complete View, of Samaditti. It is funny because the phrase, "Complete View" in Japanese is "shoken". "Kensho" is the realization of this Complete View. Kensho means "seeing into one's own nature". What is it that sees? What is it that knows? What is this Knowing? When we ask "What is it that knows", we are not looking for any agent or entity, any "knower" when we ask this question. Because when we ask this question thoroughly we see that the moment of "knower" is simply one more object of knowledge, one more feeling, one more stance, one more game, one more texture, one more thought, one more object of mind.

To have a Complete View, we must look very thoroughly indeed, hear very thoroughly indeed, live very thoroughly, question completely. Whatever objects of knowledge arise, whatever moment of a knower arises, what is this knowing? What is this? Who is this? So to realize this Complete View is the essence of our practice. We are not gathered here to practice in meditation; we are not gathered here to be Buddhists. We are gathered here as Sangha, as the harmonious community2 to realize Dharma, to realize and manifest and take responsibility for being Buddha by questioning into this moment, by entering into our lives again and again.

The sunlight is beginning to show and so I will end here for this morning.

Please, enjoy yourselves.

2: Complete Thought

Presented by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

Daijozan, February 28, 1989

Good morning and welcome to the second day of the Winter Training Session.

Mist, in the morning sky over the morning ground; the streetlights shining, the branches arching through it, half seen and half unseen. The mist of breath arising in the space before you, covering the wall. This moment rising all around in all directions and in this moment wall arising, breath arising, sound arising, half seen and half unseen. Here it is. But where did it come from? Where does it go?

Continuing our consideration of Sakyamuni Buddha's Teachings of the Eightfold Path, we will continue to consider the first factor, the first facet of the Path, the Complete View, throughout these teisho as we consider the other facets or spokes of the Dharma Wheel because all of the various factors of this Eightfold Path are a deepening and opening further into Complete View or Samaditta. Complete View is the ground Path and fruition of practice, looking more and more clearly, more and more completely, seeing into this moment, penetrating into this moment of self and other, this moment of time and space, this moment of body and mind. Looking in this moment, one of the first things that we become aware of as we begin to practise is how much we think, so it seems appropriate that the second factor to be considered is Complete Thought or Samasamcappa, Shoshin.

When we first begin to practise we discover just how much we really think, how continuous this thinking is, how it seems to run on and on and on. And yet, can not be about anything in particular, but shift randomly and drunkenly from content to content. But that these contents can generally be described as passionate thoughts, aggressive thoughts or thoughts that are dull and listless, thoughts of grasping, thoughts of grudge, thoughts of ignoring. We begin to see how thoroughly these thoughts cloud our experience and how thoroughly these thoughts break up and scatter our experience. We also begin to see that these passionate, aggressive, and ignorant thoughts, these thoughts arising based upon the three klesas are biased, are lopsided views of our world.

We also begin to notice that we have absolutely no choice about what thought is going to come up and so we begin to begin to see that there is no thinker to be found within these thoughts. There is just this thinking. We see how incomplete our thoughts are, the more completely that we see them, how based upon strategy they are. When we completely see a thought, we begin to see the possibility of a Complete Thought, a Complete Thought which is simply a thought which exerts itself in this moment and is gone. When the thoughts run on and on into each other, they are never complete. They never fully exert themselves. Well, actually they do, but this is simply not seen. To see a thought completely, see its arising, see its dwelling, see its decay, its vanishing; to see the arising of the next thought, the arising of the moment of hearing, the arising of the moment of breath, see all of these completely. In seeing it arising within this whole moment of experiencing, this whole field of experiencing, allow a thought to complete itself by allowing it to liberate itself. Thoughts are self-liberating. They arise, dwell and decay, exerting themselves and vanishing. If you string them together, you bind up your life. If you allow them to fall as they may, as if you took a bundle of straw and simply sliced into the core and allowed the straw to fall as it may, then you could begin to see each thought completely. The arising of thought is simply part of the display of the basic energy of mind. Recognize it as such and the energy of your practice is recognized to be more and more pervasive.

Where does a thought come from? Where does it go? Within each thought is a world view. Within each thought there is something which becomes. With each thought is a self and just as these thoughts arise and vanish endlessly, endless selves, endless beings arise and vanish. Respect each of these beings by not mixing them up, bundling them up, like loading them into a subway car, packing them tight. Allow each thought to express itself as a thought. See it clearly and then more and more even the content of the thought becomes less and less biased. The thoughts start to become more and more about what is going on. But even so the thoughts are simply interpretation so you don't need to listen to them too much. Just see them [in a whisper] as thoughts. See them more and more completely. Allow yourself to recognize more and more completely who and what this is.

Enjoy yourselves.

3: Complete Speech

Presented by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

Daijozan, March 1, 1989

Good morning and welcome to the third day of the Winter 1989 Zen Training Session.

One thing that you might have noticed, over the months and years that you might have been doing this, is that it is always a good morning here in the Zendo. So: good morning. Here, this morning, in this moment, breathing in and breathing out, there is this body of breath, as if the cells breathe, as if the hair breathes, as if the wall breathes. Don't get carried away by the windiness of the breath because this is just sinking mind. Don't try to manipulate the breath and don't lose the breath, be carried off by gusts of thought. No matter how many clouds of thought might arise there is still that wind of breath, so come back to it. Don't be carried away by the windiness, but feel it blow. Feel this breath and enter into this moment: this moment of questioning into Mu; this moment of body and mind and world emerging and vanishing. As this moment displays itself truly and openly before you, where does it come from?

Seeing the ways in which thoughts, feelings, perceptions and so on interrelate, once more we begin to lose some of our certainty about the ways in which we have defined ourselves and we begin to understand in a more direct way the Buddha's various Teachings on what body and mind are, what this world is. We begin to understand the five skandhas: form, basic reactivity, symbolization, patterning and consciousness as a direct description of the ways in which self-image conditions itself. We begin to notice the arising of "this" and "that" or subject and object as localizations, as boundaries, as structures that are imposed within awareness and that apparently limit awareness. And yet even as we recognize that limiting, we begin to gain the width, the breadth, of the limitlessness of Awareness itself. When you can resolve "this" and "that" into this Awareness, then the Buddha calls this "Entry into deathlessness", when all conditions simply cease. What is this? When all conditions are seen and penetrated with a Complete View, when each thought is a Complete Thought, when each aspect of the Path, each aspect of the Way, each aspect and facet of our lives is complete and without distortion, when "this" and "that" no longer arise, when we realize there to be no body, no mind, no wall, no floor, no boundaries, no time, no space. The Buddha might call that "deathlessness" or "nirvana", but what can you say about this right now?

When confusion has vanished, what is left? In zazen, facing the wall, polish with your direct practice each facet of your lives, each facet of the Way.

This morning we will briefly consider the third factor or third aspect of the Eightfold Path, that of Complete Speech or Sama-vacha, Shogo. When our lives are based upon self-deception, our communication with our world, our sense of meaning and the meanings that the world presents to us even in terms of colours, even in terms of breath, are all incomplete, are all deceptive. "Speech", I believe, can refer to not only words but our basic communication, our basic interaction, our basic inter-dependence.

When our lives are not lived, when they do not emerge from and vanish into Things as They Are3 -- Things as They Are meaning directly seeing, directly hearing, feeling the floor when you step, feeling the tongue against teeth when you talk, really listening to someone when they speak, really speaking to the person that you are speaking to, then this is Things as They Are. But Things as They Are as well, means that which is present when you penetrate into the formlessness of forms and realize that the person that you are speaking to, the act of speaking, the act of hearing, the looking, the floor, the wall, are simply Buddha dressed up as the person that you are speaking to; Buddha dressed up as you; the universe expressing itself as this wall. Then you enter yet more deeply into Things as They Are. Then your activity, your speech, emerges from Things as They Are.

Once more, to understand the completeness of Complete Speech we must also understand the incompleteness of deceptive speech, of being deluded with our speech, lying to ourselves and to others, distorting our world, editing it, reframing it in various ways, framing it and holding on to it, pretending that words are things or that things are just what we name them and are just what they mean to us. When our speech is self-centred, then it is a lie. When our speech is slanderous, that is to say, when it is based or rooted in ignoring the basic dignity of all beings, of each and every being, when it is speech that emerges from a separation between self and other, speech that emerges from isolating oneself from the object of slander, then this is a very grave distortion indeed. "Double-tongued speech," as it is called, "creating discord between members of Sangha" - that is to say, between beings - and so, disrupting, damaging, the harmony of the community of all beings throughout all times in all directions.4 This is very grave indeed.

Once more we can see that incomplete Speech is based upon ignoring Things as They Are, distorting Things as They Are and distorting it in terms of the three klesas (once more: passion, aggression and stupidity). Understanding this we must also understand that no matter how fully the three klesas might distort a situation, the situation is still as it is. It is this moment and the accuracy, the vibrancy, the sheer dignity of this moment is always available in the midst of each and every moment of incompleteness. This complete moment, this whole moment expresses itself and is completely available. It embraces you, it embraces your self-deceptions. Completely.

Seeing this, your view becomes yet more complete. When we realize Complete Speech then everything that we hear, everything that we speak is Buddha-vachana, the word of Buddha. Everything that expresses itself is Dharma, presentation of truth, presentation of Things as They Are. And when we become most intimate with this truth we realize that it is the expression of the Actual Nature, the expression of the Unborn or of this Deathlessness, the Unconditioned. When our lives are lived incompletely, based upon striving for certain meanings, based upon striving for certainty, based upon self-centred meaning, then nothing means anything, truly. But what does this breath mean? What does this wall mean? What does this morning mean? To find this is to understand the meaning of the Buddhas and Dharma Ancestors and to Transmit this very body and mind, this very moment, to yourself, most intimately and realize this body to be the body of Buddha, stretching in all directions and in all times.

I've said enough.

4: Complete Activity

Presented by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

Daijozan, March 2, 1989

[Note: Tape ends before the end of the teisho]

Welcome to the fourth day of the Winter Training Session.

Attending to this moment, we begin to uncover a mind and a way of being which is both settled and flexible, unshakeable and yet pliable or adaptable. Attending to what is simply arising in this moment, attending to our confusion, attending to our clarity, we must renew our mindfulness in each and every moment. We must apply the Teachings in each and every moment and in this application, actualize them, discover them, renew them for ourselves. It is only in this way that our practice can be vital and that we can revitalize the Buddha Dharma. When our practice is vital then our lives are vital. We recognize the freshness and splendour of this moment and the Dharma is made fresh each time that it is applied anew. Practicing without expectations, without hopes, without fears, but practicing as we are, we can begin to understand the truth of the Teachings. And this means questioning into everything that we assume to be true and taking responsibility for what we find out through our practice. The more complete that our view becomes, the more that thought becomes Complete Thought. Then speech can become Complete Speech and activity can become Complete Activity. In the very beginning of the Dhammapada, the Buddha says that "mind is the forerunner of all mental states" and he Teaches that mind is the forerunner of all activities of body and speech.

Opening to a Complete View through attending to what is going on and then questioning into what is going on, seeing the arising, dwelling and decaying of the processes of this very bodymind, seeing more and more clearly the arising, dwelling and decay of our experiences, of the world of our experiences. Questioning into the structures with which we have defined and bound our awareness, experiencing more and more directly this Awareness Itself, we must take responsibility for what we discover.

The first two factors of the Eightfold Path deal with that aspect of practice called "prajna" or "wisdom" or "direct and radical insight" or in Pali, "panna", in Japanese, "e".

The third factor, Complete Speech, together with the fourth factor, Complete Activity and the fifth factor, Complete Livelihood, deal with "sila", or "discipline". "Discipline:" Perhaps in the sense of avoiding confusion and cultivating clarity which is certainly, undoubtedly necessary for us in our practice. But also, if we can base our practice upon this moment itself, recognize our lives to be the expression of this moment itself, then we can contact the deeper meaning of discipline and a deeper, subtler, pervasive discipline. A discipline which is simply according with Things as They Are, expressing Things as They Are. A discipline which is as natural as the way that a wall holds up a ceiling or the way that a bird's song sounds like a bird, the way that breathing in gives rise to

breathing out. And so this morning we have come to the fourth factor of Complete Activity, or Sama-camanta, Shogu.

To understand Complete Activity, once more we must understand incomplete activity which in the suttas is described when talking about this fourth factor as the incomplete activities or unwholesome activities, akusala, unwholesome, of killing, stealing and sexual misconduct. Taking life, killing, taking that which does not belong to us through greed and avarice and sexual misconduct which in the traditional texts seems to mainly deal with seducing young girls who are not yet out of their father's house or married women and so on and so forth. These three akusala activities can easily be understood as activities which arise out of confusion, out of the three klesas of passion, aggression and stupidity, out of territoriality; activities that could not possibly arise without the delusion of self and other. In our consideration of these incomplete activities we must understand killing to be severing life, taking life, and this must include killing as an unwholesome activity not only in regard to killing human beings or even animals or even insects, but of course, killing time, killing the vibrancy of our lives, killing Buddha. Stealing must be understood not only as taking that which is not given, but manipulating situations for one's own gain at the expense of others; taking the biggest piece of pie and so on; taking opportunity; taking the wind out of someone's sails in conversation so that you can make your point and so on.

Sexual misconduct is sexuality which becomes the meaning of one's life. Sexual misconduct is the search for some place to surrender into and to be safe. Sexual misconduct is manipulation and seduction, is dominance and submission, in other words, a game, a strategy.

Now Complete Activity is not simply the absence of incomplete Activity or confused activity. If one removes incomplete Activity and the motives for incomplete Activity, then there is not simply an absence, there is a presence of wholeness and completeness. When one does not impose confusion and contraction, then there is vibrancy, there is clarity, there is compassion, there is wisdom. So not only should there be the absence of taking life, of killing, there should be the understanding and the expression of life: The understanding that, as Dogen zenji says, "Life does not kill", that life and death are this living and that as it says in Kyojukaimon, "The life of Buddha is increase." It is this realm, this generosity of being, the splendour and wonder of sights and sounds; the sheer exuberance of wind moving through branches, the blueness of the sky, the hardness of rocks.

Not stealing is not enough. Being free of territory is not enough for one to realize and actualize Complete Activity. Compassion and generosity are the expression of Complete Activity.

The absence of sexual misconduct and lust is not enough for this to be the expression of Complete Activity. We must love completely with a completely open heart. Not just one or two people, but each and every thing that arises as our world must be understood as the expression of this love; this love that is present when there is no barrier, no boundary, no self and no other. Then we can begin to understand the active love of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva as our own hearts, the compassion of the Buddhas and Awakened Ancestors. We strive effortlessly and ceaselessly and continually for the liberation of beings.

Complete Activity means to do everything as thoroughly as you possibly can: to chew your food well, to breathe this breath. But it also means to uncover activity which is free from the klesas. We must understand that just because an activity or speech, something that one says or something that one does, that just because these are not based upon passion or aggression, that does not make these complete. Neutral activity, lukewarm activities

are not enough either. There must be this completeness, this living with the whole body. You must mean everything that you do and everything that you say, even "Pass the salt."

Considering the third, fourth and fifth factors of the Eightfold Path involves the consideration of karma, positive karma and negative karma. Karma, however, meaning how we make ourselves who and what we are and recognizing that incomplete activities..

[End of tape]

5: Complete Livelihood

Presented by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

March 3, 1989

So, good morning and welcome to the fifth day of the Winter Training Session. At this point, one is somewhat settled into the Training Session. It hasn't quite reached the conclusion. Perhaps we are conserving our energy for something, but by doing so we rob ourselves of deep and clear practice now. So please make every effort.

At the conclusion of yesterday's teisho, I was discussing karma or causality, which is a description of how we make ourselves who and what we are, moment after moment, through everything that we do, every thought that arises, the way in which we hear each sound, and the choices that we make. Complete Speech, Complete Activity, and Complete Livelihood within the Eightfold Path are concerned with recognizing unwholesome activity or incomplete activity, and releasing it, and cultivating wholesome activity or good karma. And I was commenting on how neutral karma is of no particular aid in this, that lukewarm activity might not be based on the klesa of passion of the klesa of aggression but it is certainly rooted in the klesa of stupidity or ignorance.

Now this whole matter of karma, of good karma or bad karma, wholesome karma and unwholesome karma, is one that a lot of words have been spent on throughout these 2,500 years. But fundamentally, Buddha has absolutely nothing to do with karma. No matter how wholesome one is, how squeaky clean one is in everything that one does, this has nothing at all to do with being Buddha, which is recognizing radical freedom from all conditions, the freedom so radical that we speak of it as shattering the mirror of mind,5 or as a candle blown out so that the flame can no longer be spoken of.

It is beyond reference.6 No matter how much good karma that one might produce, this has nothing at all to do with being Buddha. And yet, obviously, this whole thing about wholesome or kusala activity must have something to do with being Buddha. But the point is that being Buddha is not something that is constructed out of anything, not something that is composed out of anything, or fabricated out of anything. It is not something that you can attain. It is who and what each and every thing is.

In order for us to recognize this, it is much easier for us and we are much more willing to look when there is a state of wholesomeness. So therefore, cultivating wholesome conduct, wholesome karma, is conducive to liberation but it does not produce liberation. Beyond that, wholesome conduct or complete conduct, Complete

Activity of body, breath, speech and mind, is simply that which takes place when we recognize that this is Buddha and when we embody this recognition. Because remember the point about "complete" and "incomplete", is that acting on the basis of the three klesas can only occur when one ignores the freedom of being Buddha, because the activity of the three klesas is rooted in craving and fear, rooted in poverty.

Cultivating wholesome karma is mistaken unless it is rooted in our recognition that confusion is something extra. Confusion is something that we impose both upon our situation, and upon who and what we are. Within the basic space of this moment of seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling and thinking, within the arising of these sensory bases and fields, within the arising of this world, in this moment, there is no room for anger, no room for guilt, no room for greed. It is only when we localize, when we contract upon bits and pieces of who and what we are, that incomplete action, that unwholesome karma is even possible.

But as for the Buddha, Buddha does nothing at all. Beyond reference, we can only refer to this as non-dual. Who is it that does what is being done in each moment? Who is it that does this breathing? What is it that gives rise to the thoughts? What is it that does "wall"? [The Roshi pounds on the wall three times] Look.

Our practice is this process of looking, this process of examining directly. And one of the things that we see, is how completely each and every thing makes every thing else what it is. And how every thing makes each and every thing what it is. The vast interdependence, the vast mutuality of this being is something that we discover more and more, which is what must be brought into consideration with the fifth factor of the Eightfold Path, that of Complete Livelihood.

The Buddha taught that there were various forms of livelihood which were not conducive to practice, to your liberation, or to the liberation of all beings. These are means of livelihood, means of gaining one's living through distorting reality, through deceiving others, or through taking advantage of others, taking from them what is theirs by the right of need: livelihood through warfare, through dealing in lives, through intoxicating others, through witchcraft and sorcery. A form of livelihood that takes place without the recognition of the mutuality of our life is a livelihood that kills and a livelihood that we can only engage in blindly.

Whatever we do, sitting on the cushion, facing the wall, going to work, coming home, getting married or buried, each of these are how our lives expresses itself, and how this living manifests this life of all beings. Looking clearly into this moment, into each and every moment of our lives, we see our lives to be the expression of this mutuality. And in our living, even in our livelihood, we must try to express this mutuality and account for this mutuality.

The universe nourishes us and in turn we must polish this universe, polish it with each and every breath, with each and every movement.

This is the fifth factor of the Eightfold Path called in Pali, Sama-ajiva, in Japanese Shomyo.

We will end here for this morning.

6: Complete Effort

Presented by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

March 4, 1989

Good morning and welcome to the sixth day of the Winter Training Session.

Over these six days a lot of things have come and gone and, at this moment, are coming and going. Thoughts, feelings, perceptions, cognitions, arising, falling, and decay; constellating themselves in various patterns, various combinations; and then not so much recombining as vanishing - vanishing into the arising of this moment. One moment of discursiveness can give rise to another moment of discursiveness, one moment of guilt to another moment of guilt. But each and every moment is this moment.

As patterns of projection and tendency exert themselves, we might feel overwhelmed by their exertion, but each pattern is a constellation of factors. Examining these factors, seeing these factors directly - seeing how they are within your seeing, within your hearing, your touching, tasting, smelling, and thinking, feeling the textures of them, coming close to them, directly - you can touch them, you can grab hold of them, and then you can uproot them, for they are grounded in nothing. They arise, dwell, and decay in this moment. This moment has nothing solid about it, nothing fixed about it.

The more that you look at the forms that arise around you as your world, the closer that you get to them, the more that you see that they are formless. These formless forms that appear as this world, that "world", this world. And yet, truly, they are no where to be found. They are ungraspable. The patterns and projections of reactivity, age-old story lines and games, patterns of relationship that were formed in the cradle, or in the school yard, or in the marriage bed, that exert themselves . . . now . . . are just simply this exerting, just simply this arrangement.

Come close to them, see them clearly. Know that they do not encompass you. You do not stand within them. They arise within you. Whatever pattern, whatever projection, whatever reactivity might be present, arises within the whole field of your experiencing. Allow the vibrancy of the whole of your experience to exert itself.

Practising the Way with this whole bodymind is the sixth factor of the Eightfold Path, Complete Effort, called in Sanskrit Samavayana in Japanese Shoshojin.

This Complete Effort is like a leap into space. It is like coming out into the open. It is like exposure. It is the arising of this moment in all directions around you, the arising of this moment within you, and your arising within this moment. This moment itself has complete integrity. Wall is wall, sitting is sitting. Sometimes you feel good about it, sometimes you feel bad about it. Sometimes you are reluctant, sometimes you are inspired. But sitting is sitting. Find this within your sitting and you will know zazen. Feel the step when you walk and you will know kinhin. Be aware of your life and you can penetrate into the Unborn.

Complete Effort is the application of Complete View and is that which can allow us to Complete Thought, speech, activity, and livelihood. Seeing that which is broken and scattered with view , through effort, make the leap in the very moment of hesitation. Recognizing, do not hesitate. Through this effort you can complete your life. You can bring together the whole world. You can feel it around you and you within it. Exerting yourself yet more fully, closing each and every gap - the gap between self and other, between thought and action, between intention and event - you realize that this world is you, this moment, is just this.

Please, enjoy yourselves.

7: Complete Mindfulness

Presented by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

Daijozan, March 5, 1989

Ice on snow. this morning of the seventh day of the Winter 1989 Zen Training Session. Ice on snow, water locked with water, a thin layer, a shell. You step down on that shell, it breaks. Just taking a step, it breaks. The shell is more slippery than it is thick. What seems like a barrier is the same as what is underneath: ice and snow, emptiness and emptiness, Buddha and Buddha. We say in this Lineage that only Buddha can Transmit Buddha to a Buddha; only a Dharma Ancestor can Transmit the Dharma to the Dharma Ancestors. Only sitting can sit sitting. And only you can penetrate to who and what you are.

One time the Buddha called out, "Monks."

And the monks answered, "Sir?"

And the Buddha said, "Monks, there is but one way to liberation and this is mindfulness."7

Complete Mindfulness or Sama-sati, Shonen, is the seventh factor of the Eightfold Path. Complete Mindfulness, right mindfulness, true mindfulness. Mindfulness is to make the mind full of what is going on now, of what is arising here in this place and as this place. Whatever thought arises as breath whistles through the nostrils, as the stomach knots, as the hair on your heads grow, whatever arises as this world is the very place of practice and the very place of penetration into that which is Unborn, that which is Deathless,8 that which is the very nature of all Buddhas and Dharma Ancestors, the very nature of all beings, the very nature of freedom itself. Complete Mindfulness is to be mindful of what is present in this very place. Mindfulness of body, mindfulness of environment, of feelings, of mind; mindfulness of seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling and thinking; mindfulness of form, basic reactivity, symbolization, patterning and consciousness. But however you want to slice it, you must cut deeper. You must cut into, bite into and chew this very life, like a dog worrying at a bone, perhaps, gnawing to get the marrow. But it is actually quite simple. It is like taking a step and shattering the thin layer of ice. Each step shatters confusion. Each breath shatters the moment of the last breath. This moment shatters that moment, spits out the coming moment.9 This coming is immediately this going with nothing left over. Please practise this nothing left over, practise this tracelessness, completely, and this will be Complete Mindfulness.

Getting lost in thought, sinking in fatigue or dream, in expectation, self-judgment, self-criticism, self-aggrandizement, self-image, and seeing this is Complete Mindfulness. Have no image of what your mindfulness should be like. Simply attend as clearly as you can to what is arising and these structures that attention appears to be bound in; attend to these, attend to attention itself as completely as you can. And this then, is sama-sati, Complete Mindfulness.

Complete Mindfulness has nothing left over, pushes nothing forward. It simply works with what is most immediately present because what is most immediately present, what presents itself as this very moment, is all that you need to penetrate the Way, to penetrate into your own freedom.

This completeness shows you that body and mind arise right here in the same place and in the same time. Even though you might wander into memory, play out your lost loves, be chased here and there from dark room to dark room within your mind of thoughts and discursiveness, whether you are waiting for that damned bell to ring or hoping that this will never end, you are right here, right now. Practise this because it is the simplest thing in the world, because it is that which gives rise to the world, quite simply. Complete Mindfulness is the application of Complete View and the deepening of Complete View. Please apply the full Dharma to this whole moment. Take a clear look and see what's what.

Please, enjoy yourselves.

8: Complete Practice

Presented by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

Daijozan, March 6, 1989

The Teachings of the Tathagata are like a wheel, the Dharmacakra. This wheel has eight spokes, eight factors. In considering them we began with Complete View and then Complete Thought. These first two factors are associated with prajna or "e". Complete Speech, Complete Activity, Complete Livelihood and Complete Effort, these are associated with sila, discipline, "kai". The seventh factor, Complete Mindfulness together with the eighth factor, Complete Practice, are associated with samadhi.

Samadhi means "complete concentration", to be fully and completely engaged. In the Buddha Dharma, it is taught that concentration, dwelling upon any particular state, any state whatsoever, is simply part of the game of self-image, the charade of self-image, the charade that there is anything that can be held on to. Dwelling within a samadhi state and propagating and continuing that state, it is taught, does not lead to liberation. The Buddha taught that in order to penetrate into the actual nature of all Dharmas, one simply had to look clearly. As one looks, as one practises vipasyana or direct insight, one's mindfulness deepens into concentration and this concentration can even reach what is called "access concentration", the state just before jhana, just before true jhana, true enfoldment within a concentration state, and still penetrate. So Complete Practice, if it means complete in the way that we have been using this word throughout these teisho, means simply whole, simply vast, simply unadorned and exposed, unafraid. It does not mean "ideal practice". It does not mean heroic

practice, practice with banners and bells celebrating your amazing achievements. Complete Practice is to practise completely.

When in each and every moment we practise this Way with the whole bodymind and in this practising of the Way, in this practise of this bodymind, drop this very bodymind,10 this is Complete Practice. But even just fully exerting oneself as much as one is able to, recognizing a thought as a thought; recognizing projection as projection, practicing with deep, true sincerity, this is Complete Practice. This is Zanmai and Zanmai is our Way, not a way of concentration, not a way of looking for any particular state but observing clearly, observing completely, practicing this observation of each and every thing that arises, seeing clearly this arising, dwelling and decaying, entering into the formlessness of forms. Complete Practice, then, is not confined to the breath, to a koan, or even to chanting, kinhin and oryoki. Complete Practice is completely exerting ourselves in our lives.

In discussing the Eightfold Path we were speaking of wholesome and unwholesome states. The Buddha regarded complete practise of vipasyana or even access concentration as being wholesome states, states conducive to liberation; practices, aspects, facets of experience that would help to penetrate into the nature of experiencing; and the jhanas themselves as being neutral states. But because they deepen self-image's tendency to want to hide within something, self-image's tendency to take on costumes, to fold itself up within itself so that it need not notice anything at all, I think we must regard these jhanas as unwholesome states. I don't think that there is anything neutral in our practice, although it is not a matter of either/or. It is a matter of doing each thing as completely as you possibly can, no more and no less.

Zazen is zazen. You might feel good about it and inspired about it, or you might feel horrified, but one way or the other zazen is zazen. But this does not mean that it is neutral. This means that it is just this . The wall is wall; breath is breath. This is not neutral. This is not lukewarm or mediocre. This is Things as They Are. This is your life and this is the ground of Awakening, the ground of penetration of all apparent states, no matter what state they may be: fear, joy, waking, sleeping, dreaming, dying, standing up, sitting down, lying down, walking. Whatever arises, its very arising shows that it is completely intimate with you. So enter into this intimacy and you will begin to enter most deeply into your very nature. Take it a further step and tell me what you see.

Practising this Eightfold Path is basically the same as penetrating eighty-thousand Dharma gates. Practising the fifty-two stages spoken of in the Avatamsaka sutra,11 the Four Foundations of Mindfulness or the Seven Factors of Enlightenment, this Eightfold Path is the practice of realizing Buddha in this very life.

Please, take care of yourself and enjoy yourself. Enjoy this practice, this practice of sore knees and aching bones and frightened minds and turbulent feelings and extreme beauty and clarity and simplicity, warmth and compassion and direct insight into ourselves and into the nature of all that lives.

Please, enjoy yourself.

9: Closing Comments

Presented by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

Daijozan, March 6, 1989

Before we close this Winter 1989 Training Session, I would like to thank everyone who made this possible:

The Buddha and his Teachings of the Eightfold Path and the Successive Lineage of Buddhas and Dharma Ancestors down to my Teacher, who have given us as a gift of practice and to each of you who are giving yourself this gift.

The Wheel of Dharma turns without cease and yet it never moves because it is right here.

1.

For the first few years of its existence from 1985 the White Wind Zen Community held four Training Sessions annually rather than full seven-day O-sesshin. Training Session consisted of a full weekend sesshin with morning and evening sittings dedicated to the subject of a teisho series.

2.

The literal meaning of the word "sangha".

3.

Tathata, Immo. Suchness or Thusness or Things as They Are.

4.

Roshi is referring to the Forty-Eight Supporting Precepts of the Brahmajala sutra (Bonmo-kyo) which monastics of WWZC's Northern Mountain Order receive at ordination.

5.

Fourth Daikensho in Anzan Daiko zenji's Teachings.

6.

A reference to the meaning of the word "nirvana".

7.

See the Satipatthana sutta in "The Straight Path" by Anzan Hoshin, Great Matter Publications.

8.

These are terms that Sakyamuni Buddha used.

9.

Roshi is referring to this passage in Dogen zenji's text Uji: " Presencing chews up that time and spits out this time." See the Wild Time teisho series for commentary.

10.

Shinjin-datsaraku.

11.

The Kegon (Huayan) school has a schema of fifty-two (actually fifty-three) stages of the path divided into groups of ten. The first group of ten are the stages of faith. The next three groups of ten and the three virtuous stages. The last group of ten are the ten wisdoms.

The Posture of Zazen

by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

in "Four Gates of Zen," 1987

Zazen is the practice of attending to experience as it presents itself, with and as the whole bodymind. While the mind may wander off into thoughts of the past, interpretations of the present, and speculations concerning the future, the body is always right here and right now. Thus, zazen begins with the body practicing an upright and attentive posture.

The main point of zazen posture is to attend, and not to merely take on or force the body into a particular position in order to look or feel "holy" or "like a Buddha". Dogen zenji says in the Fukanzazengi: How Everyone Can Sit, "You cannot fabricate Buddha through sitting or lying down". You take a strong, stable, and open posture to practice, to open to your actual experience, to understand yourself, to enter and manifest the Unborn nature, and realize yourself as Buddha. Making a "big deal" out of it by dreading a difficult posture or romanticizing it is all unnecessary.

The bodily posture should be balanced, grounded, and open. The full lotus (kekka-fuza), or half lotus (hanka-fuza) are optimal for this posture of an aware bodymind and so you could experiment with those first.

Full lotus postureHalf-lotus posture

Turn to sit facing a blank wall. Sit on the front edge of a zafu (round meditation cushion) or any thick and firm cushion that you might have at hand; if you sit too far back you will put too much pressure on the back of the thighs and cut off circulation. Rest the knees on a zabuton (flat padded mat) or blanket so that the knees and buttocks form a tripod of support for the upper body. Lift up one ankle with the hands and pull it up onto the thigh of the opposite leg; the line of the toes should align with the outside line of the thigh. It really doesn't matter very much which leg is uppermost. Allow the foot to rest in the hollow of the thigh and then try to bring the other foot up to the same position on the other thigh. Bring the feet in as close as is possible. This is the full lotus posture or padma asana. If this is uncomfortable, then bring up only one foot and tuck the other underneath the leg. This is the half lotus.

You will probably experience some discomfort after holding this posture for a while. Stop "holding it" and just sit with it. The idea of the discomfort is much worse than the actual sensations. As you continue to practice, the body will settle into the posture, ligaments will become more flexible, tension held in the hips, thighs and calves will release, and the posture will become not only comfortable but will have a steady, joyous quality. Basic stretching exercises will be helpful in alleviating undue stress on the muscles and increasing flexibility. Sit in the posture at any opportunity: to read, listen to music, and so on.

If neither the full nor half-lotus postures are suitable as yet, you can simply take the "Burmese" or agura posture in which the knees contact the zabuton and one ankle is placed in front of the other.

Burmese posture

If this is not suitable, sit in seiza (a formal kneeling posture) on the zafu with the knees spread and the big toes of each foot in contact, left over right, behind the zafu. Again, keep the knees about four fists apart so that there is a grounded quality to the posture.

Seiza with zafuSeiza with bench

If you have severe back or knee problems you may certainly also use a chair or stool; in this case sit well away from the back of the chair with the feet flat on the ground. If you are very ill, you may practice by lying on your back with your hands over the hara in the shashu mudra, the right hand folded to form a fist with the left hand placed over the right, the left thumb tucked into the fist.

The hands can also help us to practice zazen. Put the right hand palm up so that the wrist is resting on the right thigh, and, if you are in the full-lotus posture, the backs of the knuckles are on the upturned heel of the foot. In Burmese or agura posture the backs of the wrists should rest on the upper inner thighs. Place the left hand so that the knuckles fit behind the knuckles of the right. Bring the blades of the hands in against the tanden (the area of the lower belly four finger widths below the navel) and allow the thumbs to touch lightly in a natural arch above the palms.

The dharmadhatu-mudra

This is the hokkai-join, or dharmadhatu-mudra which means the "gesture of reality". The mudra will help you to notice how you are. We should be aware of whatever mental state arises as it arises; however, if we were able to do this completely, we wouldn't need to start with feeling the breath. Mental states and bodily states arise together as bodymind is not separate. Therefore, bodily states can remind us to recognize our mental state. If mindfulness dulls, the hands will slide forward and the thumbs will drop. If your practice is judgmental and goal-oriented, the thumbs will press against each other tensely. A stable and open bodily posture is a manifestation of a stable and open mental posture.

Now open the shoulder blades and any tension being held in the shoulders. Straighten the head and draw the chin back slightly. Exhale and bow forward from the hips toward the wall, keeping the body aligned. Slowly straighten again while inhaling. You should find that the pelvic area has thrust forward slightly and that there is a very slight concave to the lower back. This will support your back. You do not need to tense your shoulders or try to somehow hold yourself straight with your chest. When your posture is aligned correctly in this way, the upper part of the body should feel almost weightless and the lower part extremely grounded and settled.

Exhale deeply through the mouth and place the tongue against the palate, with the lips and teeth now closed. This will create a slight vacuum in the mouth and so the gathering of saliva in the mouth will be decreased.

Place the eye gaze about one-third up from the bottom of the wall to your own height and allow a soft gaze; that is to say, do not stare or focus on the wall, but let the gaze fall "through" the wall and be open to peripheral

vision. Do not keep the eyes wide open, or you will be easily distracted. Do not close the eyes or you will be scattered in the random hypnogogic colours and images that arise, or you will become dull and sleepy.

The body is the mirror of the present moment.

In this posture, just sit.

The Posture of the Breath

Like thoughts, the breath comes and goes. If anger arises, the breath becomes angry. If sadness arises, the breath sighs. If your practice is tense, the breath is tense. Attend to the rising and falling movements of the lower belly as the breath fills and releases. Each breath is fresh, new - you have never breathed this breath before. The breath is a touchstone through which you can bring body and mind together in the same time: here, now.

Just feeling the breath itself, abandon notions of the breath. Don't even "watch" or "follow" the breathing. Just feel this breath. When you wander into discursiveness and get lost in thoughts, return to just this breath. When mindfulness darkens or sinks, return to just this breath. Practice free from struggle. Don't tense the belly around the breath to make sure you are watching it and thus take on the stance of a "watcher". Don't try to manufacture deep, calm breaths. Just breathe as you breathe. With this breath, you enter into your life.

The breath is a mirror of the mind.

In this posture of breath, just sit.

The Posture of the Mind

As you sit, the mind takes on various postures or stances. It crosses its arms and tries to just wait things out. It twiddles its thumbs. It fidgets and scratches and wriggles. It flails its arms, shakes its fists, and screams. It crouches and slumps among its old memories, its favorite old movies and songs, as random chattering. It bloats with pride at having been "watching the breath" so clearly. On and on and on.

The mind defines itself as "this" as opposed to "that". It agrees or disagrees. It tells itself stories about itself over and over to try to prove to itself that it is real. It takes a point of view and then confuses that viewpoint with what is seen and so blinds itself to seeing clearly. And on and on and on.

The mind is the mirror in which experiences arise and present themselves within Awareness.

Breathing in, breathing out, just sit.

Review

Sit on a zafu or cushion facing a blank wall. If you use a timer or a clock, place it out of sight and forget about it until thirty minutes are up.

Straighten and align your posture: ears over the shoulders, nose over the navel. Release the shoulders. Knees should be flat on the mat or floor so that together with the buttocks a firm base of support is formed. Place the hands left over right in the lap with the inner edges of the hands against the belly. Rest the wrists and allow the thumbs to touch lightly.

Exhale and bow forward from the hips, keeping the back straight. Pause.

Inhale and straighten. Rest back from the hips lightly and exhale, placing the tongue against the hard palate. Keep the chin tucked in slightly. Eye gaze is soft, half-open, and directed downwards slightly.

Sit. Feel the movement of the breath together with the tanden (lower belly). Don't arrange the breath. Just breathe the breath.

When you become lost in thinking, sleeping, hearing, seeing, itching, or anything at all, just notice that and bring yourself back to present experience through feeling this breath.

Practice yourself as you are, right now.

The Practice of Boards and Stones

Presented by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

Zazen-ji, June 18, 1989

Published in Zanmai 2, Summer 1989 Issue

So this Sunday morning we are sitting here and there's the breath and there's the mind, there's the body and the back, the forehead and the thoughts: all those thoughts, all those feelings.

The breath is just the breath, but the thoughts pile up and their weight sways and pulls and pushes you: thoughts of self-criticism, judgement, hope and fear, painful memories, quivering expectations. But each thought comes and goes like the breath. Each thought arises, dwells and decays.

The thoughts arise and express the samskaras held within the fourth skandha. The samskaras are various mental states of predisposition that have been learned and gathered from beginningless time, we can say, because there's no point in trying to fix a beginning to the mind, trying to fix a beginning to confusion. No point in trying to find anyone or anything to blame, because wherever we look for something to blame for our confusion, that very thing arises within our very looking, within our awareness of it. Wherever we look, whomever we might point to, whether we point to ourselves or we point to someone else, all of this arises only within our awareness, so instead of pointing and blaming, perhaps we should look into this. Perhaps we should look into this question of self and other before we act on such a presumption.

When you look at a wall, the wall arises within your awareness! Right here is this very question: What is the wall? Which brings, of course, the other question: Who is that is aware of it? What is really going on here?

You step on the floor and there's this stepping. This step, the floor, the shifting of the weight, all of this arises within awareness. Sometimes you feel good, sometimes you feel bad, sometimes your mind is buzzing with dream-like half-thoughts as you take that step on the floor, and then you feel queasy and uncertain. Sometimes the mind is clear and bright, sharp and deep and that step seems to penetrate all worlds. Regardless of how you feel about it, those feelings, the step on the floor, your whole experience arises within your awareness of it. What is this awareness?

This morning I would like to talk just briefly about yesterday morning. Yesterday morning we had gone over to Zazen-ji, to the new Center, to prepare the boards for the zendo's floor. All the nails had been pulled from the hardwood that we've gathered from an abandoned building that was to be knocked down. We have reclaimed this wood that was probably laid around 1946. We've reclaimed these boards that are scuffed, encrusted with dirt, with nails piercing their length every which way. We've reclaimed these to lay a floor in the zendo, the Practice Hall in Zazen-ji. So we pull all of the nails. We pick up the boards and we might lay them down on the floor, or we might lean them on our shoulders, and we take a chisel, we take the sharp end of the chisel and, holding it against the tongue or against the groove, we pull, scraping off the dirt. So yesterday I commented that "this was the practice of the boards". The boards started out as boards, but through this practice of scraping, the boards become yet more boards, more board-like.

It's amazing how much this is like our practice, with the sharp edge of the teachings scraping against our entire length and breadth and width and depth. The sharp edge of our life, the sharp edge of birth and death, piercing expectations, piercing fear, piercing our very last defence, scraping and cleaning all that which was encrusted and held in secret corners. We clean the tongue and groove of those boards so that they might fit together and not obscure or obstruct each other, so that each board can be what it is (beats the floor with nyoi staff three times), just like that.

There are so many ways, so many places that we don't seem to fit into our lives, that we don't fit with each other, with our family or loved ones, those we dislike, rocks and trees, cars and buildings, sky, clouds, our own thoughts and feelings. So we scrape and polish, we scrape ourselves up against the breath, against the koan, against the wall, against the floor, against the teacher and against each other.

The scraping and polishing takes a board and makes it yet more fully and completely a board, a plank. This practice takes each one of you and makes each one of you more completely and fully what you are, what you have always been.

Mazu, or Old Master Ma, lived in the Tang dynasty, and just as I was talking a moment ago about yesterday morning, this morning I'll talk about the Tang dynasty and Old Master Ma, Mazu. In this story Mazu or Old Master Ma was not yet old, was not yet a Master, but still we'll call him Mazu.

His Master, Nanyue saw him sitting one day, sitting very earnestly, very determined, so Nanyue, being Mazu's Teacher knew he had to seize the opportunity and so he tapped Mazu on the shoulder and said:

"What are you doing?" And Mazu said:

"I am sitting". Nanyue said:

"Well, why are you sitting?" And Mazu said:

"I am sitting to become a Buddha".

Nanyue said "Hmph!!", walked off a couple of paces, crouched down, squatted on his haunches and reached over and picked up a tile or a stone. Taking another stone, he started to rub the stones together, polishing stone against stone. Ma heard the grinding, turned and saw what his master Nanyue was doing and asked:

"Master! What are you doing?" Nanyue said:

"I am polishing these stones." Ma said:

"Why are you polishing the stones?" And Nanyue said:

"I am polishing these stones to make a mirror." Ma said:

"You can't polish stones into a mirror!" Nanyue said:

"You can't become Buddha through sitting."

At that moment, Ma had an insight.

And so, of course, Ma continued to sit and to sit yet more deeply, to sit without striving to become Buddha, but to sit in order to unfold and recognize Buddha. Buddha not at some other place, not in the Tang dynasty, not yesterday morning, but this morning and also in the Tang dynasty, also yesterday morning and tomorrow morning and in the arising of each breath and each thought.

This arising, this presentation of experience, moment after moment, these thoughts and feelings coming and going, this movement of mind, this movement of our life, is just this polishing, just this scraping. Polishing or scraping stones or boards. Each stone, each board is Buddha and this scraping is its practice. This polishing is its practice. This polishing for no true purpose but to make a board into a board, a stone into a stone, a Buddha into a Buddha.

It is not possible for anyone to become Buddha, for anyone to become enlightened. It has never been possible and never will be possible, but it is not only possible but necessary, vitally necessary for each one of you to realize yourselves as being Buddha, which means to look without preconception at the very nature of experiencing. You see this by attending fully to each experience as it is, arising within the field of awareness, as it is.

Through this fullness of attention, you release the pettiness of struggle. Through this fullness you begin to appreciate the wealth, the vast grandeur of each experience and of this field of experiencing that is body, breath, speech and mind. Through this fullness of attention you begin to realize that each thing that is attended to is a kind of gate, a kind of doorway. A doorway that you pass through to become more of what you always already were.

Attending fully to each thought, each feeling, you can enter through each one of those to find out where the thoughts come from, where they go. To find out what the nature of mind itself is, what the essence of awareness itself is, what the heart of all worlds is. This we call Buddha because Buddha means "Awakened One". When we find this heart, when we find this essence, it is like waking up from a dream, it is like waking up from the closed, claustrophobic shifting images of hallucination into the bright, crisp fresh air of wakefulness. We call it Buddha because it is actually beyond description. We call it Buddha because it is not based upon any of the six realms of being, it is not based on the five skandhas or the twelve nidhanas, it is not based on self and other, it is not based on body and mind, it is not based on time or space.

It has absolutely no reference, because each thing that arises is actually based upon this Buddha; not that this Buddha is anything underlying things, it is awareness itself.

Polishing and scraping, sitting, studying koan, studying the teachings, studying ourselves, means to polish this moment, means to cut into this moment. It means to breathe. It means to release struggle and confusion into the vast and basic purity of this whole moment. It is to receive the transmission of the Buddhas and Dharma Ancestors through this practice and through this practice, through this transmission, to receive ourselves as we are.

In the “Hokyo Zanmai” (The Jewel Mirror Samadhi) by Dongshan Liangjie says: "Buddhas and Dharma Ancestors transmit vastness. Now you have it, so keep it well."

Please, have a good morning.

The Treasure House

the first in a series of commentaries on

Eihei Dogen zenji's Katto: Entwining Vines

by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

October 1, 1994

This skin, meat, bones and marrow of the Buddha

arises everywhere as everything.

Because everything, each and every thing,

is the skin, meat, bones and marrow of the Buddha,

the Buddha is the Buddha.

Because the Buddha is the Buddha, there is no Buddha.

Awareness is the only condition.

All appearances, all apparent conditions arise as its display.

Because there is nothing other than it, there is nothing to be aware of.

The vast Treasure House of True Reality is so rich

it is inexpressible.

Its inexpressibility is such that entering into it fully and completely has been called nirvana, nehan, which sometimes is even interpreted to mean

a kind of death without remainder

because it is the death of everything that you think that you are.

You see, the situation becomes so entangled,

so confused,

that we have to say "True Reality", "real' reality

which is like saying "water, water".

But we do have to say True Reality,

sat dhamma, shobo,

because there are realities that are not true.

These realities that are not true appear

when you appear.

When you appear

and squint and stare and shuffle and step,

then all around you arises your reality

and nothing that cannot fit into that is allowed to be real,

whatever does not fit inside the constraints of
whatever your current conviction might be,
is ignored entirely.

but even this demonstrates the richness of the Treasure House of Reality.

It is so rich, so inexpressible,
that your tongue could break in two,
your lips burn from the friction of speaking so many words
before you could begin to say anything at all about it.

We could say that it arises as all worlds, as all beings,
as the infinite infinities of the Total Field of All Possibilities,
but this says nothing of how rich it really is.

We can say that everything arises within it,
but even this is nonsense because there is nothing outside of it
and so how can one speak of something being "within it"?

Its richness, its expansiveness, its vastness is such that
it has room for everything
because anything that is,
is its display.
Its vastness, its richness is such
that it can even express itself as the appearance of contraction,
of confusion,
of there being "me" and "you".

Its richness is such
that it seems to be so tempting to want to take a look,
it seems to be so tempting to take up some perspective,
some point of view,
in order to look at this richness, this vastness,
but as soon as a perspective is taken up,

all other ways of seeing, of knowing, are shut away.

For Awareness in itself there is nothing to be aware of,
nothing ever happens,
nothing comes or goes,
there is nothing lacking,
there are no gaps,
but as soon as a perspective arises,
time begins to move,
Space becomes a space and this space is active as coming and going,
as the movement of time.

But there are so many things coming and going
that this perspective that has arisen, that point of view that has been taken up,
begins to feel threatened.
There's too much happening,
the richness is too vast for this point of view to be able to understand it
and so it collapses further in upon itself
and its world becomes smaller and smaller
until the Treasure House of True Reality
becomes the charnel house of birth and death (strikes the nyoi staff against the floor)
but even in this charnel house of birth and death
there is the meat, the bones, the marrow, the skin, the face, the eye
of the Buddha.

Here it is decked all around you,
now it's hanging on hooks.
Can you take it?

Even here in the charnel house of birth and death,
Reality is flayed bare and open to you.
Even in the midst of this coming and going,
even in the midst of your fear of change,
of death,

even in your uncertainty and doubt,

even in your pretensions, even in your misunderstanding

the body of the Buddha stands forth as you, as each and every one of you. (strike!)

But do you understand? Do you understand?

The Transmission of the True Eye of Reality, unsurpassable Radiant Knowing,

Shobogenzo, Nehan Myoshin

is what is transmitted from Ancestor to Ancestor.

It is the life thread, the myomaku, the bloodline

that flows through the body of Reality.

It cuts through self and other,

it brings together self and other.

Self and other become so entwined through this bloodline

that there is only room for the vastness of reality

in this intimate embrace.

Because you see, because you hear,

because you touch, taste, smell and think and feel,

you are radiantly free,

because all that you are

presents itself as ways of knowing,

because everything that you think that you are,

anything that you could point to as being "me"

is merely something known,

something arising within Knowing.

You are radiantly free. (strike!)

But do you understand?

Yunmen said, "All sounds are the Buddha's voice and all forms are the Buddha's body yet when you pick up your bowl to eat you hold on to the view of a 'bowl', when you walk you hold on to a 'walking view'. When you sit you have a 'sitting' view. The bunch of you are all like this."

When you hold up the fuhatsu, the black Buddha Bowl in oryoki,

what is it? What is it?

You slurp the soup but

if you think it's soup,

you don't understand.

Because you don't understand

all that you have is a bowl of soup.

Drink it down, chew the vegetables,

a little while later

you'll piss and shit the whole thing away and

have to do the whole thing

again.

But if you know what's in the bowl,

if you know what the bowl is,

if you know what this eating and shitting and pissing,

this breathing, this living and dying, are,

If you know what they are,

if you know who you are,

then you are radiantly free.

Then you can enjoy your food.

Then you can taste this breath.

Then you are alive

as that which lives and dies,

comes and goes

as all beings, as all worlds.

You are the skin, meat, bones and marrow of Shakyamuni Buddha,
Mahakashyapa, Bodhidharma, Dogen . . .
but only when you realize that you are not you at all.

Only when you are Shakyamuni Buddha,
Mahakashyapa, Bodhidharma, Dogen . . .
do you understand who you are.

Now I say that you are the skin, meat, bones and marrow of the Buddha.

Please, someone come up here and demonstrate.

Do you know who you are?

There are so many colours,
so many forms, so many sounds.

Now, in the autumn of the year,
the dying leaves burst into bright scarlet,
glow yellow,
here and there mauve
and even when they wither and fall,
they are brown and golden.
And as the leaves dry and wither further,
as the cells of the leaf dry out,
it curls, curls into intricate,
fragile patterns.

The leaves leap forth with the wind,
swirling above the ground.

This coming and going,

this birth and death,

is nothing to be afraid of.

There is nothing to be afraid of.

But because our lives, our worlds,

are coming and going

and because we believe them to be "our" lives and "our" worlds,

we try to hold on.

We try to hold on

as everything

falls

through our fingers.

We try to grasp with words,

with feelings,

with fingers and toes,

but everything

falls away.

We become entangled in our attempts to hold on,

but everything we hold on to

falls away

and even our entanglement

falls away

so we need to entangle ourselves once again

and again.

Our intelligence becomes entangled in what it's being intelligent about.

We become entangled in deceit.

We become entangled in our relationships

because they are based on the presumption of a separation between self and other.

(Strike!) But do you understand who you are?

Only when your life becomes entwined with this question,

only when your life presents itself

as this question,

will you understand.

Wild Time: Commentaries on Dogen zenji's Being Time

First of a series of teisho presented by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

(Published in "A New Kind of Knowledge" edited by Jack Petranker, Dharma Publications 2004)

1: Now and Then

June 18, 1995

Each and every morning,

first this spring

and now this summer,

a house wren calls out.

He call out, "I am this house wren and this is my house. Stay away."

His house is a hole in the wall of the house neighbouring this building.

It is a brick wall that faces onto and adjoins the monastery garden.

The house wren sits in this hole sometimes, and there he calls out his message.

Sometimes, however, he sits amongst the branches and leaves of the sumac tree.

Sometimes he sits on the wires.

Now he is here

and now he's there.

When here, it is here, now.

When there, it is then.

But when "then" was "now,"

"there" was "here."

Whenever anything happens

it happens now

and "now" is this "happening."

Each moment, when it is this moment, is right now.

But "then" was once "now" and "right now"

tick tick tick

is now "then."

This moment is not the past moment, not the future moment

but in this moment

what happens as this moment

both shows and hides the past.

The bird was "there" and now is "here."

The future, however. seems to be utterly hidden.

We can have some very small sense of the future, in that,

for example, if we are walking up the steps towards the Dokusan room, we can know, somewhat, the future completion of the motion of lifting, placing, and setting the foot.

But we might die before the foot makes contact with the next stair

and go tumbling down.

We don't know. We don't know.

The future is that hidden.

Because it is so hidden from us, we can engage in all manner of speculation.

We can lose ourselves in all manner of hopes and fears.

We can imagine future glories,
or complete and abject failure,
or any combination thereof...

And so it can seem to us
that time moves as past, present and future.

Each moment has a past and a future.

Each moment is this moment
and there is only this moment.

But each moment, when it is this moment, is only this moment.
And this moment contains within itself past and future.

But "past" and "future" only have meaning
when measured from this moment;
and this moment has no width.
It has no depth.

There is nothing that is this moment.

There is only this presencing,
this activity of Experiencing
that is happening everywhere
right now.

Eihei Dogen zenji says that this is something very interesting.
Something that we should look into.
Something that we should understand through our practice directly.

Our practice must take place in this moment.
When else can it take place?

Practicing the realization
which has been transmitted from Buddha to Buddha, from Awakened Ancestor to Awakened Ancestor,
must take place in this moment.
It must take place as this moment.

And when we understand that our practice realizes itself
when we practice not only in this moment,
not only as this moment,
but as the time which unfolds all moments, all times,
then we realize who we are.

And that moment of realization can only happen now,
in this moment.

Dogen's essay, his text on this matter, is called Uji: "Being-time."
Ji means "time" or "moment."
U means "Being," or even "has"; that something has something.
It is the opposite of Mu: nothing, no, don't or doesn't have.

In this text Dogen is not that concerned with addressing the issue of emptiness, sunya.
Instead, he is speaking about something further than that., something beyond Mu,
but something which is not a "something."

He is attempting to express something
to each of you
about how Aware Space embodies itself as each of you
and how each of you
unfold yourselves as each other
and as all things, as all beings, all times, all worlds.

And so "Being," in this case, is meant to express something about the radiance of Aware Space,
the knowingness of Knowing
which unfolds itself as knowns.

Being is always presenting itself as everything that is

and yet it is always absent

because Being can never be "a" being.

Each being

is the presencing of Being itself.

And yet each being is always

becoming absent.

Always vanishing.

In the very moment of its arising,

of its presenting itself,

each being is vanishing.

At the edge of each moment,

on this side the past is gone,

on this side the future has not happened,

and in the centre

is nothing at all

because this moment is utterly ungraspable,

is already

gone.

And so being-time is Being unfolding itself as beings.

Time is the unfolding of Being as beings.

Being and time are the Activity of Aware Space.

Time is Activity: the radiance of Knowing expressing itself as spaces which are active as forms, as beings, as knowns.

Dogen begins his text by raising an old story from an "Old Buddha," an Awakened Ancestor, named Yaoshan.

Now, this Zen master Yaoshan was not always a Zen master.

"Once" he was a Zen student,

"then" he was a Zen master.

Here is a story about Yaoshan when he didn't know what was going on.

Zen master Shitou said to Yaoshan, "If you say this it you've missed it. This and not this are both way off. What about you?"

Yaoshan said, " Ah...ah...ah...wha'...ah...um..."

Yaoshan didn't know what to say.

But now he knows what to say because the Old Buddha Yaoshan speaks now as this new Buddha.

But once he has spoken,

he becomes an Old Buddha.

So let's hear what he has to say.

"Being-time stands on the highest mountain peak.

Being-time moves on the floor of the deepest ocean."

Wait a minute!

This isn't what Yaoshan said. Yaoshan said, "Sometimes it stands on the highest mountain peak. Sometimes it stands on the floor of the deepest ocean."

Dogen has taken the characters that can be read as "sometimes it" and reads them as "Being-time."

The "Old" Buddha Yaoshan had something to say

but Dogen makes it new and has him saying "Being-time."

Now what does this mean?

"Being-time stands on the highest mountain peak."

It means that Being-time

looms forth.

"Being-time moves on the floor of the deepest ocean."

What does this mean?

It means beneath everything, here it is.

It also means

up is Being-time,

down is Being-time.

Every place is Being-time.

Up looks down and there is "down."

Down looks up and there is "up."

And when "down" look down,

"down" becomes "up."

Dogen also has Yaoshan say, "Being-time is three heads, eight arms."

Perhaps this speaks of Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion.

The activity of Awakening beings presents itself everywhere as everything, in all directions, embracing everything that is and yet holding to nothing.

Sometimes Avalokiteshvara has eleven heads, a thousand arms.

And Aizen Myo-o, one of the five Vidyarajas, who represents the transformation of lustful patterns of attention into the expansiveness of compassionate activity, has three heads and eight arms.

Yaoshan or Dogen (or both) say, "Being-time is the sixteen foot body of the Awakened One."

Perhaps I'll read to you from the footnote that I have appended to the text here. And it occurs to me that when this teisho is transcribed then this quotation from my footnote to the text might be footnoted which is a very recursive textuality indeed but...

"The sixteen foot body of the Awakened One..."

The text actually says jorakku-hasshaku which can mean "sixteen feet or eight feet."

"'Body of the Awakened One' is a gloss to explicate the passage. The Buddha was ideally represented as towering above the pettiness of common views, understandings, and concerns. His body was radiant and golden. Standing, his form was sixteen feet high, seated, eight feet high."

Yaoshan and Dogen go on to say, "Being-time is a staff, a whisk."

BANG (Roshi strikes his nyoi staff on the hardwood floor)

A staff is a symbol of transmission.

A whisk, a hossu, which was originally used to chase away flies, somehow became another symbol of transmission.

Basically a Zen master would hold up his fly swatter and say, "What is this? What is this?"

I guess the fly knew.

"Being-time is a pillar, a lantern."

It is the floor. It is the wall.

Everything that presents itself within your experience right now is a moment of being, is Being-time.

And so you are Being-time.

"Being-time is Smith, is Jones."

or Zhang and Li, Taro and Jiro.

"Being-time is earth and sky."

Dogen says, "Being-time here means that time, as it is, is being and all being is all time. The Awakened one's sixteen foot high body is time. Being time, it has the golden radiance which is time. Learn that the twenty-four of the day are all the radiance of now. The three heads and eight arms are time and because they are time they are the hours of the day right now."

How is it that 8:15 in the evening is three heads and eight arms?

What presents itself in one moment presents itself in all moments.

Each moment, each form, each activity interpenetrates every other moment, every other thing, every other activity.

Everything is contained within everything else

but nothing is held onto.

Nothing is jumbled up.

Nothing is obstructed.

Enter completely into this moment

and you will enter not only into That which contains all time

and expresses itself as all times, all moments,

but you will fall into That

which has no time, no space, no dimension

because it is That in which all dimensions, all spaces, all times

arise.

Within the Total Field of All Possibilities, the Dharmadhatu, all times have already happened, are happening, are about to happen.

But the Total Field is simply the totality of modes of knowing and of knowns.

For Knowing in itself, for who you each and all truly are,

not only is there no other time than this moment,

there is not even this moment.

There is no time at all.

There is nothing other than Knowing.

And it is now 8:18.

Dogen says, "Without really ever being able to really measure twenty-four hours as long or short, swift or slow, you still call them twenty-four hours. The traces of their coming and going are so obvious that you don't need to doubt them. "

Where are the traces of the twenty-four hours?

Our whole lives seem to be littered by the traces of the twenty-four hours.

You had breakfast. You had lunch and then you had supper.

Not long after lunch you were looking "forward" to supper.

In each moment,

although the "radiance of now"

shines and blazes

as the vividness of the ungraspable presencing

of That in which everything is arising,

although this moment is the radiance of your own natures

and although each moment arises as it is, as this moment, and does not obstruct the previous moment or the following moment,

you lose yourself in speculations about the future, stories about the past.

Measuring yourself by the clock,

measuring time as a kind of passage

in which things come and go
but also extend and endure,
"you" have a sense of time "passing by"
and you are merely a by-stander.

But you are time.

You are the unfolding of all moments.

First the bird is here
and then it is there.

And then is now
and there is here.

The continual coming and going,
the rising and falling,
the presencing, the unfolding,
that is your life
is lived by you.

Time is not merely something which "passes."

It is the utter and radical impermanence that makes life possible
so that when you breathe in
you don't have to hold it forever and ever.
You can breathe out.
And when you breathe out there is room to breathe in.

And this impermanence is so radical that it must be understood
not as some thing which happens "to" things
but as the activity, the presencing, of Reality.

Joshu Dainen roshi once said something like, "Each moment of our lives is like the hole in a wheel that the axle passes through. The wheel of our whole lives turns around."

Well, actually... it would have sounded more like...

"Each momentu...you, me, us...living is like...You know...wheel has hole...empty hole...And something goes through, neh?"

—Someone called out, "Axle."

"Axle...Axle go through hole. Each momentu of our lives like hole. Wheel of our whole life spinning...turning around it. Momentu is nothing...nothing...gone...neh? But too, everything is there...only there...nothing...nothing...each momentu say nothing. All nothing of all momentu this momentu...neh?"

Each moment of our life

is the total expression

of the Life that lives as all lives, as all beings.

Not only can you not grasp onto it as "your" life, as "you,"

there is nothing in your life that can be held onto.

Not a single moment.

Not a single breath.

But it is this ungraspability

that presents itself to us as immeasurable richness,

as the gift of our lives,

the gift of this breath,

the gift of bird song.

No matter what the bird might be saying about territory,

about ownership, about breeding, about hunger, about fear,

the bird also sings.

The bird flies,

dips and turns and rolls in the air

and plays.

We understand nothing about time

because we understand nothing about this moment.

Dogen says, "The traces of their coming and going are so obvious that you don't need to doubt them, Yet just not wondering about them is not the same as truly understanding them. When sentient beings have doubts about what they don't understand this doubt is usually vague and undefined and so cannot be the doubt which penetrates through questioning right now."

Our usual kinds of doubts are all entangled with struggles against and are dependent upon our beliefs, our faith in this or that, our assumptions, our presumptions.

But when doubt becomes questioning

then questioning opens as wonder.

When you realize that you don't know what anything is

and yet it is still presenting itself,

still shining there:

—a drop of sweat running down the side of your face,

the flick of a bird's wing,

the unfolding of a bud into a blossom,

the rising and falling of this moment, this moment, this moment—

then, knowing that you don't know what anything is

becomes such an open ended questioning

that it opens into wonder.

And when this wonder is unfolded in each moment of your life,

not just your "practice" but your life,

when you understand that "practice" is your life,

when you are practising your life,

then the doubt which became questioning,

which became wonder,

becomes understanding.

This is not merely understanding some thing.

You become understanding.

Dogen says, " In any case, these doubts were always nothing other than time."

Throughout the Total field
all times are here and now.

In each region and range of the Field,
each presencing arises where it does
and when it does
as a here and now.

But we don't understand.

We think that time moves like an arrow
from the past, through the present, to the future:
You are born. You live. You die.

But we also live time backwards
as if time moves from the future through the present
sweeping everything around us into the past.

Which is it?

In the morning, in the evening,
in the spring, the summer, autumn and winter,
in each moment of your lives
there is only the radiance of now,
the radiance of who you are.

Not at some future point,
not at some point in which you finally get the point and understand and realize it.

But even now,

even now,

right now,

with all of your moments of confusion and your moments of clarity

you are this moment

of Being-time.

Zanshin

by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin

July 13th 1988 , Daijozan

Zanshin means "the remaining mind" and also "the mind with no remainder." This is the mind of complete action. It is the moment in kyudo (Zen archery) after releasing the arrow. This is "Om makurasai sowaka" in oryoki practice and drinking the rinse water. In shodo, it is finishing the brush stroke and the hand and brush moving smoothly off the paper. In taking a step, it is the weight rolling smoothly and the next step arising. In breathing in completely, it is this breath. In breathing out completely, it is this breath. In life, it is this life. Zanshin means complete follow through, leaving no trace. It means each thing, completely, as it is.

When body, breath, speech and mind are broken from each other and scattered in concept and strategy, then no true action can reveal itself. There is only hesitation, or trying to push oneself past hesitation. This is the mind of hope and fear, which arises because one is trying to live in some other moment, instead of in the moment that arises now. One is comparing, planning, or trying to maintain an illusion of control in the midst of a reality which is completely beyond control.

"Beyond control" does not mean "out of control;" it means that the sense of solidity, comfort and predictability that self-image tries to maintain is completely irrelevant to one's actual experiences. You don't even know what this sentence is going to say until you have read it. Once you've read it, the black shapes and letters become words and meanings and then you have the sense that you have read it. It is only after a thought has arisen that you have the illusion that you have thought it.

Self-image arises as memory, as a contraction around the vividness of life as it is and, in order to ascertain a sense of its own continuity, it lumps things together, piles them up and strings itself along. It can only do this by ignoring most of the details of the moment, and it dulls their vividness by pushing and pulling itself into an imaginary "past" or "future." However, the energy of the arising of this moment is the energy of our life itself, and by backing away from this vast energy we find ourselves lifeless, confined, hesitating, awkward, angry, judgemental, guilty, sad.

Zanshin means to do each thing completely. Doing this does not mean to stick and hold. Sometimes, in sitting, you find yourself lost in a thought and then you wake up and cut the thought; then you find yourself going back to check if you've cut that thought. But that thought is gone and you are only trying to find a definition of yourself, you are only trying to become someone who has "cut the thought." Instead, when you wake up from the thought, that's it. What now? Zanshin then means, a mind of continual readiness, like a mirror ready to reflect whatever is shown to it.

In the martial arts, Zanshin means having no break in our activity, because there is no time to take back a stride or block and fix it. It also means going beyond technique, because we cannot force the situation to conform to the technique. The angle of the strike and the force of the strike must be adjusted immediately to the energy of the partner.

In practice we must go beyond strategies of defense and hesitation. We must open up to the energy of mind itself as it expresses itself as seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling and thinking. Penetrating into this energy, we must go beyond all barriers.

Often, when we try to express complete activity in zazen or dokusan, in doing the dishes, weeding the garden, or paying our bills, we try to impose some kind of "fresh" mind, we try to manufacture some kind of mind of practice, or mind of wisdom. But true action or true wisdom arises from the energy of this moment itself. In continually renewing mindfulness of what simply is, we find that this fresh mind knows what to do. There is the mind of seeing, the mind of hearing, the mind of posture, the mind of walking, of sitting, of standing, as well as the mind of thoughts. When we stop trying to impose "our mind" upon the moment, the mind of the moment can express itself clearly and complete Knowing opens as the ten directions and the three times. This is what the "Avatamsaka sutra" is pointing to in its talk of Buddhas and Buddha-realms in all directions. It also means opening to the clarity of experiences and penetrating into the nature of experiencing itself. We must find our wisdom in the simplicity and richness of this moment itself. Blue is unquestionably blue. Breath is breath. Sound is sound.

Zanshin means allowing each Dharma to exert itself as what it is. It means that " wherever a thing stands, it covers its own ground," as Dogen zenji says in the "Genjokoan". It means to take a complete step. It means leaving nothing behind and pushing nothing forward. It means paying attention to our lives.

Yaza 2002: In This Moment

by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

Dainen-ji, July 20th, 2002

Zazen is the practice with the whole body-mind of what is true for all bodies and minds. It is practising the hand as the hand, the eyes as the eyes, and this moment as this moment.

In this moment of sitting up straight with both eyes and both ears open, we face what is true in all moments. In this moment, if our attention is folded in and backed away from the ten directions that spill out all around as this world, then that is true of how we tend to be in many moments. We are playing out the games of hope and fear, grasping and avoidance, that self-image wastes away its life with instead of coming out into the truth of this life.

In this moment, if we are struggling to be mindful, then the clumsiness that comes from clenching our attention like a fist so much of the time is revealed. In seeing this, we can learn to open our hands. In this moment, if we are just open to the openness that is present as this present moment, then we begin to come face-to-face with what is always true in all the moments. Each moment is a moment of coming and going; but we cannot find any place

that the moment comes from or goes to. Each moment is a moment of body-mind and world and the ten directions embracing each other without barrier.

In the Tenzo kyokun 典座教訓, Dogen zenji says, "Throughout the day and night, practise the coming and going of things as arising in the mind, the mind turning and displaying itself as things." This is true in each moment of the day and in each moment of the night.

Many of those who have come before us in this Lineage of the practice of realization sat not only every day, but all day. Some even sat all night as well. To celebrate our own opportunity to actually do the practice that forges Buddhas, and to acknowledge our relationship with those Awakened Ancestors, with our Teachers, and with each other as sangha, each year, we practise Yaza -- we sit together through the night. This is how Zen monks have a party.

Many people are used to staying up all night watching old movies on television, or arguing with a spouse, or fretting over unpaid bills, or just drinking and causing trouble for ourselves and others. Well, we're not making any trouble here -- hopefully, we're not making anything here -- but instead are just simply sitting and attending openly.

You might get bored and flick through the old movies of memories. You might argue with yourself or with your sitting. You might be fretting about unpaid bills. But please, just enjoy yourselves. And just sit.

Yaza 2003: Night Falls

by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

Dainen-ji on July 10, 2003

As night fell, the shadows beneath the spreading branches of the pipal tree lengthened and deepened, and Siddhartha Gautama sat up straight. Facing into the night, facing himself, facing each moment of the coming and going of experience, Siddhartha Gautama unfolded himself as Sakyamuni Buddha. In that space beneath the pipal tree, in the space of his own body-mind, Sakyamuni Buddha unfolded the endless dimensions of the life that lives as him, as you, and as the falling of night and the breaking of day.

Since that time, practitioners of the Buddha Way have often sat through the night. In Japanese Zen monasteries, lights-out are often around 9 o'clock at night or 10 o'clock at night. During sesshin, a gathering for intensive practice, it is expected that following lights-out, that you will sneak out and do yaza -- sit all through the night. The practice of yaza is thus something extra, something unusual, that we do just because.

New students often ask why we practise yaza. Well, that's why: Just because. Just for the fun of it. You know when you were a little kid, getting to stay up late at night was one of the best things that could ever possibly happen? Well, this is the best thing that can ever possibly happen because it is the only thing that is happening right now.

Sitting up straight right now facing the night, facing the wall, facing yourselves, is a tremendous opportunity. And it is an opportunity you will have moment after moment after moment all through the night. And when day breaks -- when the sun rises -- we will continue to sit.

Unfortunately, we do have to end at some time. But the time for facing yourselves, for facing the wall, for Zazen, is never past. The coming and going of each moment of your life is an opportunity to unfold for yourselves who and what you are beyond your strategies, beyond your fantasies, beyond your fears, beyond your hopes.

But that's enough talking, not only from me, but from you. So each and every one of you, shut up . . . and have a wonderful night.

Yaza 2004: Tonight

by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

Dainen-ji, July 20, 2004

Tonight, instead of getting drunk, or going to bed early, or staying up to watch a late late movie on television, or have an argument or read a book, you are going to do zazen throughout the night, past midnight and past dawn and into the morning.

Around thirteen-hundred years ago, the Fifth Ancestor of Zen in China, Hongren, passed the transmission at midnight to Huineng, who became the Sixth Ancestor. Since that time, in our Lineage, the Dharma is formally transmitted to a new teacher in a private ceremony at midnight. Before and after that time, practitioners have sat through the night.

Some such as the First Ancestor in India after the Buddha, Mahakasyapa, have even gone as far as practising nesajjika dhutanga, which is a vow to never lie down during the day or night, but to sit and, when sleepy, do kinhin. The Tenth Ancestor, Parshva, studied the sutras throughout the day and sat throughout the night. Shitou, who received Transmission from the Sixth Ancestor's Dharma-heir, Qingyuan, sat throughout the nights in his grass-thatched hut on a cliff's edge.

Dogen zenji wrote a verse,

> The Western Ancestor's Teaching is transplanted.
>
> By moonlight, I fish, on cloudy days, I till.
>
> Pure, clear. No dust touches this snow.
>
> Cross-legged in this mountain hut,
>
> Following the ancient Way of the Ancestors,

I sit the night through.

So, yaza, the practice of sitting through the night, is an ancient tradition. We honour those who have passed on the realized-practice of Zen over these thousands of years with our own annual practice of yaza. The gift that we have received is too precious to be measured and cannot be contained in words, and so we honour them with our bodies and minds and by practising zazen.

Each moment of our lives, whether in the day or the night, whether we are awake or asleep or dreaming, is an opportunity to wake up to the richness of the luminosity of Experiencing. Here is a verse that is written by Xuedou that was quoted by Dogen zenji in the Tenzo Kyokun 典座教訓:

One, seven, three, five.

What you search for cannot be grasped.

As the night deepens,

the moon brightens over the ocean.

The black dragon's jewel

is found in every wave.

Looking for the moon,

it is here in this wave

and the next.

The bright moon of our original and true nature shines in the coming and going of each moment. Tonight, let us sit within that brightness--within the open space of Experiencing, which presents itself as us.

Please, tonight, enjoy yourselves.

Yaza 2005

by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

Dainen-ji, July 16, 2005

From morning to night, the arising of each moment is the vanishing of everything that has gone before and the emergence of your life as it is. From morning to night, the arising of each moment is the radiance of Experiencing shining as each and every moment, each and every experience. Sitting up straight, we learn to align ourselves with this vast activity by releasing all of the ways in which we hold ourselves back from reality. From morning to night, each moment is an opportunity to practise what has been realized and transmitted by the Lineage of Buddhas and Awakened Ancestors.

And from night to morning, the arising of each moment is that self-same radiance.

Most people are asleep all through the day, let alone at night. In our Lineage, many important things have happened during the night. Siddhartha Gautama sat up straight beneath the spreading branches of the pipal tree. All through the night . . . all through the night, he sat, opening radically past every movement and structure of attention. In the morning, when he saw the shining of the Morning Star, he fell open past himself, past all beings, past all worlds, and was completely beyond reference point. That morning, Siddhartha Gautama fell away, and the Buddha Sakyamuni looked out at the morning.

It is said that Huike travelled deep into the snowy mountains to see the Indian monk Bodhidharma, who dwelled in a cave near the Shaolin temple. In that cave, Bodhidharma sat day and night. Huike stood in the snow outside all through the night, waiting for an opportunity to meet the master's mind -- to meet his own mind.

It is said that the Fifth Chinese Ancestor, Hongren, formally transmitted the Dharma to the Sixth Ancestor, Huineng, at midnight.

At Rujing's monastery, Tiantong, zazen often went late into the night, and sometime into the early morning. Rujing would stride up and down and around the rows of seated monks, striking those who allowed themselves to collapse. On one occasion, he struck a monk sitting near a young Japanese monk named Dogen. Striking the monk, Rujing said, "Zazen is dropping through the body-mind." Hearing this, Dogen's body and mind fell away into the Luminosity that is radiant as all bodies and minds, all beings, all worlds.

And so now we once more establish the body-mind in zazen all through the night in celebration and commemoration of those who have sat, those who have practised, those who have realized the transmission mind-to-mind and whole bodily of who and what everything is. This, then, ladies and gentlemen, is a party . . . without pyjamas. A party in which we celebrate this moment . . . and this moment . . . and this moment . . . all through the night.

From morning to night and from night to morning, each colour, form and sound, each drop of sweat on this warm summer night, is an opportunity.

Please, tonight, enjoy yourselves.

Yaza 2006

by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

Dainen-ji, July 15, 2006

Welcome to our annual yaza -- sitting throughout the night. We sit throughout the night because on a hot and humid night like this, who could sleep anyway?

When Eihei Dogen zenji studied with his master Rujing at Tiantong shan in China, the schedule for the day would begin around 2:30 or 3:00, and zazen would extend well past 11:00 at night. Some records show that during Rujing's abbacy, the time for washing one's face in the morning after rising from sleep had been moved to one o'clock in the morning. It was during one of these late night rounds of zazen that Rujing struck a student sitting near to Dogen, saying "Zazen is dropping body and mind." Hearing Rujing speak of dropping through the body-mind, shinjin-datsuraku, Dogen fell away: fell right through and all around as all directions and all beings.

At Hakukaze-ji it was very common for zazen to continue throughout the night during sesshin. Rohatsu, the most intense sesshin of the year, usually began with merely eighteen hours of zazen on the first day, twenty hours of zazen on the second day, twenty-two on the third day, and twenty-four on the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh day. So you do the math.

We practise yaza to commemorate the efforts of those who have come before us. But also because it's a lot of fun. Just as familiar faces and places and objects appear one way in the daylight and yet can look entirely different seen at night, the coming and going of moments, the coming and going of the breath, the coming and going of moments of wandering into discursiveness or sinking into dullness, or opening up and opening around, take on a very interesting character when experienced doing zazen when we would usually be asleep.

Now there is a good reason for our usually being asleep at night: the systems of the body-mind, its circadian rhythms, are such that during the night, the body rests and renews itself. And as we sit throughout the night, the rhythms of body-mind will be different than they are throughout the day. It's interesting to experience this. There will be times when attention will wander into discursiveness or sanran. And there will be times when you will experience dullness or sinking mind, konshin.

However, it's not going to be as difficult as you think. All that you have to do is to stay awake for one moment: this moment, this breath, this sound. Opening to and attending mindfully to this moment, you find that there is an infinite infinity of sensations, of sounds, variations in temperature. Even the colours of the wall, although white, are many different shades of white.

Rather than struggling and trying to survive, just let yourself die away. Let that thought die away. Let the past moment die away. Let the moment drop through itself. Do this, and you will know shinjin-datsuraku -- dropping through the body-mind.

You just have to be willing to enjoy this moment as it actually is. If there is sinking, feel that -- feel what it's actually like without attempting to push it away or steel yourself. And without snuggling into it, without collapsing, without becoming someone experiencing the sinking. All around the sensations of sinking, everything is quite bright: the lights are on, and we'll keep them on all night. Notice how attention can flatten: how the sounds can flatten and seem distant, or can be vivid and dimensional and rich, and are not merely heard but felt bodily.

If the eyes blink and itch, and a tendency to close them continues to arise, raise your eye gaze, open your peripheral vision, notice the depth that is present in the visual field even facing the wall. If attention sinks, if it flattens, notice what this actually feels like -- what the effect of that movement of attention has on all of the senses. In doing so, you will be able to recognize not only coarse states of sinking such as sleepiness, but subtler forms of inversion that are part of self-image's recoil from the richness of reality. Sinking mind -- konshin -- and wandering mind -- sanran -- are not all that different. In order to become lost in thought, your attention must already invert and narrow. This inversion and narrowing is of course much stronger with sinking mind. But even within sinking mind, there is wandering -- there are bits and pieces of discursiveness, there is imagery, and of course a flux of feeling tones.

Whether there is wandering or there is sinking, practise with it in the same way by balancing attention with whole-bodily feeling, with the breath, with this whole moment.

So, on this hot and humid night, please, enjoy yourselves.

Yaza 2007: Sit Through the Night, the Night is Bright Right Through

by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

Dainen-ji, July 14, 2007

It is very bright tonight.

It is not bright because of the stars and the moon. In fact, the stars are not visible through the clouds, and the moon is just beginning its emergence from shadow and will not reach fullness for two weeks. And it's not bright because we have the lights on in here. It is bright because the night, the day, and each moment are the radiance of the Luminosity in which they arise.

The sound of each falling raindrop. The sensation of each trickle of sweat. The movement of the breath. The apparent stillness of the wall. All of these knowns are known -- are arising within Knowing. Knowing intimately expresses itself as the day, as the night, as you, as me. Because it expresses itself as all of these things, it is none of these things: none of these things can limit what it is.

Tonight, on this very bright night, we will sit all through the night. This is known as "yaza". Some two-thousand six-hundred years ago, a man named Sakyamuni Buddha looked up at the sky and saw the Morning Star. And in this seeing, he awoke to the nature of the star, the nature of the seeing, the nature of himself, the nature of all beings.

It wasn't because of the star; it was because of how he saw it. And although it was the Morning Star, it had been there all night, and so had he. Sitting through the watches -- the hours of the night -- Sakyamuni radically opened attention around everything that arose and fell. All movements of attention were allowed to be released and to collapse into open Knowing.

Since that time, on countless nights, practitioners, Teachers and students, such as Huineng, such as Dogen, such as Yasuda Joshu Dainen roshi and such as myself, have sat all through the night. We do not sit all through the night in order to not go to sleep; we sit all through the night in order to practise the brightness that is possible for us in each moment of every day and every night. We commemorate and celebrate the practice of our Lineage Ancestors. But we also celebrate each moment of sitting up straight through the night.

If fatigue arises, let it come and let it go. If attention moves towards it -- funnels towards it -- this is the same activity that is involved in identifying with and becoming lost within and becoming overcome by anything: anger, fear, boredom, torpor, stupidity, discursiveness, imagery, dreams.

When attention closes, open around it whole-bodily. Wake up to this breath, this whole moment. All through the night, be bright because the night is bright right through.

So, please, tonight, enjoy yourselves.

Yaza 2008

by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

Dainen-ji, July 12th, 2008

As the sky darkened into night over the pipal tree, Siddhartha Gautama sat up straight on his pile of kusha grass and began to wake up from his dreams of who he was.

He had been his mother's little boy. He had been his father's shining prince. He had been his wife's tender lover. He had been the various concentration states that he had learned to practise from various teachers. He had been an ascetic punishing the body. He had woken up from those dreams; he had understood that, rather than punishing the body in order to find the Way, he needed to practise the body.

And so after a meal of congee made with milk, he sat beneath the tree, and the sky darkened. All of the dreams of who he had been rose and fell. All of the stories, all of the identities: the stories that people had told him about himself, the stories that he had told himself about himself and about other people.

As the watches of the night came and went, he opened up past all of the stories that littered his attention to the movements of attention that they gave rise to and reinforced. And then he saw that it was the movements of attention that gave rise to the stories in order to hide behind the stories.

Attention continuously leapt and clutched, but then fell open. The stories became more and more abstract. He saw more and more clearly that all of the qualities that he had defined himself by were the same as all of the qualities that all beings of all worlds define themselves by, but that each and every one of them was simply a movement of attention and an avoidance of the inherent openness of Experience.

As the sky brightened, he saw the star of the morning, the planet Venus, shining. And he saw that each and every thing, each and every moment, is a shining of that vast openness of Experiencing. He saw that that was the only thing that he could be, that anyone could be, that anything is.

And so Siddhartha Gautama woke up. We have stories about this man; we call him "Sakyamuni Buddha". But he, and you, and I are beyond all stories, beyond all names, beyond all identities. Tonight, as the rain falls, as sweat drips, as the night slowly lightens into day, please, this evening, sit up straight.

And please, enjoy yourselves.

Yaza 2009

by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

Dainen-ji, July 11th, 2009

It was going to be a long night.

The shadows beneath the bodhi tree lengthened and were gathered into the growing gloom as evening fell. Siddhartha Gautama sat up straight on a mound of kusa grass. He had had long nights before (as you all have had) staying up at night arguing, or watching old movies on television, or getting drunk, or nursing a sick child or relative. Oftentimes at the palace of his father the revelries, the entertainments, stretched long into the night.

Having left the palace, having left the entertainments, having left what had been his life, Siddhartha had set out to discover the nature and meaning of his life and of all lives. Despite the entertainments, despite the revelries, despite the arguments, despite the wars, despite policies and prayers, despite theories and hopes and fears, Siddhartha had found that there was a fundamental sense of problem -- of unsatisfactoriness. This had been kept from him throughout his childhood and even as a young adult. And so, when he discovered it in himself and then saw it mirrored in the gaze of everyone that he met, he knew that sense of unsatisfactoriness with a rawness that nothing could distract him from.

He called this "dukkha". Often, this is translated as "suffering". But the roots of the word, "du" and "kha" mean "obstruction" and "space", like the space in the centre of a wheel that the axle passes through being obstructed so that either the axle cannot pass through the wheel, or the wheel rolls unevenly, jarringly. The space of

Experience is so vast, so rich, so open and vivid. And yet there's a fundamental sense of poverty, a fundamental sense of problem.

What is this?

This is what Siddhartha had set out to discover and to find, as he put it, a "cure" for. He trained in various meditative disciplines, learning to do this or that with his mind. He could provoke all kinds of interesting experiences. But like all experiences, they came and went. And he found that that was the most interesting thing about those and about all experiences, this coming and going: impermanence.

There is a sense of dukkha, unsatisfactoriness, because we want things to be solid, we want things to be certain, we want to be certain. We want to be certain about ourselves and about our world.

And yet everything is coming and going. Everything in our lives, everything in our cultures are structured to pretend that things are solid and stable. It rarely occurs to us when we are happy, angry, lustful, bored or sad that we will not always feel this way. It often doesn't occur to us that our habits, the things to which we have become accustomed, are not how the world is.

It often doesn't occur to us that the world was not always this way.

For example, most of us are used to going into a room by ourselves, or with a sexual partner, or perhaps with a crying child, to go to sleep at night. We think we need seven hours of sleep or eight hours of sleep. We go to sleep at this time and we wake up at this time, and that's just how things are. But things have not always been this way. It's only over the last several hundred years that there are rooms designated for sleeping.

Generally, throughout most of human history, night began when you could no longer see the lines on the palm of your hand. In that growing darkness, you would lie down and sleep. But generally, around midnight, perhaps 1:00, you would wake up, go to the washroom, as we call it, and if you could afford candles or something of this nature, you might read, you might do this or that task. And after two or three hours, you might lie down again and then sleep until the dawn.

Siddhartha's long night was not just a matter of going without sleep for one night. He had determined, finally, to give up all the strategies of attention that are habitual to self-image -- to the sense of a self -- and all of the meditative strategies that he had learned and simply pay attention to the coming and going of experience itself. He vowed that he would not get up from sitting until he had seen through and seen directly the cure for dukkha.

And his mind unraveled. He didn't follow any of the threads of thought: any of the images, any of the feeling tones that rose and fell. He let them just fall, one after the other, without holding on to, backing away from, or becoming any of them. He did this so completely, it is said, that as the watches of the night progressed, he saw through and saw directly that this process of becoming -- becoming this kind of self, that kind of self, any kind of self at all -- was the cause of dukkha. It is said that he saw through all of his memories, all of his tendencies, and

saw through the attempt to become any kind of being whatsoever: he saw through the nature of himself and all beings.

We practise yaza, sitting through the night, once a year to commemorate bodily the practice and realization of Siddhartha Gautama, who became Sakyamuni Buddha. It is an opportunity for us to experience how body-mind is throughout the night. We put aside our usual bedtime and all of our night-time habits and instead choose to sit up straight throughout the night.

It would be nice if each of you had a very long night as the Buddha did. In the morning, when he saw the last star still in the sky, there was no longer anyone there at all.

So, please have a long night. And enjoy yourselves.

Yaza 2010: Dark and Hot

by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

Dainen-ji, July 10th, 2010

It is dark. It is hot.

Long hours stretch before you. And even with the coming of the dawn, it still won't be over.

Welcome to our annual Yaza, sitting through the night.

It is dark. And so while it is hot, it is not as hot as it would be through the day. Throughout the decades, the centuries, the millennia, Zen practitioners have often sat through the night. For several decades now, rather than practise a two- or a seven-day sesshin during the hottest month of the year, we decided that we would use this as an opportunity to instead join our Lineage Ancestors in the practice of Yaza.

If long hours stretch before you even past the dawn... where are they?

We can speak of hours and minutes, weeks, months, years, seconds. But in our experience, there is always only this moment whether it is dark or light, night or day. Whether we are sitting, standing, walking or lying down, it is always just this moment. Whatever is experienced arises within the open space of Experiencing: hot, cold, sweat, shivering, waking, sleeping and dreaming.

While "hours", "minutes", "weeks", "months", "years", "seconds" are just ways of talking about the presencing of Experience, there are cycles of body-mind just as there are cycles in the sky, cycles in the ground and under the

ground, cycles of seeds and flowers and withering. How the body-mind is throughout the day is different from how it is throughout the night. Certainly, the waking state is different from the sleeping state. During the night, various circadian rhythms are taking place. And so Yaza gives us an opportunity to experience how we experience in a context, a situation, an environment, and at a time when we are usually asleep.

And so, Yaza is very different in energy and in flavour from zazen that you have done during the morning, the afternoon, the evening. It is an opportunity to just sit moment by moment experiencing how we experience.

If we are hot, there are still colours, forms, sounds, sensations. If we are cold, there are still colours, forms, sounds, sensations. If our attention narrows and flattens, there is still open seeing, open hearing and open feeling possible all around that narrowing and flattening. If attention funnels further into the generation of discursiveness and imagery, all around it, everything is open all day and all night. Yaza, like each moment of our lives, presents an opportunity to open to that Openness. If attention narrows and flattens and folds into torpor, lethargy, dullness, all around it is open.

And so, I hope that you use each moment, each opportunity, that this Yaza presents to you to open to Openness.

So please, tonight and all through the night and through the morning, enjoy yourselves.

Yaza 2011

by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

Dainen-ji, July 9th, 2011

Through each moment of zazen, the body-mind learns to sit up straight. Sitting up straight in zazen, we sit as and wake up as this whole moment of the whole body-mind as complete zazen. Through learning how to sit up straight in zazen, we learn how to sit up straight in each moment, whether sitting, walking, standing or lying down. Throughout the day and throughout the night, throughout the waking, sleeping and dreaming states, we learn how to sit up straight.

In Zen and in the various Buddhisms as a whole, we very commonly speak of "waking up". The Buddha is one who has "woken up". Now, it can seem to some sometimes that the waking up of Zen is not only in contrast to, but perhaps opposed to, sleeping. While metaphorically we can speak of sleep and dream as the internalized activity of self-image throughout its lifetime, actual Zen is of course not actually opposed to sleep.

Sleeping with the whole body-mind as the whole moment is wonderful. Unfortunately, most people never truly sleep because they collapse and contract and fold into what they understand to be sleep and dreams. When we sit up straight in sleep and in dreams, we can see just how open, how vivid, how luminous each moment of day and each moment of night actually is.

Nonetheless, in the tradition, we find various masters of the past, such as Parsva, Shitou [Xiqian] 石頭希遷 and [Dayi] Daoxin 大醫道信, who are said to have sat throughout the night, never lying down to sleep. In fact, there is a kind of cousin of our Lineage named Shishuang Qingzhu (or Qingju) 石霜慶諸 whose community of monastics was noted for never lying down to sleep and was called the "Hall of Dead Trees".

But sleep is wonderful.

So why do we do Yaza? Why do we sit throughout the night?

We sit throughout the night because zazen is even more wonderful than sleep. Zazen is opening to the whole moment - the whole field of the presencing of experience. As did Bodhidharma, we sit facing the wall. And yet, if we love zazen, sometimes we might sit outside, we might sit in a forest, we might sit by a river, we might sit on top of a hill, because it is wonderful to sit. We learn how to sit not only at a red light in traffic, but while driving. Sitting through even the most boring meetings, we find that we can sit and enjoy each moment of that boredom.

Throughout the day and throughout the night, there are many cycles and changes that rise and fall, that sweep and fade. Ten o'clock in the morning does not feel like ten o'clock at night does. And certainly two o'clock in the morning does not feel like two o'clock in the afternoon. And so we sit throughout the night to feel how the body-mind is, how the moment is, at times that we are usually asleep.

Some of you might know that historically, human beings went to sleep as the night fell and darkened and then got up with the dawn. But you might not know that throughout the night there would be various times when one would get up and talk, get up and do some work, perhaps preparing the morning meal. In many cultures even now, it is very common for people to live together in large halls or small rooms, and when someone goes to sleep, many other people are still awake and talking. Some of them might lie down at some point and sleep while others walk about and talk.

Through the economics that we have developed throughout our history, we have learned to sell ourselves: our energy, our attention, our muscles, our labour, our time. And so we have over time packaged our time, not only into minutes and hours and days and weeks and months, but blocks that are bought and sold. Our days are for the most part sold to our employers, and so our time to sleep is gathered together into another block; rather than sleeping in the afternoon, which is quite natural to us as we are biphasic physiologically, all of our sleep is contained in one period. We do not want to have this interrupted. It needs to begin by a certain time, and it needs to end at a certain time. And if it is broken throughout, we can become very upset about that.

But each moment in its rising and falling is not contained within any kind of block or structure that can be bought or sold: it is priceless. And it is a moment of your life -- of your actual life. All of those moments -- each and any moment - can only be this moment. And so this moment is priceless.

Throughout each moment of this night, please, sit up straight and enjoy yourselves.

Yaza 2012: Morning Star

by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

Dainen-ji, July 14th, 2012

The dark of the hot Indian night slowly glowed into indigo. Slowly, it became what we might call "morning". As the stars in the sky began to fade into that glowing indigo, by contrast the planet Venus seemed to grow brighter, reflecting the light of the sun. We call it the "Morning Star".

Beneath the spreading branches of a pipal tree, a person sat as they had sat throughout the night.

They had been born into a noble family -- a royal family -- and swaddled in comfort and luxury. As an infant, as a child, as an adolescent, they had seen through the hollowness of these comforts in the face of what they had seen when they looked into the faces of the poor, of the ill, of the hungry and the destitute, and also into the faces of the comfortable and well-fed. Regardless of comforts or discomforts, no one was ever truly satisfied.

Putting aside the security of family and the walls of the kingdom, they had abandoned themselves into wandering the forest and meeting with various teachers of spiritual paths. They had listened. They had studied. They had practised various meditative techniques of withdrawing attention from the senses, folding attention inwards tighter and tighter into what seemed a vast space, but only because there was nothing to compare it to: there was only the sense of fixation and concentration. Looking into the face of these concentration states, they had seen their hollowness, their sunyata. Like the coming-together of all causes and conditions, of all circumstances, they were impermanent and would decay just as a meal would become excrement.

Finally, they had become utterly disenchanted at all strategies of attention: they had seen through all of the faces that they had assumed in their childhood, their adolescence, their adulthood, and their spiritual practices. Even the extremities of asceticism were not as painful as the recognition of the futility of all activities that were merely reactions and recoil from the basic and primordial fact of Experiencing and experiences.

And so they had sat down in the hot Indian summer day on a gathered pile of kusha grass beneath the spreading bows of the pipal tree. And sitting there -- sitting up straight and straightforwardly facing the rising and falling, the coming and going, of experiences -- they had allowed this coming and going of experiences to indicate the nature of the space of Experiencing in which they arose and vanished.

Night drew on. And throughout what was called the "first watch" of the night, they had seen all of their associations, all of their presumptions, all of their reactions, all of their stories and habits and tendencies, rise and fall and come and go like beads of sweat arising in a fever. Each gesture of attention pushed and pulled them into claiming those gestures of attention as their own nature, as their very selves. But in releasing fixation, in

attending to the movements of attention as they actually occurred, all of this fell away. They had had no real preparation for what was occurring: their experience as royalty, their experience as a sadhu (their experience as an ascetic) were all irrelevant, were all mere imaginary identities.

As the second watch of the night came and went, more fantastical presumptions of self and other and world came and went. They saw lifetimes as men and women and animals, and each of these lifetimes seemed as if they might be who they really were. But they rose and fell within the space of open attention and the Aware Space of Experiencing and were all released.

It is said that during the third watch of the night, all possible identities as any and all beings throughout all possible worlds, all possible realms of knowings and knowns, came and went and were all seen to be hollow. Looking up, they saw the Morning Star, and Siddhartha Gautama Awoke as the Buddha.

The tradition says that at this time, the Buddha said, "I and all beings everywhere together attain the Way at the same time." The Buddha had realized that his nature was the nature of all beings everywhere, and that all beings everywhere and all worlds and all places and all times were the same movements of the immovable Luminosity of Experiencing in itself.

In the Zen tradition, we celebrate the beginning of our Lineage by commemorating the Buddha looking up and seeing the Morning Star. This is preceded by the days of o-sesshin. Throughout the centuries and millennia, students and teachers have often sat through the night, sometimes to commemorate the Buddha's sitting beneath the bodhi tree, sometimes because there had been no time throughout the day, or it had been too hot. Or simply because they couldn't sleep, and so why not sit. But ceremonial commemorations of the Buddha's sitting throughout the night, his "yaza", have also taken place. In the Zen community for decades now we have practised yaza one night during the summer.

For some of you here tonight, this will be your first extended sitting. And it will be more difficult than you can imagine; it will also be much easier than you can imagine. It has nothing at all to do with your imagination -- with your thoughts, with ideas of difficult or easy or day or night or self or other. There is just simply this moment, moment after moment.

Fortunately, we've made it interesting for you because the coming and going of all of these moments and the presencing of this moment is happening throughout the night and the early morning hours, and you have never done this before. You have stayed up all night, yelling at someone and being yelled at. You have stayed up all night watching movies, or surfing porn on the web, or simply unable to sleep. So it's not that you have never stayed up all night before ever in your life. It's that now you have the opportunity to be interested.

How the body-mind is moment after moment and hour after hour throughout the day and the night goes through various cycles. There are cycles of attention that are approximately twenty minutes in length. There are cycles of the body-mind processing food, processing the chemistry of the brain: these circadian cycles throughout the day and the night are quite different from each other. And so even if you have sat all day throughout the day, this will still be very interesting.

And if you have done yaza before, well, you haven't done this one. Remember how easy the last one was? That's just an idea; that's just a memory. This will be more difficult and more easy than you can possibly imagine.

Far too soon, this hot night will brighten into morning. In the coming and going of all of these moments, sit up straight and look up, look down, look all around, with the whole body and mind and you will see it: you will see that the nature of Experiencing is brighter than the Morning Star, brighter than the Sun. It is beyond light and dark, beyond self and other: and it is the very nature of who you are.

So please, tonight and this morning, enjoy yourselves.

Yaza 2013: What Comes Out at Night

by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

Dainen-ji, July 20th, 2013

Even in the midst of the bright light of day, almost all of people's actual lives are hidden from them. The colours, forms, sounds, sensations, fragrances, tastes are hidden from them because they hide from the actuality of all of these colours and forms and sounds rising forth and falling away as the actuality of each moment of their lives throughout the day and night. Taking a step, they don't feel the feet. Opening a door, they forget to close it behind them. So aimed towards where they are going, sometime they even walk into glass doors or even wooden doors.

We sit in rooms. We walk down hallways. We go up and down stairs. We pass windows. We pass doors. We pass each other. But for the most part, people are not free to move in the vast space of their own lives because they have locked themselves away where there are no windows, there are no doors, but only the claustrophobic closets of their hopes and fears.

Sitting in this room right now, this moment arises as these colours and forms and sounds, these sensations, this posture of zazen. I ask you to please allow yourself to open to what these can reveal to you about your life as a whole.

Do you notice that in each moment of seeing the wall, the wall is always different? Each breath as it is breathed is always a different breath. With each angle of the head, each blink of the eye, your seeing of the room changes--your experience of the room changes. And the room, this Hatto (this Dharma Hall), is all only about the nature of your experiencing of it.

You sit within the room; but the room arises within your experience of it. Each set of eyes, set at whichever angle it is at momentarily, sees the room. The room is seized within the seeing, but opens itself as the seeing. Your seeing of the room, the presencing of the room, are intimate with each other. And your experience of the room, and your experience of the room, and your experience of the room, and my experience of the room, are all

intimately aspects of the presencing of the actuality, not only of the room, but of Experiencing in itself. No moment of seeing the room is what the room is. My seeing of the room is not what the room is. Your seeing of the room is not what the room is. But what it is, what seeing is, who you are, who I am, is directly present in the sheer fact of the experience.

In the bright light of day, as you walk through rooms, through hallways, out on the streets, under trees, through long grasses, feeling water, sweating in the heat, hearing the sounds of birds and of traffic, and perhaps of your own breath: all of this is arising within your seeing, your hearing, your touching, tasting, smelling, thinking and feeling as a whole. And as you walk on the street or under the trees, there are hundreds and thousands of sets of eyes watching you pass: in between the leaves, resting on the bark in the shadows between the branches, in the drops of rain still resting on moss or clinging to a leaf. There are birds, there are insects, there are squirrels all around you and overhead.

Even walking in the midst of a forest in which we know there are numberless beings present, for the most part we don't see them. But they're watching us: all of these eyes gazing and staring and blinking. And we are arising within their experience of us.

And as night falls, some beings go to sleep. Others rouse themselves and walk and climb and fly: in the sky, on the ground, on the walls, between the floorboards, in between your eyelashes. In each moment, we are always in the midst of innumerable lives, all of which are also the Life that lives as each of us.

The practice of yaza -- of sitting throughout the night -- is simply an opportunity for us to see what comes out at night in us. It is not that it is so vastly different from what occurs when we sit during the day; otherwise, it would be almost pointless. What we experience through the activity of sitting, whether in the morning or the afternoon or the evening or late at night or very early in the morning, are all aspects of how the body-mind is in that moment. And by opening to how it is in that moment, we begin to recognize something that is not so much the same in each moment, but something that is always already the case about each moment, each day, each sense, each being, each life.

We practice yaza annually in the White Wind Zen Community for several reasons. First of all because it is the month of July and it is the hottest month of the year in Ottawa. And so sitting at night is much more comfortable than sitting during the day. And so yaza is not an endurance test -- it is not something to grit the teeth for and to tense your muscles and to push your way through: you're here to have fun.

We also practise yaza because how we are throughout the cycles of body-mind throughout the day and night can be subtly different: sitting at three o'clock in the morning does feel different than sitting at three o'clock in the afternoon.

And so this evening, I hope that you allow yourselves to see what comes out at night. If moment-by-moment you release yourself into this moment, it will be you.

So please, tonight and throughout the night, and into the morning, please, enjoy yourselves.

Yaza 2014: Perigee Moon

by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

Dainen-ji, July 12th, 2014

Some two-thousand six-hundred years ago more or less, Siddhartha Gautama sat beneath the branches of a pipal tree, which since then has been known as the "Bodhi Tree", the "Tree of Awakening". The shadows lengthened. The sky darkened into night. And Siddhartha Gautama just sat.

Despite all of the strategies of concentrating attention to create this state or that state and the cosmologies that described these various states as being more or less real than other states of mind, he simply abandoned all strategies and techniques and just sat: breathing, seeing, hearing, feeling whole-bodily. He sat determined to question deeply into the question of suffering and its causes, the nature of confusion, and ultimately the nature of experiences and of Experiencing. And so, throughout the night, he simply sat, exposing himself to Experience as it actually presented itself, releasing all strategies of attention.

He sat all through the night, and in the morning, looking up, he saw the Morning Star. At that moment, he realized the nature of experiences and of Experiencing and had realized freedom from suffering through releasing obstructions of attention. The Mahayana sutras express this as the statement, "I and all beings together realize the Buddha Way", the Way of Awakening.

This realization was not something that had been whispered to him by the Morning Star. It was not proclaimed by the Morning Star. It was not symbolized by the Morning Star. It was just that in that moment of seeing, the nature of seeing became clear, the nature of hearing became clear, the nature of feeling became clear, the nature of experiences and of Experiencing became clear.

What we call the "Morning Star" is actually the planet Venus brightly reflecting the light of the Sun through the lightening sky of the dawn. Siddhartha Gautama, who, since this point in time of awakening to his own nature, the nature of all beings, has been known as "Sakyamuni Buddha", did not know that the Morning Star was the planet Venus. He did not need to know this information. There was nothing about the star that caused the realization; it was simply his openness to the fact of seeing.

Since that moment, the Buddha Way -- the Buddha Dharma -- has been proclaimed, has been practised, and has been realized. And since that time, many practitioners, many masters and students, have sat throughout the night.

It has long been our tradition in the White Wind Zen Community to use July, the hottest month of the year in our part of the world, to commemorate, to celebrate, Sakyamuni Buddha's sitting throughout the night by ourselves sitting throughout the night. While I hope that we sit in each moment deeply questioning into the nature of experiences and the nature of Experiencing, commemorating the Buddha's sitting is not a matter of thinking about the Buddha's sitting; it is simply a matter of sitting as the Buddha sat.

We are not sitting in order to struggle against sleepiness. We are not sitting in order to stay up for twenty-four hours as some kind of achievement. In fact, if you've had some naps or rest before coming this evening, that would be good. We sit to enjoy sitting: to simply sit through the night because it's fun and because it's hot outside during the day, and because it's much more pleasant to sit all night than to sit through these hot sticky days. Many people leave the city to go on holidays, to go on vacations. Monastics are always on holiday, are always on vacation, are always having fun and don't need to go anywhere to do that. What we really like to do is to sit; and so that's what we're doing. And so I hope that this evening you have a wonderful time.

Now, this evening, July 12th, 2014, is an occasion on which there is a full moon. And the moon is not only full, but it is closer in its orbit around the Earth than it generally tends to be. This is called the "perigee". As it's closer to the Earth, depending upon the angle with which we see it, the haze and clouds that might be present in the sky, the Moon can be 30 per cent brighter and almost 15 per cent larger, which is fun.

And so perhaps if you go outside during one of the free periods of our yaza -- of our sitting throughout the night -- you might look up and see this bright full moon. As with sesshin or Dharma Assemblies or retreats, while we might have free periods, these are not regarded as breaks from zazen and kinhin and the various forms of our practice, but simply as opportunities to practise moving, standing, walking, sitting, as we more commonly do without forms: to drink tea, to have some breakfast, mindfully in each moment. As with sesshin and Dharma Assemblies and retreats, then, regardless of what you see, the point is to open to the activity of seeing, the activity of hearing, the activity of feeling, the activity of the whole body-mind and the whole moment in each moment throughout the night.

Still, if you happen to look up and see this bright full moon, that's nice. And so despite the fact that throughout this yaza you should practise only functional talking, if you do happen to look up and see the moon, it could be appropriate to point it out to someone else who has not seen it as simply and as clearly as you can.

There is a traditional saying that people miss the reality of their own experiencing, of their own experiences, because even when there is a finger pointing at the moon, we tend to look at the finger instead of the moon. We tend to become caught up in who is pointing, and what the pointing might mean, and whether they are pointing at us. Whether they are pointing as if we were too stupid to notice something. Whether they are pointing while wagging their finger or not. Instead of simply looking at what is being pointed to.

Even if you do see the moon that is being pointed out, more important than seeing the Moon is to be alive to the activity of seeing. Each colour, each form that is seen, each sound that is heard, anything that is known at all, arises within Knowing, is the activity of Knowing presenting itself as knowns: the activity of Experiencing presencing -- becoming actualized -- as experiences. All experiences are always pointing to the Experiencing that they arise within. See this. Hear this. Feel this. Know this.

Whether two-thousand six-hundred years ago. . . whether this morning or tomorrow morning . . . whether next week, or next year, or two-thousand six-hundred years into the future: in each moment of Experiencing, all experiences arise within it as its display.

So now, in this moment and throughout the yaza, please practise this and enjoy this: enjoy yourselves.